

Centre for North-West Regional Studies at the University of Lancaster. He knits this evidence into a coherent whole, creating a generic portrait of age, class, and experience. What Childs does not do nearly so successfully is to account for other variables, some of which must surely be relevant. Despite his assertion that regional differences diminished at the turn of the century, the book contains little evidence to substantiate the point. Sensitivity to regional variations might well reveal differences among southern, midland, and northern experiences. There were, indeed, many Englands and many occupations, producing, one may suggest, a more variegated reality than the one that appears here. This reservation aside, Childs's book is a good one, intelligently structured, cogently argued, and generally informative.

Victor Batzel
University of Winnipeg

Susan Lynn — *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Racial Justice, Peace, and Feminism, 1945 to the 1960s*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992. Pp. xi, 218.

Recently a number of historians have set out to challenge the 1950s as a decade of consensus in a range of ways, from analyzing the media to pursuing domesticity in politics and the atom bomb. Susan Lynn's book is decidedly in the camp of scholars in both women's and political history who seek to challenge the accepted wisdom. From the perspective of this new revisionist wave, politics in the 1950s were not solely the domain of conservatism. Less patterned by McCarthyism than constrained by it and far more independent of the virtues of family and domesticity than Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* led us to believe, the immediate postwar decade gave rise to a reformulated progressive politics that saw racism and poverty as the central problems on the American agenda and viewed the role of the United States in world affairs — whether from pacifist or liberal internationalist assumptions — to be open to democratic debate.

Lynn's subjects, the women of the American Field Service Committee (AFSC) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), were central actors in the transformation of liberal politics in the postwar years. Beginning in the 1940s, both the AFSC and the YWCA became increasingly aware of the importance of racial inequality, our "American dilemma". With the coming to power of the labour movement in the war years, both organizations now redirected their energies from class (especially workplace and union) issues and invested their resources in civil rights and peace activism. Women who were otherwise constrained by the politically conservative climate organized against discrimination, violated segregationist laws, strove to integrate their two organizations, worked for job and educational opportunities for minorities, and mentored other women in leadership skills. While neither organization was explicitly feminist (a term which, as Lynn argues, came exclusively to mean the National Woman's Party and the Equal Rights Amendment by the 1950s), both the YWCA and the AFSC offered women the opportunity to

hone their talents and contribute to efforts for social justice. In the women's YWCA, gender solidarity was more evident than in the more gender-neutral AFSC; at the same time, both organizations fostered women's civic leadership. Despite — or, as Lynn argues, because of — their religious origins, women found a deeper commitment toward and greater opportunity for public activism in the pursuit of social justice than men.

Lynn's study has made a valuable contribution to the debate on the 1940s and 1950s by bringing to light the efforts of two generations of women activists who, while they did not participate in a publicly named "women's movement", furthered the cause of women through the first round of postwar civil rights and peace activism. Lynn provides us with detailed biographical sketches of women leaders, shows us the beginnings of national and local desegregation, and outlines campaigns to change how cities and organizations did business, all progressive deeds in conservative times. Lynn's argument about the religious origin of women's activism — and its central role in explaining the timing and content of women's activism and their difference from men — is too important to be left to a sidebar, for it clearly is a strength of the study. Finally, Lynn does address in part what some men and women were doing while many citizens fell into an affluent consensus and still others were deluded by Joe McCarthy. Women and men, she shows us, sometimes worked for positive change.

Progressive Women in Conservative Times, however, does fall short in explaining why the shifts in women's political agenda occurred. A few of the chapters proceed as a march through events; the biographical summaries, while they give us much information, are not adequately linked to the book's main arguments, and Lynn's discussion of gender difference in the YWCA and YMCA dips into essentialism without fully accounting for the different origins, purposes, and social bases of the two organizations. The difference is indeed acknowledged, just not given much credence. Further, I should have liked to hear more discussion of why women collectively turned to activism and what they said in their own words about the path of reform and the problems of society, rather than their changing organizational affiliations or career paths.

More importantly, the shift in the progressive agenda from the labour question to civil rights is a matter of contention today. In giving scant attention to the reasons why both the AFSC and the YWCA shifted away from issues of class-based inequality, Lynn misses an opportunity to set the efforts of progressive women in the larger context of the failure of liberalism. Ostensibly, the AFSC and the YWCA turned to race and international politics because the labour movement had succeeded, and their industrial work was no longer relevant. Yet the lack of support for class-based reform weakened the left in the 1960s. It created a rift within left-liberalism that continues today, and it meant effectively that programmes to address race and gender inequality would treat only cultural, legal, and political manifestations, not their economic and social underpinnings. Yet neither the AFSC nor the YWCA had ever indicated, even in the heady days of the Social Gospel, that the issue of structural inequality was up for discussion. The gap between politics based on class and those on race and gender exists today as a major stumbling block to

even negotiating coalitional efforts, let alone sustaining them. Lynn's progressive women would shed light on this process.

Despite these reservations, Lynn's book gives us valuable information on the path of women in postwar reform movements. She has reclaimed and resurrected the origins of contemporary civil rights and peace activism in the 1940s and 1950s and offered us a third way to view the gender politics of the era. Neither domesticity nor feminism could adequately account for or explain the participation of progressive women in movements for social justice. Liberal religious conviction and the contradictions between gender ideology and women's social realities could. Further, the pressures to integrate not only their own organizations but their communities brought the middle-class women of the AFSC and YWCA into a broader world of civic activism, the legacy of which we have today. In exploring these themes and the specific path of women in reform, Lynn has made a valuable contribution to women's history and the history of politics in the postwar world.

Elizabeth Faue
Wayne State University

Jacques Castonguay — *Philippe Aubert de Gaspé : seigneur et homme de lettres*, Sillery, Éditions du Septentrion, 1991, 203 p.

Figure quasi mythique de la vie littéraire québécoise du XIX^e siècle, Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, père (1786–1871) a fait l'objet de nombreuses études. Un simple survol de la *Bibliographie critique du roman canadien-français, 1837–1900*, de David M. Hayne et Marcel Tirol, permet de constater le nombre important de travaux consacrés plus ou moins directement à cet écrivain avant 1968 (dont plus de 90 concernant son premier ouvrage, *Les anciens Canadiens*). Ces études ont cependant beaucoup plus porté sur son oeuvre que sur sa vie. La biographie écrite par l'abbé Henri Raymond Casgrain en 1871 et la notice du *Dictionnaire biographique du Canada* rédigée par Luc Lacourcière en 1972 sont les seuls travaux à caractère biographique de large envergure ayant fait l'objet d'une publication.

Depuis de nombreuses années, Jacques Castonguay s'intéresse à la famille Aubert de Gaspé. En 1977, il publie, aux éditions Fides, *La Seigneurie de Philippe Aubert de Gaspé : Saint-Jean-Port-Joli*. Dans cette histoire des seigneurs de « Port-Joly », Philippe Aubert de Gaspé occupait une place importante. Le chapitre qui lui était consacré (p. 61–85), en tant que sixième et dernier seigneur du lieu, faisait déjà amplement état de ses activités d'homme de lettres. Castonguay nous présente aujourd'hui un ouvrage entièrement consacré à cet écrivain qui a marqué la deuxième moitié du XIX^e siècle, une biographie mise à jour par de nouveaux travaux de recherche afin d'« apporter des précisions sur plusieurs points que ses premiers biographes, probablement faute de temps, d'espace ou de documents, ont traité parfois sommairement » (p. 10). Pour écrire la vie de Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, père, l'auteur a eu recours à une documentation importante et diversifiée qu'il n'est pas inutile d'énumérer ici.