

trente-huit grévistes, toutes des femmes non-juives, n'ont pas bénéficié de l'appui du *International Ladies' Garment Workers Union*, le syndicat juif qui avait mené la grève de 1912.

Bref, *Gender Conflicts* représente une percée captivante en étude féministe. En nous éclairant sur des disciplines soeurs, telles l'histoire de l'immigration, l'histoire culturelle et l'histoire juridique, cet ouvrage permet d'étendre les limites de l'histoire des femmes et de briser les barrières entre celle-ci et l'histoire "courante." Par ailleurs, comme les auteures sont historiennes, sociologues ou politologues, leur collaboration invite au décloisonnement des disciplines.

En fait, nous n'avons que deux réserves majeures à l'endroit de cet ouvrage. La première concerne sa concentration sur l'Ontario, plus particulièrement sur la ville de Toronto. Bien sûr, les auteures reconnaissent leur parti-pris géographique et s'en excusent, sous prétexte que ce recueil est le reflet des discussions et des préoccupations collectives d'un groupe particulier d'universitaires torontoises. Toutefois, en dépit de ces explications, les lacunes du recueil demeurent entières. En effet, on y apprend rien sur les rapports sociaux de sexes dans l'Ontario français, dans l'Ouest, dans les Maritimes ou au Québec. Une meilleure représentation géographique aurait permis de mieux cerner toute la complexité des expériences des Canadiennes.

Notre seconde réserve a trait au choix des sources. Si les problématiques et les thèmes abordés sont nouveaux, les sources utilisées sont plus traditionnelles. Par exemple, plus de la moitié des articles utilisent les journaux comme source principale. Par ailleurs, malgré le rôle important qu'a joué l'État dans la formulation des politiques concernant les femmes, l'utilisation des sources gouvernementales est rarissime. A l'exception de Dubinsky et de Strange qui ont toutes deux dépouillé les archives judiciaires ontariennes, ainsi que de Frager qui a utilisé les archives du ministère du Travail de l'Ontario, les auteures ont plutôt recours aux archives d'organismes privés, tels les agences sociales ou les organisations féminines. Une telle situation devrait susciter de nombreuses interrogations chez les archivistes, notamment en ce qui a trait à l'accessibilité des documents gouvernementaux. En effet, les sources gouvernementales concernant les femmes manqueraient-elles de visibilité? Autrement dit: ensevelis dans des fonds qui documentent d'autres événements ou phénomènes jugés plus importants, les documents gouvernementaux portant sur les femmes échapperaient-ils aux historiennes? Dans l'affirmative, quels moyens devrions-nous utiliser pour promouvoir les sources relatives aux femmes? Par ailleurs, à une époque où la communauté archivistique est en train d'uniformiser sa façon de décrire les archives, comment préserver les particularités d'un langage féministe, essentiel au développement de la recherche en étude des femmes? Bref, comme en témoigne *Gender Conflicts*, l'histoire des femmes est devenue une discipline à part entière et les problèmes méthodologiques qu'elle soulève devraient figurer au premier rang des préoccupations en archivistique.

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"Hello, Central?": Gender, Technology, and Culture in the Formation of Telephone Systems. MICHÈLE MARTIN. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. x, 219 p. ISBN 0773508309. \$34.95 (cl.).

“Well?” or “Are you there?” were once the polite ways to answer the telephone. In late-nineteenth-century Canada, today’s standard “hello” was considered a bit rude (a bit too emphatic, perhaps, too much the sort of noise one would make summoning a cab). For the prosperous businessmen who were most telephone companies’ first intended subscribers, a more dignified form of mutual salutation seemed appropriate.

Such long-gone features of telephone etiquette form an important part of the material Michèle Martin analyses in *“Hello, Central?”*. From descriptions of telephone conduct, Martin derives a story of how the telephone altered the social practices of power and was itself formed in response to late-nineteenth-century cultural contexts. As well, Martin examines the technical designs of early telephone systems. And again, by considering which kinds of machinery came into widespread use and which others, with disparate but comparable advantages, disappeared, she illuminates the politics of this technology’s development.

Martin covers relatively familiar ground in arguing that telephones were originally intended as a service to businessmen, a technology attractive for enabling an intensified circulation of capital. Because the telephone companies expected that business subscribers would be their most profitable market, they actively discouraged non-business uses of telephones, such as the initially popular telephone concerts. Such collective telephone use ran contrary to the business community’s and the telephone companies’ main objective: to develop private service to individuals.

Business subscribers wanted to be able to speak privately on the phone, and telephone companies wished to satisfy this preference in such a way as to profit maximally. From these values followed the companies’ choices of phone equipment, a particular type of labour discipline for operators, and a pattern of technological diffusion that initially short-changed urban working-class and rural potential subscribers. Early telephone systems also served mainly male users. In fact, in the technology’s nineteenth-century phase, telephone companies and their male subscribers sought to deter even the female kin of élite men from employing the phone for their own purposes, especially social ones.

Martin’s argument thus is structured around a multifaceted duality: private/individual/male/urban-capitalist versus public/collective/female/working-class-and-rural. She shows that the phone system developed initially to serve the former’s needs and interests, but resistance from various places in the latter constellation ultimately played its own part in shaping the technology. Resistance took various forms, ranging from protests lodged with government bodies to individual violations of the phone company’s work rules or etiquette prescriptions.

Martin’s discussions of the phone operators’ work and of evolving telephone behaviour have both antiquarian charm and theoretical interest. Theoretically, she challenges not only the relatively easy (though persistent) target of technological determinism, but also modifies subtly the view of technological domination offered by Cynthia Cockburn and by some Foucauldians (if not Foucault himself). Her theoretical challenge is sustained by the substantial accounts of social practices she offers, based largely on documents in the Bell Canada Archives. In this repository, she has found a series of operators’ life stories and a collection of “quotations and anecdotes” which offer a rich source of concrete detail about telephone culture. Also valuable were clippings and subject files, supplemented with periodical literature she found elsewhere. Telephone managers’

intentional shaping of phone culture is abundantly documented as well, in news sources, correspondence, and policy statements.

All these texts had a good deal to say explicitly on the gender-specific features of phone voices, manners and uses. Quite common were assertions such as "The woman's voice carries better over short-distance connections, the man's over long-distance" (p. 96). The surface content of Martin's archival sources readily supports her argument that the development of the phone system depended on gender hierarchy. The technically imperfect system needed operators who could handle the frustrated business customers in ways that allowed the customers, while vulnerable to the system, to feel superior to it and blameless for the troubles it sometimes caused them. Martin quotes numerous descriptions of women operators as particularly able to soothe the irate customer.

But Martin also interprets her sources more penetratingly, allowing us to see, for example, that the construction of the perfect operator was not just any female figure, but often specifically the image of a genteel household maid, an image particularly useful for maintaining impersonality and hierarchy in a service relationship. Such sophisticated interpretation of her material could perhaps have been more developed in some areas, where multilayered figurative language was common. For example, there is room for further comment on the tensions among the many and various metaphors used to describe women operators — familial, military, meteorological. Relations among these metaphorical systems undoubtedly structured the space for and character of operators' resistance in more ways than Martin already notes.

Meaty as the Bell Canada archives material is for Martin's purposes, the collection, like any other, has its limits. Most notable is its central-Canadian focus, which Martin duly remarks upon. One wonders whether research drawing on the Maritime Telegraph and Telephone archives would sustain identical conclusions, or whether, for example, the opposition between the privacy-loving urban businessman and the happily communal rural party-line user holds up in light of more evidence about rural businesspeople's use of the telephone system. Certainly, rural business users of telegraphy were as privacy-hungry as their urban counterparts.

Whatever the limits of the Bell Canada collection, we are lucky to have it. Some other sources for our communications history have been lost to presentist housekeeping. Canadian Pacific, for example, has not kept its telegraph division records. With such losses, we let slip the record of roads not taken. And as "*Hello, Central?*" so clearly shows, that record is our only means to understand the historical politics of technological change.

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Without Consent: The Ethics of Disclosing Personal Information in Public Archives. HEATHER MACNEIL. Metuchen, N.J.: Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1992. 230 p. ISBN 0-8108-2581-3.

You have just completed the annual ritual of filing your income tax return. It's in the mail and your only thought is, "When will I see that refund cheque?" Did you ever stop and think that one day that form you submitted in confidence to the government could be examined by some researcher interested in the economic profile of the Canadian