

## The Re-Birth of Canada's Past: A Decade of Women's History

Margaret Conrad

Volume 12, Number 2, Spring 1983

URI: [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad12\\_2rv04](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad12_2rv04)

[See table of contents](#)

---

### Publisher(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

### ISSN

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

### Cite this document

Conrad, M. (1983). The Re-Birth of Canada's Past:: A Decade of Women's History. *Acadiensis*, 12(2), 140–162.

## The Re-Birth of Canada's Past: A Decade of Women's History \*

TEN YEARS AGO the Canadian Historical Association at meetings in Kingston, Ontario, held its first session on the topic of women. Much has happened in the last decade to banish forever the silence surrounding women's culture and women's contribution to Canada's past. Drawing upon the methodologies of the new social history and fueled by the energies of multidisciplinary "area studies", Canadian women's history has emerged as an exciting new field of study, and supporting structures have quickly taken shape.<sup>1</sup> Although pioneer scholars in Canadian women's history often faced ridicule, hostility or benign neglect, it is now generally recognized that women's history is an important area of study and that gender is a separate category of analysis which historians ignore only at the risk of rendering their work woefully inadequate.<sup>2</sup> As with other large categories such as class and ethnicity, the study of gender demands a whole new "angle of vision".<sup>3</sup> Historians who study women must consider new subjects of analysis such as reproduction and sexuality and be prepared to adopt novel notions of historical periodization. They must also devote more attention to the private sphere of human history which has hitherto been considered appropriate for public consumption only when filtered through fictional accounts. By exposing the historical contradictions between public and private life, women's history promises to transform not only the way in which we view

\* I would like to thank Wendy Mitchinson and Phillip Buckner for reading a draft of this review and offering valuable suggestions. As usual, Joy Cavazzi pitched in at the last minute to transform my tortuous handwriting into a typewritten manuscript. Without her help much of my writing would remain in the realm of "work in progress".

- 1 The Women's Committee of the Canadian Historical Association was formed in 1975 and feminist historians were prominent in the founding of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW), which since 1977 has served as an umbrella organization for multidisciplinary research. Historians were also well-represented at the plenary sessions of the Canadian Women's Studies Association in 1981-82. Meanwhile, several Canadian-based women's studies publications have appeared — *The Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women* (1972) — since 1979 called *Resources for Feminist Research*, *Atlantis* (1975), *Canadian Women's Studies* (1978), and the *International Journal of Women's Studies* (1978). Journals such as *Histoire sociale*, *Labour/Le Travailleur*, *Ontario History* and the *Revue d'histoire de l'amérique française*, have also served as outlets for articles on topics relating to women.
- 2 For a discussion of the developments in women's history during the 1970s in Canada, I am indebted to Alison Prentice, "Women's History in Canada: A Project in Process", unpublished paper presented to the Colloquium on Social History, Carleton University, June 1982. See also Eliane Leslau Silverman, "Writing Canadian Women's History, 1970-82: An Historiographical Analysis," *Canadian Historical Review*, LXIII (December, 1982), pp. 513-533; Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Fugitive Female: An Introduction to the Bibliography of Canadian Women's Studies", in Anne B. Piternick, ed. *Bibliography for Canadian Studies: Past Trends and Future Needs*, (Toronto, 1982), pp. 48-57.
- 3 Ruth Pierson and Alison Prentice, "Feminism and the Writing and Teaching of History",

women in history but also how we assess the public sphere dominated by men and their institutions.

Ten years of hard work in the archives have netted significant results for Canadian women's history, nowhere more so than in the foundation of any field of study: bibliography. Since 1972 *The Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women* (now *Resources for Feminist Research*) has kept a running tally of national and international developments in women's studies, while in 1980 Beth Light and Veronica Strong-Boag published *True Daughters of the North* (Toronto, OISE Press, 1980), a 200-page, annotated bibliography of published primary and secondary sources on Canadian women's history. This indispensable research tool should permanently lay to rest any criticism based on the alleged paucity of sources for historical analysis. In Quebec Denise Lemieux and Lucie Mercier are supervising a massive bibliographic enterprise on women in Quebec for l'Institut Québécois de Recherche sur la Culture, which will be of immense value to historians.<sup>4</sup>

Collections of documents, like bibliographic aids, reveal the wealth of resources for women's history. In 1974 Michèle Jean contributed substantially to our understanding of Quebec women's recent history with her collection of documents on *Québécoises du 20e siècle* (Montréal, Editions du Jour, 1974). In English Canada, Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson followed the century-long debate over women's appropriate role in industrial society in *The Proper Sphere: Women's Place in Canadian Society* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1976); and The Canadian Women's Educational Press, a valuable ally in promoting women's studies, published *A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women* (Toronto, Women's Press, 1976), a collective effort by feminist scholars to draw a regional profile of women's past experience.

*Pioneer and Gentlewomen of British North America, 1713-1867* (Toronto, New Hogtown Press, 1980) is the first of a projected four-volume series of documents relating to women. Edited by Beth Light and Alison Prentice, *Pioneer and Gentlewomen* represents a new level of sophistication in documentary history. Its tightly-written essays prefacing sections and chapters are easily the best secondary literature available on women in pre-Confederation English Canada. Further, the structure of the book which groups documents according to stages in the "life-cycle" — now more appropriately called "life course" — suggests an important way of interpreting women's historical experience. Though many readers would prefer longer excerpts from the documents, the

*Atlantis*, 7 (Spring 1982), p. 41. See also Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York, 1979) and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Placing Women's History in History", *New Left Review*, No. 133 (May-June 1982), p. 14.

4 Also, Yolande Cohen recently identified 21 post-graduate theses on women's history out of some 423 completed theses on women in Quebec: see Yolande Cohen, "La Recherche universitaire sur les femmes au Québec, 1929-1980", *Resources for Feminist Research*, X (December 1981/January 1982), pp. 5-24.

editors understandably decided to include a wider range of material. Light and Prentice are also to be congratulated for giving the Atlantic Provinces "equal time" in this volume, though in their quest for evidence, the editors were unfortunately exposed only to the most accessible documents, thereby missing some fascinating sources of women's history in Atlantic Canada during the "Golden Age". A more rigorous search of newspapers, legal records and private papers would have yielded a richer harvest, especially in the public sphere of community and church activities.<sup>5</sup>

Prentice and Light have been criticized for not including more information on such matters as life expectancy, age of marriage, family size, literacy, years of schooling and sex ratios of the population in British North America. This information is difficult to find since demographers often omit gender as a category. Important exceptions to this generalization include Jacques Henripin, *Trends and Factors of Fertility in Canada* (Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 1972) and Hubert Charbonneau *Vie et mort de nos ancêtres* (Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1975), as well as a growing list of articles. Despite pioneering work by Michael Katz and David Gagan, offering demographic evidence on women's lives,<sup>6</sup> we still continue to rely far too often on American statistics, never really knowing if they apply to Canada or not. The intrepid scholar who offers an analysis of demographic factors as they apply to women will earn the undying gratitude of those trying to understand change over time in the lives of Canadian women.

As yet, monographs and textbooks in Canadian women's history are thin on the ground. Certainly we have nothing comparable to Carl Degler's *At Odds*:

- 5 In my search for sources on women's history in the mid-1970s, I was assisted by — in most cases — willing archivists and the *Union List of Manuscripts* but was unable to determine what women's documents really contained. For instance, women's papers were judged by what information they provided on politics and economic developments not by what they contributed to the understanding of women. Having read many of the documents since my inventory was published ("Report on the Archival Resources of the Atlantic Provinces on the Subject of Women's History", *Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women*, VII (July 1978), pp. 103-111), it becomes clear that not only do women's documents need to be identified but that identified women's sources need to be re-evaluated in the light of developments in the field of women's studies. See also Veronica Strong-Boag, "Raising Clio's Consciousness: Women's History and Archives in Canada", *Archivaria*, IV (Summer 1978), pp. 70-82.
- 6 Michael Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West* (Cambridge, 1975); David Gagan, *Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West* (Toronto, 1981). Readers of *Acadiensis* should be aware of the following sources pertaining to the Atlantic Region: Douglas F. Campbell and David C. Neice, *Ties That Bind — Structure and Marriage in Nova Scotia* (Port Credit, 1979), Sheva Medjuck, "Family and Household Composition in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Moncton, New Brunswick, 1851 to 1871", *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 4 (Summer 1979), pp. 275-86 and Medjuck's useful critique of Michael Katz's work, "The Importance of Boarding for the Structure of the Household in the 19th century: Moncton, N.B. and Hamilton, C.W.", *Histoire sociale*, No. 25 (May 1980), pp. 207-213, Lorne Tepperman, "Ethnic Variations in Marriage and Fertility: Canada

*Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present*<sup>7</sup> which combines demographic and descriptive evidence in an ambitious and audacious interpretation of women's lives over a 200-year period. In Canada, only Québécois women can boast a survey history of their experience, a tribute to the advanced level of social science methodology and to the well-established tradition of collective scholarship in Québec, as well as to the energy of the authors. Calling themselves "Le Collectif Clio", Marie Lavigne, Jennifer Stoddart, Micheline Dumont and Michèle Jean have laboured for three years — or as they prefer, 4 times 9 months — to produce *L'histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles* (Montréal, Les Quinze, 1982). More than 500 pages in length, the book chronicles the changing conditions of work, reproduction, public policy, ideology and material culture as they relate to women's lives. The authors reject the traditional periodization based on "political" events such as the Conquest and Confederation for categories they find more useful: 1617-1701, a period of "heroic" beginnings when women were relatively few and opportunities unusually numerous; 1701-1832 when women's productive lives were confined primarily to preindustrial rural homes; 1832-1900 when the male leaders of bourgeois society systematically and deliberately exorcised women from political and professional opportunities even as the collapse of the wheat economy and the rise of industry drastically transformed the productive role of women. More than half the book is concerned with the 20th century, which the authors see as offering the most significant milestones in the history of women's collective consciousness and public status — the emergence of secular suffrage and reform organizations at the beginning of the century; the long over-due acquisition of the vote in 1940; the passing of bill 16, giving women legal rights within marriage in 1964; and the beginning of the recent women's movement which the authors date from the autumn of 1969 when the Montreal Women's Liberation Movement was founded, the *Birth Control Handbook* published and more than 200 women marched in the streets in protest against the prohibition of public demonstrations in Montreal.

It is impossible in a review such as this to fully discuss all the misconceptions exploded and conclusions reached in this important book. Those who have been following the literature in the history of women in Quebec will be familiar with much of the material — Sylvio Dumas' findings concerning the origins of the

1871", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, II (1974), pp. 324-43; Patricia Thornton, "Some Preliminary Comments on the Extent and Consequences of Out-Migration from the Atlantic Region, 1870-1920", in Lewis R. Fischer and Eric W. Sager, eds., *Merchant Shipping and Economic Development in Atlantic Canada* (St. John's, 1982). Two articles published in *Acadiensis* also offer valuable clues to the patterns of women's lives: Gisa I. Hynes, "Some Aspects of the Demography of Port Royal, 1650-1755", *Acadiensis*, III, 1 (Autumn 1973), pp. 3-17, and Alan A. Brookes, "The Golden Age and the Exodus: the Case of Canning, Kings County", *Acadiensis*, XI, 1 (Autumn 1981), pp. 57-82.

7 (New York, 1980).

*filles du roi*; the work of Marta Danylewycz, Marguerite Jean and Jacqueline Bouchard on female religious communities; the impressive body of literature available on women's paid labour in Quebec.<sup>8</sup> There is also a lucid account of the legal status of women in Quebec which will be welcomed by scholars. The authors confront directly Quebec's unfortunate record in granting women equal rights in voting privileges, education, work and the law. The slow pace of secularization in education and social services, they argue, kept women in a clerically sanctioned position of subordination. Hence, the vanguard of secularly educated professional women who led the fight for women's rights in English Canada had a very weak counterpart in Catholic Quebec. Their schools and professional opportunities were constrained by structures often staffed by women but in the final analysis controlled by the male clerical hierarchy. The misogyny of male politicians, clerics and bureaucrats is a familiar phenomenon to students of women's history but the examples of patriarchy cited here from the Quebec experience should make the most seasoned male chauvinist blanche.

By any standards *L'Histoire des femmes au Québec* is a landmark publication, its flaws dwarfed by the scale of the endeavour. Several problems, however, should be mentioned. Occasionally, the organization of the material results in unnecessary repetition and authorities referred to in the text are not always cited in the bibliographies at the end of chapters and sections. Though the authors admit that the cutting edge of feminism in Quebec often emerges from non-francophone sectors, only sporadic references are made to minority women whose position in the conservative milieu of Quebec must have been exceedingly difficult. Moreover, while the authors must be commended for their innovative approach to periodization, 1760 is a starting date for a non-francophone presence in Quebec, not only of élite English ladies but also of the growing number of Irish and Scots women who the authors tell us comprised a significant proportion of the domestics and prostitutes in the 19th century. Clearly there is a chapter of women's history in Quebec behind such revelations. There is also a tendency throughout the book to see women purely as victims of patriarchal and capitalist oppression. It would be useful to have a fuller discussion of the private ways in which women exercised power and how they rationalized their second class public status. Finally, the authors rely heavily on American monographs in their interpretations of such topics as housework and post-Second World War developments in Quebec. Given the fact that Québécois women so often marched to a different drummer in the 19th and 20th centuries, more research on women's culture — that private sphere of women's lives which

8 Sylvio Dumas, *Les Filles du Roi en Nouvelle-France* (Québec, 1972), Marta Danylewycz, "Changing Relationships: Nuns and Feminism in Montreal, 1890-1925", *Histoire sociale*, No. 28 (November 1981) pp. 213-234, Marguerite Jean, *Evolution des communautés religieuses des femmes au Québec du 1639 à nos jours* (Montréal, 1977), Jacqueline Bouchard, "Facteurs de sortie des communautés religieuses du Québec", thèse de doctorat, Université de Montreal, 1970.

differs quite dramatically across ethnic, class and occupational lines — is needed. This is merely to say that like all good books, *L'Histoire des femmes au Québec* raises new questions. Given the productivity of feminist scholars in Québec, we can assume that the answers will soon be delivered.

Quebec women are also well served by Susan Mann Trofimenkoff who in her *Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1982) includes women's history in the general narrative. Such integration has been pitifully slow to develop in the historical scholarship of English Canada where the two solitudes based on "race" seem to have been replaced by solitudes based on gender. There is little excuse for this situation since journal literature abounds and several volumes of essays provide easily accessible evidence of the work accomplished in Canadian women's history. Two of these, Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, eds., *The Neglected Majority* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1977) and Marie Lavigne and Yolande Pinard, eds., *Les Femmes Dans La Société Québécoise* (Montreal, Boréal Express, 1977) have been on the market since 1977. A more recent anthology, Barbara Latham and Kathy Kess, eds., *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in British Columbia* (Victoria, Camosun College, 1980), is the fruitful result of a student summer project based at Camosun College. As with most anthologies, the articles are uneven in quality, but they testify not only to the fine work being done by students in women's history but also to the massive amount of information available on "provincial" topics in unpublished papers and theses.

In their efforts to balance the record, scholars of women's history have managed to shed new light on that most Canadian of topics — the fur trade. Recent work by anthropologist Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1980), and historian Sylvia Van Kirk, "*Many Tender Ties*": *Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg, Watson & Dwyer, 1980), has revealed the role of Amerindian women as intermediaries in the fur trade alliances that were established between native tribes and European fur trading companies. From the native perspective, liaisons with the white intruders cemented special trading relations, while Europeans valued the productive skills, language ability and political power wielded by their "country wives". Without this quasi-family interaction, the course of the Canadian fur trade would have been profoundly altered and, so too, if we accept Harold Innis's interpretation of the central role of the fur trade, would the course of Canadian history.

By focussing on the interaction between the public and private sphere and between men and women, Brown and Van Kirk offer models for the way in which historical sources — most of them written by men — can be made to render up insights on the roles and motives of women in the past. Their findings shatter any illusions we may harbour about women being passive victims of their oppression. Amerindian women consciously chose to live with white fur traders

in order to enhance their own power and to increase their share of the material wealth that resulted from the close association with European traders. It is possible as well that Indian women preferred the marriage conventions of European males to the polygamous relationships sanctioned by many tribes. That the rules of the fur trade game eventually changed to their disadvantage does not negate the fact that Amerindian women tried to carve out for themselves a privileged position in the economic system that dominated their lives. Brown and Van Kirk remind us that we should not treat all women, not even all Amerindian women, as an undifferentiated mass, since relationships varied over time and according to tribal and ethnic customs. It is this insight that points to future directions in the study of native women's history; for although we are truly privileged in having two monographs devoted to the experience of the "country wives", a danger exists that this relatively small group will be perceived as the only native women worthy of study. The vast majority of women who remained in their tribal relationships during the fur trade era require more attention. The tendency of early feminist scholars to look to Amerindian society for examples of a matriarchal "golden age" or a crucible for female oppression must gradually give way to an examination of the variety of conditions experienced by native women in the past.

In the United States much attention has been focussed on women in colonial society and the early years of the new republic. The same cannot be said of this period in Canadian women's history. Instead, scholars have leaped from the fur trade to industrial society. To some extent this focus is a result of the general interest in post-Confederation Canada in the 1970s. It is also prompted by the contemporary need to understand how we arrived at our present predicament. Despite, or perhaps because of, this present-mindedness, the debate surrounding women and industrialization is a vigorous one, informed by an impressive body of research. The tendency of women's history to shatter icons was inherent in the debate from the beginning. A paper delivered by D. Suzanne Cross at the CHA's first session on women in 1973 revealed that a significant percentage of Québécois women were in the paid industrial workforce in the 19th century and also that nuns provided day care services for working mothers.<sup>9</sup> These findings flew in the face of commonly held misconceptions about the homebound Québécois mother and the pious, secluded sisterhood. Cross's article was soon followed by *Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930* published by the Women's Press in 1974. The authors outlined within a Marxist framework the occupational dimensions of women's subordination under capitalism and underlined the importance of gender as well as class in analyzing such rarely researched topics as domestic work, prostitution, nursing and women's organized resistance to exploitation in the workplace. Meanwhile, the contours of middle class women's involvement in the public sphere in the late 19th century were

9 *Histoire sociale*, Vol. 6 (November 1973), pp. 202-223.



drawn by Veronica Strong-Boag in *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women in Canada 1893-1929* (Ottawa, National Museum of Man, 1976). Strong-Boag concluded that the "separate sphere" of voluntary activity safely drew middle class women into public life without directly threatening the power relationships in middle class families or male ascendancy in war, politics and business.

The subordination of working women in the hierarchical structures of business and unions, and the marginalization of middle class housewives in voluntary organizations were important insights that prompted further research. Wayne Roberts in *Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893-1914* (Toronto, New Hogtown Press, 1976) attempted to explain the "failure" of women to attain equality in the industrial workforce by looking at the structure of women's work experience. Since the vast majority of women in the paid labour force were young and single, and married women often worked in small firms or at piece work in the home, their work experience, Roberts argued, was too fragmented to support sustained efforts to organize against discrimination. Moreover, women's primary responsibility for home and family caused them to concentrate their reform efforts on "evils" which threatened the home rather than those which exploited women in the paid labour force.

The preoccupation with domestic issues also shaped the women's movement as it emerged in the second half of the 19th century. This theme is explored in Linda Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada* (Toronto, Women's Press, 1979). According to Kealey a "maternal feminist" ideology inspired the reform energies of most Canadian women between 1880 and 1930. In both the domestic and public spheres, she argues, middle class women justified their increased power because of their roles as mothers of the next generation rather than as individuals demanding equal rights for themselves. The distinction between equal rights feminism and maternal feminism is a useful one, though it is not always clear that women one hundred years ago made such fine definitions. Evidence from the articles in the anthology suggests that women used whatever arguments were appropriate, drawing upon evangelical, liberal and socialist rationales as well as invoking maternal feminism. The latter, it could be argued, was the most effective approach, both in dealing with middle class women who increasingly inhabited a child-oriented world, but especially in confronting men who had much to lose in both the public and private sphere if women challenged the canons of patriarchal power. Given the persuasiveness of the "separate spheres" doctrines in the late 19th century it would be surprising if women, in attempting to enhance their status, did not try to parlay their assigned sphere into a base for exercising power. As Wendy Mitchinson argues in her article on the Women's Christian Temperance Union, maternal feminism was more than a vehicle for maintaining the status quo: it often spurred women to take on public roles and to adopt ideas

such as state-enforced prohibition which had distinctly radical implications for women and for society.

It is, of course, difficult to determine whether taking the line of least resistance was the best strategy for Canadian women at the turn of the century. Most of the authors of *A Not Unreasonable Claim* imply that such an approach was wrong-headed and the evidence is clear that women achieved only partial victories: entry into the professions which imposed quotas on the number of women admitted to professional schools; bureaucratization of social services on the condition of surrender to male experts; a francophone women's movement turned inward by male-defined concepts of conservatism and nationalism; suffrage and prohibition laws which failed to usher in a brave new world of women's power over either their own sphere or in society generally. A collective sense of disappointment — and disapproval — emanates from *A Not Unreasonable Claim*. Only the maverick Flora Macdonald Denison, as described by Deborah Gorham, seems to rise above the image of the misguided society ladies who championed the cause of women and reform at the turn of the century.

The same image is offered of Canadian suffrage leaders by Carol Lee Bacchi, both in her article in *A Not Unreasonable Claim* and in her new book, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1983). Bacchi concludes that the female suffragists failed to effect a social revolution for women because "the majority never had a revolution in mind". In proving this contention, Bacchi draws a profile of 156 suffrage leaders who flourished between 1877 and 1918. These women, she concludes, represented a small Anglo-Saxon, Protestant elite, urban-based, dominated by professionals (almost 60 per cent held jobs) and wives of professionals who endorsed women's suffrage as part of a larger reform programme devoted to race regeneration, social purity and the family ideal. On the eve of the First World War, suffrage leaders still carried evangelical and temperance baggage which they dressed up in a progressive package calling for state-supported education, professionalization and bureaucratization. Significantly, in 1914 the suffrage movement in Toronto split between a small Canadian Suffrage Association, the direct descendant of Emily Stowe's equal rights-oriented Toronto Women's Literary Society founded in 1877, and the much larger National Equal Franchise Union, committed to a multiplicity of reform causes of which suffrage was only one and not the most important. Farm and labour women, Bacchi argues, were never fully integrated into what were essentially urban, professional organizations. In short, feminist ideology did not inspire a broad national movement for female suffrage. Indeed, because of the conservatism of the majority of suffrage leaders, by 1914 the female franchise became desirable, not, as has been supposed, to reward women for their contribution to the war effort, but to bring more "right thinking" people to the polls in a wartime election and to garner support for provincial parties facing an electorate which had already embraced most of the reform package promoted

by the suffragists. Having used maternal feminist arguments to justify the vote, women were left with an institutionalized double standard, a reform movement taken over by bureaucrats and professionals, and a world no longer inspired by idealism.

Bacchi's concise, lucidly-written monograph supplements Cleverdon's earlier detailed treatment of the Canadian suffrage movement.<sup>10</sup> One wishes, however, that Bacchi had Cleverdon's sense of province and region. It may well be the case that the Toronto suffrage movement split in 1914. The same bifurcation did not always occur elsewhere. A study of the suffrage movement in New Brunswick by Mary Eileen Clarke<sup>11</sup> indicates that the same people led the suffrage movement throughout the period and that social (or maternal) feminists did not supplant equal rights feminists. On the contrary, the Saint John Association was nearly destroyed by its flirtation with socialist ideas at the turn of the century; its members consistently and publicly attacked "conservative" women's clubs that did not endorse suffrage; and it refused to support Borden's Union Government scheme for partial suffrage in 1917. Evidence offered by Bacchi suggests that suffrage organizations in the western provinces shared more with their Maritime counterparts than they did with their Toronto "headquarters". Bacchi has not one reference in her bibliography to Maritime sources and only a brief discussion on the evolution of the suffrage movement in western Canada. Such an observation is not just regional carping. The suffrage movement in Canada was constrained from the beginning by provincially-defined conditions and timetables. The situation in Quebec amply demonstrates this fact. Moreover, the position of "farm" women on suffrage surely requires a more fundamental analysis than that they were tangential to urban-based suffrage organizations. The issue was, after all, larger than the specific clubs which promoted it and, as with all major "reforms", was supported for various reasons: to help the cause of farm families, to strengthen the prohibition fight, to secure healthier cities, and as an end in itself. Those busy and often much discriminated against professional women who dominated the ranks of the suffrage societies must have had more than maternal feminism in mind when they fought for political rights. No matter how they packaged it, at a very fundamental level female suffrage struck a blow at the patriarchal family — as anti-suffrage spokesmen, especially in French Canada, never tired of reminding listeners. In the final analysis, votes for women came too late. By 1917 it mattered little whether the suffrage movement was led by maternal feminists arguing for rights as women or from equal rights feminists arguing for rights as human beings. The male-dominated struc-

10 Catherine L. Cleverdon's *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto, 1950) was reprinted, with an introduction by Ramsay Cook, by the University of Toronto Press in 1974.

11 "The Saint John Women's Enfranchisement Association, 1894-1919", M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1979.

tures of industrial society were already firmly in place.<sup>12</sup>

A problem shared by most of us writing women's history is that we sometimes argue from hindsight. Women's suffrage failed to usher in an era of equality, therefore the goals of the suffragists must have been unworthy. But one does not logically follow from the other. Indeed, it might equally be argued that if corporate capitalism, consumerism, flapperism and the peace movement had not taken precedence over feminism and progressivism in the 1920s, the history of the suffrage movement would be treated differently. What we know of the later careers of the suffragists indicates a continuing interest in feminist activity, however misguided, which the "lost generation" of the 1920s and 1930s seems not to have embraced.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the undermining of the intellectual justification for separate spheres — a story well-told by Rosalind Rosenberg<sup>14</sup> — gave women few weapons with which to fight for equality from their grossly unequal starting position. Whatever the circumstances, it is the fate of women in the interwar years, not the goals of the suffragists, that historians must begin to study in order to understand the "failure" of suffrage.

As yet we have no monographic literature on women in the public sphere after the First World War. Articles by Strong-Boag, Lavigne, Stoddart and others indicate that the thrust of women's struggles for equality in the interwar years shifted as women strove to combine marriage and career, break into the professions now theoretically opened to them, influence bureaucratic structures which increasingly controlled their lives, resist discrimination in the job market and, in Quebec, struggle to attain the vote and reform of marriage laws.<sup>15</sup> These were not easy struggles and victories were few. Nor did the Second World War bring anything more than temporary opportunities to break out of traditional patterns of subordination. Ruth Pierson's valuable articles point to a pernicious role on the part of the state in treating women as a reserve army of labour during the

12 For a revealing analysis of this process see Graham S. Lowe, "Women, work and the office: the feminization of clerical occupations in Canada, 1901-1931", *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 5 (1980), pp. 361-381.

13 Mary E. Hallett, "Nellie McClung and the Fight for the Ordination of Women in the United Church of Canada", *Atlantis*, Vol. 4 (Spring 1979), pp. 2-19; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canadian Feminism in the 1920's: The Case of Nellie McClung", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 12 (Summer 1977), pp. 58-68; Rudy C. Marchildon, "The 'Persons' Controversy: The Legal Aspects of the Fight for Women Senators", *Atlantis*, Vol. 6 (Spring 1981), pp. 99-113.

14 *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, 1982).

15 Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 4 (1979), pp. 131-64; Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart, "Les travailleuses montréalaises entre les deux guerres", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 2 (1977), pp. 170-83; Jennifer Stoddart, "The Dorion Commission, 1926-1931: Quebec's Legal Elites Look at Women's Rights", in David Flaherty, ed., *Essays in The History of Canadian Law*, Vol. I (Toronto, 1981), pp. 323-357; Suzanne Buckley, "Efforts to Reduce Infant Maternity Mortality in Canada Between the Two World Wars", *Atlantis*, Vol. 2 (Spring 1977), pp. 76-84.

Second World War.<sup>16</sup> Evidence such as this and the tortuous reasoning behind the introduction of universal mothers' allowances in 1944 has prompted Veronica Strong-Boag to view state policy regarding women with a healthy feminist suspicion.<sup>17</sup>

Historical assessment of women after the Second World War is rare, though Joyce Hibbert's *War Brides* (Scarborough, Peter Martin Associates, 1978), is a compelling account through the use of oral interviews of 60 of more than 50,000 war brides who followed their husbands to Canada after the Second World War. Pat and Hugh Armstrong in *The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and Their Segregated Work* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1978) examine workforce participation of women between 1941 and 1976, while Francine Barry does the same for Quebec in *Le Travail de la femme au Québec: L'évolution de 1940 à 1970* (Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1977). A lucid account, written by a participant in the women's movement since the 1960s, is Myrna Kostash, *Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto, James Lorimer, 1980). Also of interest because it demonstrates the links between the "old" women's movement and the "new" is Cerise Morris's article on the movement for the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. Morris documents the importance of having a woman in the cabinet — Judy Lamarch — to channel the pressure from the network of women's clubs whose post-suffrage history still awaits their historian.<sup>18</sup>

In women's history education is a favourite topic since it serves as a socializing agent as well as a sensitive indicator of prevailing attitudes toward women. The work of Alison Prentice and her colleagues at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has done much to disabuse us of the notion that teaching as a profession had been a uniform blessing or even a uniform experience for

16 At last count Ruth Roach Pierson had published six articles which in the interest of her readers should be put between the covers (preferably soft and cheap) of one book. At present they can be located in the following sources: "Women's Emancipation and the Recruitment of Women into the Canadian Labour Force in World War II", *Historical Papers*, 1976, pp. 141-73; "'Home Aide': A Solution to Women's Unemployment After World War II", *Atlantis*, Vol. 2 (Spring 1977), pp. 85-97; "'Jill Canuck': CWAC of All Trades, But No 'Pistol Packing Momma'", *Historical Papers*, 1978, pp. 106-133; "Ladies or Loose Women: The Canadian Women's Army Corps in World War II", *Atlantis*, Vol. 4 (Spring 1979), pp. 245-66; "The Double Bind of the Double Standard: VD Control and the CWAC in World War II", *Canadian Historical Review*, LXII (March 1981), pp. 31-58; "Canadian Women and Canadian Mobilization during the Second World War", *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, 51 (1982), pp. 181-207.

17 Veronica Strong-Boag, "Working Women and the State: the Case of Canada, 1889-1945", *Atlantis*, Vol. 6 (Spring 1981), pp. 1-9; "Canada's Early Experiments with Income Supplements: the Introduction of Mothers' Allowances", *Atlantis*, Vol. 4 (Spring 1979), pp. 36-43; "Wages for Housework: Mothers' Allowances and the Beginnings of Social Security in Canada", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 14 (Spring 1979), pp. 24-34.

18 Cerise Morris, "'Determination and Thoroughness': The Movement for a Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada", *Atlantis*, Vol. 5 (Spring 1980), pp. 1-21.

women.<sup>19</sup> Though women came to dominate the one-room schoolhouse in English-speaking areas of Canada in the late 19th century, they did so at salaries substantially lower than those of their male counterparts. When it came to collegiate and university education, women teachers were rare and female students were often hived off into exclusively female courses such as home economics and secretarial science.

The resistance of universities in Canada to the admission of women on an equal basis with men is another grim tale. If most "official" university historians have their way, the story will never be told. For this reason, the appearance of Margaret Gillett's *We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill* (Montreal, Eden Press, 1981) is an important landmark in the history of women in Canada. Although Stanley Frost was commissioned to produce a history of McGill, Gillett set out to write a parallel volume which would do justice to women's very separate experience at the institution. The history of the "Donaldas" — the name is derived from Donald Smith whose beneficence guaranteed separate education for women at Royal Victoria College rather than in co-educational facilities — is a fascinating one. Gillett devotes more than 200 pages to women's struggle to gain access to McGill; Frost allows only 12, three of which consist of pictures. Critics have objected to Gillett's discursive style but she surely has many models in official university histories which "chronicle" the activities of every male benefactor and dean. Gillett points out that gaining admission to McGill did not mean equal access to all programs, credibility for female faculties such as food sciences and nursing, or equal treatment in extra-curricular activities. Historians tackling other institutions might do well to take a leaf out of Gillett's book in pursuing the fate of women beyond the date when they are admitted to the hallowed halls of academe.

In addition to exploring the history of women's public and working lives, Canadian scholars are now beginning to follow their British and American counterparts in focussing on the private world of women. It can be argued that because women have been relegated to a separate sphere, they do indeed have a separate culture — or more accurately separate cultures — which can be documented historically. The pursuit of women's culture is an exciting scholarly endeavour because whole new categories must be articulated for describing those aspects of women's lives which were separated from "malestream" culture. Since public documents rarely include direct evidence of women's lives,

19 Alison Prentice, "The Feminization of Teaching in British North America and Canada, 1845-1875", *Histoire sociale*, Vol. 8 (May 1975), pp. 5-20; "Towards a Feminist History of Women and Education", in David Jones *et al.*, eds., *Approaches to Educational History* (Winnipeg, 1981), pp. 39-145; Marta Danylewycz, Beth Light and Alison Prentice, "The Evolution of the Sexual Division of Labour in Teaching: A Nineteenth Century Ontario and Quebec Case Study", unpublished paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Los Angeles, December 1981.

historians must turn to private chronicles — letters, diaries, autobiographies and novels — as well as evidence from prescriptive literature and material culture in order to document women's experience.

Virtually all historical topics take on a different perspective when seen through women's eyes. This point is brought home upon a reading of Doug Owsram's *Promise of Eden* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980) where one hears only men's voices and sees only a man's frontier. The work of Eliane Silverman and Susan Jackel offers a wholly alternative perspective on the "taming of the West". Silverman has collected oral interviews from women on the Prairie frontier and her approach is a good example of the kind of research now breaking new ground in women's history. Silverman contends that women have traditionally lived split lives, one in a male-dominated culture where they were subordinated by tradition, fear, loyalty and love, and a parallel one where their actions could range the full spectrum from intimacy to power.<sup>20</sup> Her probing questions elicit women's attitudes toward uniquely female rites of passage, friendship patterns and mutual aid networks on the frontier.

In *A Flannel Shirt and Liberty* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1982), Susan Jackel reveals that while men were acquiring and ruling the west, unmarried middle-class British women were also spying out the land as a possible frontier of opportunity. Though Jackel admits that the number of "redundant" British women who came to "the last best west" is difficult to determine precisely, she argues that they formed the basis of a formidable network championing causes ranging from reform of the homestead laws to British imperial supremacy. This network was not confined only to the Canadian West. Organizations such as the Female Middle Class Emigration Society cultivated an enthusiastic readership for the books and articles which Jackel draws to our attention. One can imagine a similar study of the west through the eyes of women in eastern Canada, where enthusiasm for western horizons was also strong and organizational structures ranging from missionary societies to boards of education sponsored the feminine move westwards. Jackel has also edited two more reprints: Georgina Binnie-Clark's *Wheat and Woman* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1979) and Elizabeth B. Mitchell's *In Western Canada Before the War* (Saskatoon, Western Producer Prairie Books, 1981), both of which are enriched by Jackel's solid introductions.<sup>21</sup>

20 Eliane Leslau Silverman, "In Their Own Words: Mothers and Daughters in the Alberta Frontier, 1890-1929", *Frontiers*, Vol. 2 (Summer 1977), pp. 37-44, "Preliminaries to a Study of Women in Alberta, 1890-1929", *Canadian Oral History Association Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1978), pp. 22-26, "Women and the Victorian Work Ethic on the Alberta Frontier: Prescription and Description", in Howard Palmer and Donald Smith, eds., *The New Provinces: Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1905-1980* (Vancouver, 1980), pp. 91-99.

21 Also useful are *A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: The Recollections of Susan Allison*, edited by Margaret Ormsby (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1976) and *God's Galloping Girl: The Peace River Diaries of Monica Storrs, 1929-1931*, edited by W.L.

Another valuable primary source are the youthful diaries of Elizabeth Smith edited by Veronica Strong-Boag as *A Woman With A Purpose: The Diaries of Elizabeth Smith, 1872-1884* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980). Known in later life as the wife of Adam Shortt and a volunteer activist par excellence, Elizabeth Smith trained as a medical doctor, one of the first Canadian women to do so. Her diaries chronicle her adolescent stint at teaching school and her subsequent medical training, both experiences constrained by the limited sphere to which women were confined in the late 19th century. Though she completed her medical degree, she retreated into marriage and volunteer work, never using her hard-won professional skills as a vehicle for material independence and feminist reforms. Smith's experience was not unusual for the first generation of professional women who were forced to choose between a career and marriage, but it is from diaries such as this that we see how youthful feminist idealism could be blunted by social conventions so deeply entrenched as to be virtually invisible.

Biographies of Canadian women of the calibre of Maria Tippet's *Emily Carr* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1979) are rare. However, scholars of women's history welcome a new edition of Elsie Gregory MacGill's *My Mother The Judge* (Toronto, Peter Martin Associates, 1981). Originally published in 1955, the biography of early feminist reformer Helen Gregory MacGill by her equally pioneering daughter has a spirited introduction by Naomi Black who situates the MacGill women in the context of Canadian feminism. Another noteworthy publication is Michael Hayden's collection of Hilda Neatby's writings, *So Much To Do, So Little Time* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1983), a title taken from Neatby's speech on women to the Canadian Federation of University Women in 1952. Hilda Neatby (1904-1975) was the heir to the "victories" of the suffrage generation and faced her share of sexism as she pursued a career as a historian in the interwar years. Her triumphs were many. She rose to the headship of the History Department at the University of Saskatchewan, served on the Massey Royal Commission on the Arts, published a widely-acclaimed critique of education, *So Little For the Mind* (1953), and in 1962 became the first woman president of the Canadian Historical Association. Hayden rightly concludes that Neatby was an "old" feminist who spoke of duties rather than a "new" feminist who demanded rights,

Morton with Vera Fast (Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 1979). For other aspects of British female immigration see Suzanne Buckley, "British female immigration and Imperial Development: experiments in Canada, 1885-1931", *Hecate: Women's Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 3 (Jan. 1977), pp. 26-40; Barbara Roberts, "A Work of Empire: Canadian Reformers and British Female Immigration", in Linda Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim* (Toronto, 1979), pp. 185-201; "Sex, Politics and Religion: Controversies In Female Reform Work in Montreal, 1881-1919", *Atlantis*, Vol. 6, (Fall, 1980), pp. 25-38; Marilyn Barber, "The Women  
21 Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestic for Ontario Homes, 1870-1930", *Ontario History*, LXXII (September 1980), pp. 148-172.



but she had a historical understanding of "feminism" and "the women's movement", terms which she herself used. This, along with her Presbyterian discipline and regional perspective, enabled her to withstand the chauvinist slights which often came her way.

Research in women's health and sexuality has revealed a continuing concern on the part of women for their treatment by men and offers compelling reasons why they should be thus preoccupied. Wendy Mitchinson, for instance, has discovered that at least some doctors at the turn of the century felt that women's mental states could be "improved" by gynecological operations.<sup>22</sup> Though Edward Shorter has recently tried to rescue the tarnished image of the medical profession in *A History of Women's Bodies* (New York, Basic Books, 1982) it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that doctors were not always as professional as they should have been and that a few more women doctors on the staff of hospitals might have averted more than a few knife-wielding experts. Obviously not all women knuckled under to the conspiratorial blandishments of doctors, lawyers and clergymen. Angus McLaren in his article on birth control in Canada concludes that despite the law and public opinion women continued to try to limit the number of children they were forced to bear, and demographic trends in the 20th century indicate that they were often successful.<sup>23</sup> We still await an analysis of women's perspective on the changing contours of the family but those pursuing the elusive evidence of women's culture will almost certainly soon be in a position to give us the "inside" story.<sup>24</sup>

The difficulty for women of combining productive and reproductive roles in a world where the public and private spheres were becoming so sharply differentiated resulted in significant changes in the life courses of many women in the 19th century. In industrial settings women tended to marry later and a larger number never married at all. Not until the Second World War did it become acceptable — though still not the norm — for married women to work outside the home unless they had to.<sup>25</sup> The conflict between "industrial time" and

22 Wendy Mitchinson, "Historical Attitudes Toward Women and Childbirth", *Atlantis*, Vol. 4 (Spring 1979), pp. 13-34, "Gynecological Operations on the Insane", *Archivaria*, X (1980), pp. 105-14, "R.M. Bucke: A Victorian Asylum Superintendent", *Ontario History*, LXII (December 1981), pp. 239-254, "Gynecological Operations on Insane Women: London Ontario, 1895-1901", *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 15 (Spring 1982), pp. 467-484.

23 Angus McLaren, "Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870-1920", *Canadian Historical Review*, LVIX (September 1978), pp. 319-40.

24 For insights into 19th century legal attitudes, see Constance Backhouse, "Shifting Patterns in Nineteenth Century Canadian Custody Law", in David H. Flaherty, ed., *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, Vol. I (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1981), "Nineteenth Century Canadian Rape Law, 1800-92", in Flaherty, ed., *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, Vol. 2 (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1983).

25 On this topic see Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "Weaving it Together: Life Cycle and the Industrial Experience of Female Cotton Workers in Quebec, 1910-1950", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 7

"family time" is a fruitful subject for examination. So too are the changing patterns of housework over the past 200 years. As yet we in Canada have nothing comparable to the work of Susan Strasser or Dolores Hayden.<sup>26</sup> We do, however, have Meg Luxton's *More Than A Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home* (Toronto, Women's Press, 1980). Through oral interviews, participant observation and documentary research, Luxton follows the changing circumstances of women's work in the home as it has been transformed by technology, municipal services and human values in Flin Flon, Manitoba, since 1927. Pat and Hugh Armstrong devote a chapter to housework in their useful survey of the literature of women's work entitled appropriately *The Double Ghetto* but they only briefly mention the problem of the double day in *A Working Majority: What Women Must Do For Pay* (Ottawa, Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1983). Bonnie Fox, ed., *Hidden in the Household: Women's Domestic Labour Under Capitalism* (Toronto, Women's Press, 1980) is an attempt by Marxist scholars to define "the peculiar nature" of domestic labour in capitalist society. These papers are a useful contribution to the domestic labour debate in Marxist circles, but unfortunately they offer little "grounded" historical analysis of the Canadian experience. Laura C. Johnson (with Robert E. Johnson) in *The Seam Allowance: Industrial Home Sewing in Canada* (Toronto, Women's Press, 1982) discuss the continued existence of women's piece work in the home and suggest a fruitful area for further historical research.

One area of study where women are only beginning to emerge from the grey mists of neglect is Atlantic Canada. Sadly, little has been published on women's history in the Atlantic Region since Ruth Pierson reported on the state of the field in 1977. As Ernest Forbes implied in his historiographical article published in 1978, the lack of concrete information can lead to the most glaringly ridiculous generalizations when scholars attempt to include the region in their "national" studies. Only one article on a woman has appeared in *Acadiensis* since the journal began publication.<sup>27</sup> Other regional periodicals, such as *Them Days*, *Cape Breton's Magazine*, *The Island Magazine* and the *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly* (now *Review*) have a better track record, while several unpublished honours and masters theses contribute substantially to our

(Spring 1981), pp. 113-126. See also, Bettina Bradbury, "The Family Economy and Work in an Industrializing City: Montreal in the 1870s", *Historical Papers*, 1979, pp. 71-96 and Susan Trofimenkoff, "One Hundred and Two Muffled Voices: Canada's Industrial Women in the 1880s", *Atlantis*, Vol. 3 (Fall 1977), pp. 66-82.

26 Susan Strasser, *Never Done: History of American Housework* (New York, 1982); Dolores Hayden, *Grand Domestic Revolution* (Cambridge, 1981).

27 Ruth Pierson, "Women's History: The State of the Art in Atlantic Canada", *Acadiensis*, VII, 1 (Autumn 1977), pp. 121-131; E.R. Forbes, "In Search of a Post-Confederation Maritime Historiography, 1900-1967", *Acadiensis*, VIII, 1 (Autumn, 1978), pp. 1-21; Lois D. Kernaghan, "A Man and His Mistress: J.F.W. DesBarres and Mary Cannon", *Acadiensis*, XI, 1 (Autumn, 1981), pp. 23-42.

knowledge of women in the region.<sup>28</sup> Amateur historians have tackled the questions left begging by university-based scholars. John Edward Belliveau has offered us *The Splendid Life of Albert Smith and the Women He Left Behind* (Windsor, Lancelot Press, 1976) and James D. Davison has explored the contexts of female culture in the 19th century Annapolis Valley in *Alice of Grand Pré* (Wolfville, Acadia University, 1981), and *Eliza of Pleasant Valley* (Wolfville, privately published, 1983).

An important monograph on women in Atlantic Canada has been written by folklorist Hilda Chaulk Murray who has used oral interviews to reconstruct the life course of women who comprise *More Than 50%* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1979) of the productive labour in the outport village of Elliston, Newfoundland. Murray describes in detail the various back-breaking tasks performed by women in the fish-based economy and also traces kin and community networks which functioned in times of crisis. Particularly valuable is her treatment of customs surrounding such events as courtship, marriage, childbirth and death. Rituals and rationales testify to women's participation in defining culture in the sense of assigning meaning and value to human actions. Unfortunately, Murray does not get a close look at men's culture. Before a final judgement is made on the status of outport women, a sensitive tape recorder should be placed in such exclusively male domains as the fishing boat and the Orange Lodge. Two other ground-breaking studies are Joyce Nevitt's *White Caps and Black Bands* (St. John's, Jespersion Printing Ltd. 1978) on the nursing profession in Newfoundland to 1934 and Linda Squiers Hansen *Those Certain Women* (Fredericton, Associated Alumnae of UNB, 1982) on the alumnae society of the University of New Brunswick.

The literary heritage of Maritime women is rich, but until recently has been overshadowed by such obvious names as Lucy Maud Montgomery and Margaret Marshall Saunders. Montgomery and Saunders are certainly worthy of our interest. *My Dear Mr. M.: Letters to G.B. MacMullen from L.M. Montgomery*, edited by F.W.P. Bolger and Elizabeth R. Epperly (Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980), is tremendously revealing of the "real" struggles of Montgomery as a writer and as a woman. A novel which deserves to be more widely distributed is Maria Amelia Fytche, *Kerchiefs to Hunt Souls* (Sackville, R.P. Bell Library, Mount Allison University, 1980), originally published in Boston in 1895. Carrie MacMillan's sensitive introduction locates Fytche's literary and feminist perspectives which are surprisingly "modern", reflecting a side to Maritime women that has scarcely been imagined.

28 Mary Eileen Clarke, "The Saint John Women's Enfranchisement Association, 1894-1919", M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1979; Denise Hansen, "Sisters Unite: The United Baptist Women's Missionary Movement, 1867-1914", B.A. Honours Essay, Acadia University, 1979; Peter D. Lambly, "Towards a 'Living Wage': The Minimum-Wage Campaign for Women in Nova Scotia, 1920-1935", Honours Essay, Dalhousie University, 1977; Karen Sanders, "Margaret Marshall Saunders", M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1978.

The Atlantic region may be short on histories of women but the documentary evidence is abundant, particularly in the form of diaries and reminiscences, some of which are gradually finding their way into print.<sup>29</sup> Excerpts from Mary Bradley's experience in colonial New Brunswick have been published in *Atlantis*, as have the reminiscences of Loyalist matriarch Elizabeth Litchenstein Johnston.<sup>30</sup> A brief passage from the diary of Susan Woodman of Alberton, P.E.I. can be found in *The Island Magazine*, No. 3 (Fall-Winter 1977). Non-Entity Press has reproduced the diary of Loyalist Sarah Frost in a reprint of Walter Bates, *Kingston and the Loyalists of the "Spring-fleet" of 1783* (Woodstock, 1980) and "The Grandmother's Story" is appended to the reprint of Peter Fisher's *The First History of New Brunswick* (Woodstock, 1981). Mrs. Frances Beavan offers an imperial view of colonial life for men and women in *Life in the Backwoods of New Brunswick* (St. Stephen, Print'n Press Ltd., 1980), originally published in 1845. Charlotte Gourlay Robinson's *Pioneer Profiles of New Brunswick Settlers* (Belleville, Mika Publishing, 1980) draws upon material some of which has been lost since these sketches first appeared in the 1940s. Gourlay was New Brunswick's first woman pharmacist, and originally prepared these brief profiles of New Brunswick women for CBC radio. It would be useful to know more of Charlotte Gourlay Robinson as well as of the women whose lives she chronicled. Modern Maritime women have not been as enthusiastic as their "foremothers" in preserving their life stories, though there are noteworthy exceptions. Helen Creighton's *A Life in Folklore* (Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975) is a valuable autobiography of a Nova Scotia "institution", and Carrie Best provides her perspective on growing up as a black girl in New Glasgow in *That Lonesome Road* (New Glasgow, Clarion Publishing Co. Ltd., 1977).

Newfoundland women have produced a virtual avalanche of life stories. These include Helen Porter's *Below the Bridge: A Memoir of Growing Up on the Southside* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1979) and Audrey M. Tizzard's *On Sloping Ground: Reminiscences of Outport Life in Notre Dame Bay, Nfld.*, ed. J.D.A. Widdowson (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1979). Eileen M. Williamson has published an opinionated view by someone "from away" who became editor of the first newspaper in the mining town of Springdale in *Outport: A Newfoundland Journal* (Scarborough, Medallion Books, 1980), while Jessie Miffen provides revealing details of professional careers open to women in *Be You a Library Missionary Miss?* (St. John's, Harry Cuff Publications, 1981).

29 A project to collect Maritime women's private chronicles is presently being undertaken by Toni Laidlaw (Dalhousie University), Donna Smyth (Acadia University) and myself. A report on that project has recently been published: Margaret Conrad, *Recording Angels: The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1750-1950* (Ottawa, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1983).

30 Bradley, *Atlantis*, Vol. 7 (Fall 1981), pp. 92-101; Johnston, *Atlantis*, Vol. 4 (Spring 1979), pp. 106-124 and Vol. 5 (Fall 1979), pp. 154-182.

Two accounts by "pioneers" demonstrate the opportunities offered to women in pre-Confederation Newfoundland and Labrador: Ilka D. Dickman, *Appointment to Newfoundland* (Manhattan, Kansas, Sunflower University Press, 1981) and Mina Hubbard, *A Woman's Way through Unknown Labrador* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1981). Dickman was a doctor who served as a district nurse(!) in Newfoundland in the early years of the Second World War. Her diary is a good primary source on gender roles and the critical perspective of a professional outsider on everything from midwifery to communications is candidly refreshing. Mira Hubbard, like Dickman, was not a Newfoundlander but the indomitable spirit of this Ontario-born American woman inspired Pierre Berton to write a preface to this reprint of her 1908 account of her Labrador odyssey. Widow Hubbard crossed the Labrador peninsula in 1905 in order to vindicate her husband who died in the attempt the previous year. Hubbard has an eye for detail and her story is a good example of the genre of adventure literature so popular in the early part of the century.

While English-speaking women in Atlantic Canada seem to have been prolific "scribblers", Acadian women were less likely to have kept written records. A fascinating exception was "Marichette" the pen-name of Emilie C. LeBlanc whose letters to the editor of *L'Évangéline* have been published in Pierre Gérin and Pierre Marie Gérin, *Marichette, Lettres acadiennes — 1895-1898* (Sherbrooke, Les Éditions Naaman, 1982). Among other things, Marichette discussed women's suffrage and criticized the Acadian preoccupation with genealogy. Her refreshing perspective suggests a rich harvest to be reaped in the history of Acadian women. Unfortunately little research has yet been done. The recent anthology, Jean Daigle, ed. *Les Acadiens des Maritimes* (Moncton, Centre d'études acadiennes, 1980) offers only fleeting glances at Acadian women. Jean-Claude Dupont in *Histoire populaire de l'Acadie* (Québec, Leméac, 1978) provides valuable information on the feminine material culture of Acadie while collective biographies — including Edith Commeau Tufts, *Acadiennes de Clare* (n.p., 1977) and Therese Lemieux and Gemma Caron, *Silhouettes Acadiennes* (Campbellton, Fédération des dames d'Acadie, 1981) — have kept the memory and experience of individual women alive. Prince Edward Island women have been similarly served by the Zonta Club of Charlottetown whose members have researched the biographies in *Outstanding Women of Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown, 1981).

Native women in the Atlantic region are at last beginning to see the shape of their history. A study by Ellice B. Gonzalez, *Changing economic roles for Micmac men and women: an ethnohistorical analysis* has been published by the National Museum in its Mercury Series (Ottawa, 1981), while Ruth Holmes Whitehead's *Micmac Quillwork: Micmac Indian Techniques of Porcupine Quill Decoration, 1600-1950* (Halifax, Nova Scotia Museum, 1982), has raised the material culture of Micmac women to the level of high art. Finally, Johanna Brand's piece of investigative journalism on a Micmac woman who "went down

the road" from Shubenacadie to Wounded Knee, brings the brutal facts of life of Amerindian women clearly into focus in *The Life and Death of Anna Mae Asquash* (Toronto, James Lorimer, 1978).

The foregoing survey indicates some of the ground covered by Canadian women's history over the past decade. New areas defined for study promise to keep scholars working for at least a century: women's cultures as they intersect with class, ethnicity and region; women's protest and accommodation within male-dominated structures; men's attitudes toward women as they are shaped by doctrines of patriarchy and masculinity. And "old chesnuts" of Canadian history will also face sharp scrutiny in the near future.

The study of religion and the church in Canada will surely be among those topics transformed by women's history. Scholars have often noted that the churches in the vanguard of the social gospel movement also produced many of the early feminists. Yet the influence of women on the social gospel in Canada has not been fully examined, nor has the role of women in the emergence of the evangelical churches in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In the realm of intellectual history the seemingly contradictory role of the churches as vehicles for the emancipation of women and as props to the status quo has not been explored in the Canadian context, nor has the impact on theological beliefs of the many feminists who embraced such doctrines at the turn of the century.<sup>31</sup>

Even political history — that bastion of male domination and preoccupation — will take on a different appearance under the influence of feminist re-vision. Barbara Roberts has already cleverly exposed Donald Creighton's masculine biases in his biography of John A. Macdonald,<sup>32</sup> and similar critiques could well be made of many other biographers who judge the private sphere only as it relates to the public career. Another area drawing the attention of researchers is the role of women in third party movements in Canada.<sup>33</sup> Is it just coincidence that once women received the vote the old two-party system became fragmented

31 Michèle Lacombe, "Theosophy and the Canadian Idealist Tradition: A Preliminary Exploration", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 17 (Summer 1982), pp. 100-118. See also, Christopher Headon, "Women and Organized Religion in Mid and Late Nineteenth Century Canada", *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, Vol. 20 (March-June 1978), pp. 3-15; Wendy Mitchinson, "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Towards Independence", *Atlantis*, Vol. 2 (Spring 1977), pp. 57-75. For influential American work, see Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York, 1977), Barbara Berg, *The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism, The Woman and the City 1800-1860* (New York, 1978), Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism and Temperance in Nineteenth Century America* (Middletown, Conn., 1981).

32 Barbara Roberts, "'They Drove Him to Drink'. . . Donald Creighton's Macdonald and His Wives", *Canada: An Historical Magazine* (December 1975), pp. 50-64.

33 John Manley, "Women and the Left in the 1930s, The Case of The Toronto CCF Women's Joint Committee", *Atlantis*, Vol. 5 (Spring 1980), pp. 100-119; Angus McLaren, "'What Has

and that beginning in the 1920s Canadians were treated with parties and movements variously titled Progressive, Maritime Rights, CCF, Communist, Social Credit, Reconstruction and Union Nationale? What part did women play not only in founding these movement-parties, but also in voting for them? How were women treated in the structures of parties, new and old? The answers to these questions promise to re-invigorate a field badly in need of revision.

We also need to understand the relationship of women to labour unions. Though it is still commonplace to claim that women are slow to organize and uniformly discriminated against by male-dominated unions, enough evidence exists of women's courage on the picket lines and participation in union executives to require a reassessment of the topic.<sup>34</sup> It is important to explore how women's segregated work affected their sense of power and how behaviour of women in the labour force differed across occupational and ethnic categories. Since the notion of equal pay for equal work was defined well before the First World War, we also need to look more closely at the methods used to marginalize women in unions and the ideology used — by both women and men — to justify it. No doubt a closer look at women's position in working class households and the values shaping working class culture will help us answer these important questions.

Family history, still in its infancy in Canada, bears few of the marks of women's history. Incredibly, the field has emerged without a sense of women's position in families and households.<sup>35</sup> It is within families that societal values are mediated, reshaped and reproduced, and women's changing influence in this process needs to be better understood. Families, of course, change over time and this change must be analyzed in relation to both women and men. Even the meaning of family may differ according to gender. It can be argued, for instance, that under certain circumstances, men's families are nuclear while women's families are more extended, reaching out to incorporate distant blood relations. We have little information as yet about the experience of girls in the

This Got to do with Working Class Women?" Birth Control and the Canadian Left, 1900-1939", *Histoire sociale*, No. 28 (November 1981), pp. 435-454; Deen Beeby, "Women in the Ontario C.C.F., 1940-1950", *Ontario History*, LXXIV, (December 1982), pp. 258-283. On women in politics see M. Janine Brodie and Jill McCalla Vickers, *Canadian Women in Politics: an Overview* (Ottawa, 1982).

34 Michelle Lapointe, "Le syndicat catholique des allumetières de Hull, 1919-1924", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, Vol. 32 (mars 1979), pp. 603-28; Joan Sangster, "The 1907 Bell Telephone Strike: Organizing Women Workers", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, Vol. 3 (1978), pp. 109-30; Star Rosenthal, "Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver, 1900-1915", *BC Studies*, XLI (1979), pp. 36-55; Eileen Suffrin, *The Eaton Drive: The Campaign to Organize Canada's Largest Department Store, 1948 to 1952* (Toronto, 1982).

35 Rayna Rapp, Ellen Ross and Renate Bridenthal, "Examining Family History", *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 5 (Spring 1979), pp. 174-199; Emily M. Nett, "Canadian Families in socio-historical perspective", *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 6 (Summer 1980), pp. 239-260.

family context, a significant omission since the household has served so consistently as women's domain. Deborah Gorham has recently published *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*<sup>36</sup> which draws upon British sources but we need a similar study for Canada where class and society for the same period were markedly different. Families and households are also the settings where power relationships are established by means both peaceful and violent, legal and illegal. These power relations and their public manifestations must be studied historically; so, too, the concept of motherhood as it is defined in various cultures.<sup>37</sup>

Ethnic and migration studies will also benefit from a feminist perspective.<sup>38</sup> All too often, one looks in vain for a breakdown by gender in tables on immigration. Such information provides important clues to questions of culture and assimilation as well as motivation for uprooting. More important, women often experience migration differently from men and their stories must also be told. Similarly, studies of rural outmigration frequently discuss only men on the move, though census figures suggest that it was often women who led the stampede to the cities where they could receive wages for the jobs they traditionally performed without pay at home.

It would be possible to go on indefinitely listing areas to be challenged by a feminist point of view. What is clear is that the hearty grasp of Canadian women's history in 1983 has far exceeded its tentative reach in 1973. Though a few purists may be dismayed by the melange of activities and methodologies comprising the field, its eclectic quality is part of its strength in re-viewing a world too long controlled — and therefore defined — by half the human race.

MARGARET CONRAD

36 (Bloomington, Indiana, 1982).

37 Canadian scholars wondering how family history and women's history interact would do well to turn to two British monographs: Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-1939* (Montreal, 1980) and Diana Gittins, *Fair Sex: Social Change and Family Structure: Women, Work and the Decline of Family Size, 1900-1939* (London, 1982).

38 See a special issue of *Ethnic Studies*, XIII, 1 (1981) devoted to ethnicity and femininity and edited by Danielle Juteau-Lee and Barbara Roberts.

### Canada's Naval War

ONE OF CANADA'S most remarkable military achievements was its contribution to the Allied Victory in the Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1945. From a pre-war force of 11 warships and 1,800 professionals, by 1945 the Royal Canadian Navy grew to include more than 450 ships of various types and nearly 100,000 all ranks. The RCN had assumed sole responsibility for anti-submarine escort of