

given its most sustained treatment in the chapter "Pioneers and Suffragists." As historian Veronica Strong-Boag<sup>1</sup> has noted, scholarship on Canadian feminism has moved through at least three stages, from the virtually hagiographic through to the historically contextual studies which mark the best work today. Unfortunately, the chapter "Pioneers and Suffragists" relies overwhelmingly on materials generated out of the second stage of scholarship, which is characterized by an evaluation of the arguments and actions of first-wave feminist against a specific set of contemporary norms. By failing to engage the actual historical realities which shaped these women's lives, 'second stage' historians have produced a distorted picture of both their motivations and their possibilities, reducing to a middle-class 'maternalism' what were actually quite radical demands to have the public sphere become accountable to

women's lives. When Frances Willard of the WCTU issued the order "to make the world more homelike" she was not talking about putting antimacassars into the factories. She was calling for the development of caring cooperative socialist communities, of the kind which figure so prominently in the demands of many feminists today. An essential corrective to this sort of misreading is Dolores Hayden's *The Grand Domestic Revolution*;<sup>2</sup> by employing her category of "material feminism," the analysis presented in this chapter could have been deepened considerably. However, all that was required was to apply the insights of other chapters regarding the ambiguities facing women seeking social reform today to the development of first-wave feminism. What better compliment to a text's depth and sophistication than to say it provides its own best corrective?

*Changing Patterns: Women in Canada*

is more than a welcome and valuable addition to the study of women in Canada. It is an important developmental benchmark which substantiates the centrality of women to Canadian life, and their ongoing refusal to accept the innumerable limitations upon them which patriarchal society seeks to impose.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Veronica Strong-Boag, "Ever a Crusader: Nellie McClung, First-Wave Feminist" in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, Ed. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986), p. 178.

<sup>2</sup>Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1987).

<sup>3</sup>I wish this text had been available when I was an undergraduate. Joanna Boehner's chapter alone would have saved years of therapy!

## CANADIAN WOMEN: A History

Alison Prentice, Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson, Naomi Black. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988.

### Clara Thomas

The six scholars who wrote *Canadian Women: A History* call their work a collective and, as they describe the process by which their book came into being, it was one, in the best meaning of that loosely descriptive word:

*Chapters were initially written by one or two of us; then, gathered around seminar tables and dining-room tables, or by phone and mail, we all discussed—and often vigorously debated—every idea, word and punctuation mark along the way .... In the end we hardly knew who had written what, or where a particular idea for a change of direction might have originated.*

Accustomed to viewing with misgivings all projected plans for such committee projects, I am astonished and awed by the seamlessness of the finished book. It is a triumph of cooperation, dedication, scholarship and writing skill.

The text itself runs to slightly over 400

pages, the appendices and index to almost another hundred. The book is divided into four major and chronological sections: "The Founding Mothers: Beginnings to the Mid-Nineteenth Century;" "The New Pioneers: The Mid-Nineteenth Century to the End of the Great War;" "The Promised Land? The End of the Great War to the Beginning of World War II;" and "The Unfinished Revolution: World War II to the Charter of Rights." Each section's introduction sets forth its shape and outlines its overall thesis which is then ex-

panded in several chapters. The whole is embellished and much enlivened by numerous well-chosen and witty photographs. Their choosing was obviously a real bonus of enjoyment to the authors: each illustration fits closely, tellingly and adds a further dimension of visual comment to its accompanying text.

A pleasure to hold and a pleasure to browse through. What then of closer reading? The introductory sentence to Part I indicates a dominant characteristic of the whole: "Aataentsic, according to the Hurons, was the great mother." This is a social and cultural history. Though it partakes of the political, constitutional, statistical, all the convenient sub-sets of the discipline, its over-riding effectiveness is in its personalized, often affectionately anecdotal style. We are never doomed to an endless tedium of dates, facts and figures; the text is constantly enlivened by the names and exploits of individual women. The concept of sisterhood is an underlying, nourishing foundation to the whole. And over-riding all is the authors' constant, careful awareness of the patriarchal quality of the vast bulk of primary sources from early days to the present. They are feminists, naturally, but they do not ride one particular feminist ideology:

*We hope to illuminate the history of women in Canada in all its diversity.*



*Often faced with enormous difficulties, sometimes treated with the most cruel injustice in communities that were for the most part decidedly patriarchal, Canadian women struggled to survive, to contribute and to make their lives meaningful. We study their lives because women have been integral to Canada's history. What they were and did made all the difference.*

The book is testimony to the astonishing amount of research in the field done in Canada in the last two decades. It was the late sixties before historians generally (but by no means unanimously) conceded that Women's History was not only a valid discipline but also a wide-open area of opportunity for enterprising scholars. Now, this volume, documented from the work of many, the most pertinent of whom are listed in its Selected Bibliography, is ample evidence of the energy, industry and insight of workers in the field. Its very existence is a source of great satisfaction, perhaps especially to those women who, like myself, in their

early careers could only dream of such a major and speedy development.

The scope of these 400 pages is, of course, huge. What the authors attempt and what they deliver is a general survey history, an enormously valuable tool for all Women's Studies courses, all general Canadian History courses and, because of its stress on personalities, an engrossing book for the general reader. Decades of work are still to come. The volume *Quebec Women: A History*, written by Montreal's Clio group of scholars, whose English translation was published concurrently with *Canadian Women: A History*, already provides a very large expansion of the field. There will be, to cite only one instance among many, massively growing bodies of work done on immigrant women in the post-World War II period, and particularly, I should think, on Dutch, Italian and Asiatic women.

Native Women's Studies, both Indian and Inuit, are still in their infancy. The authors are rightly wary of extrapolating twentieth century anthropological findings to firm conclusions about the women

of our more remote past: "It is only with the most imaginative use of fragmentary sources that we are able to construct a picture of those worlds that we, perhaps, have not quite lost." But we can certainly hope — and on the evidence of this work be confident — that future scholars will open the doors to a much increased understanding of our native women's roles in the nineteenth century and twentieth centuries, right up to our own time. The authors have done their best to obviate the criticism usually levelled at all of our written history — that it is the product of an overwhelmingly white, middle-class mind-set; time and further expansion of the field will ensure that such criticism is increasingly meaningless. Meanwhile, this work is a superb and indispensable tool for Women's Studies courses and a source book for any reader who is interested in Canadian women, their trials and their triumphs. Its index alone would make a good starting place for an Encyclopaedia of Canadian Women, not such a bad idea, perhaps, for a future, and equally committed enterprise.

## **OPENING THE CAGE: Stories of Church and Gender**

Edited by Margaret Ann Franklin and Ruth Sturmeij Jones. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987.

## **SISTERS IN SPIRIT: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective**

Edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

## **CLERGY WOMEN AND THEIR WORLDVIEWS**

Martha Long Ice. New York Praeger, 1987.

## **Louise H. Mahood**

Many women experience some sort of divine force or forces. Many words are used to describe it: such as goddess, female principle, Anat, Baal, God, Y-w-h, Christ, Allah, Buffalo Women to name

but a few. None of these words adequately describe, name or characterize the divinity we experience. Men's attempt to name the divine has not been any better, but unfortunately has become the norm of most western religious experience. In other words, the way men understand God and organize themselves is how we have been taught to speak about God and

structure our places of worship respectively.

*Opening the Cage, Sisters in Spirit and Clergy Women and their Worldviews* are three distinctive studies about women's struggle to work within their patriarchal Christian churches. These books do not offer alternatives to their churches. They do, however, confirm that while our history binds us to our oppression, our religion binds us to our history.

Margaret Ann Franklin and Ruth Sturmeij Jones have edited *Opening the Cage* to focus on church and gender issues. All of the writers (13 women and 3 men) live in Australia or New Zealand, and belong to the Church of England, the Roman Catholic or the United Church. The parameters of selection focused not on blaming men for oppression but on recognizing that women have colluded in this oppression. It would be unfair to concentrate on one or two chapters simply because each contributor has a unique perspective to share. Suffice it to say that 14 of the 16 writers are over 45 years old, and many of them have risked their professional futures by standing up for the rights of women to work along side men in professional church work. What makes these stories unique is the fact that the

