of this study: marriage and the family, the rhetoric of ambivalence, women and work, and the "New Woman" novels of the latter part of the century.

The foregrounding of lesser-known writers such as Harriet Martineau, Mrs Oliphant, Mrs Humphrey Ward, and Charlotte Mary Yonge, among others, makes this a very useful collection, but it is not without its problems. Thompson's basic thesis is flawed by undiscussed assumptions about the feminist positions of the canonical few: George Eliot, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and Elizabeth Gaskell. If the non-canonical novelists are complicated and conflicted, Thompson implies in her introduction, then the canonical authors are both simpler and more palatable to contemporary feminist sensibilities. None of these canonical writers can be considered feminist in any modern sense, however; Eliot, for example, refused to sign Barbara Bodichon's petition in support of the Married Woman's Property Bill in 1854. Charlotte Brontë expresses a strong sense of woman's proper place in *Shirley*, when the eponymous character refuses a proposal of marriage: "I will not accept the hand that cannot hold me in check." Similar assumptions about the canonical authors pervade the subsequent essays; Valerie Sanders, for example, in her contribution "Marriage and the antifeminist woman novelist" states that both Eliot and Charlotte Brontë "usually supply their heroines with second opportunities for [marital] contentment." Lucy Snowe, Romola di Bardi, Maggie Tulliver and Gwendolyn Grandcourt all spring instantly to mind; where is each one's second chance at happiness? Anne Humphreys in her essay "Breaking Apart: The Early Victorian Divorce Novel" categorizes Anne Brontë's *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* as belonging to that trope where "a brutal and/or egregiously adulterous husband is repeatedly excused, forgiven, and often nursed by the heroic wife until finally he or she dies...." While Helen Huntingdon does in fact nurse her abusive husband Arthur on his deathbed, to categorize *Tenant* so simply is to ignore the radical nature of the text: despite her fundamental lack of any personal rights, Helen escapes with her child instead of excusing and forgiving. Blanket statements such as these detract from the reliability of the book: if the better-known writers are treated in such fashion, can the respective essay-writers be trusted on the less well-known texts?

Despite these serious caveats, *Victorian Women Writers on the Woman Question* remains an interesting and useful collection, and Thompson's stated intention of "expanding the limited landscape of Victorian novels by women, focusing renewed and serious attention on the women writers forgotten or neglected by literary history, and in the process also expanding and radically reevaluating our reading of 'the Victorian'" is a worthy one. The woman question was one of the major anxieties of the Victorian period, and excellent discussions of the major issues, such as the *Married Woman's Property Act*, or the reform of the divorce laws, inform the individual papers. One's reading of the *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, for example, cannot help but be affected by the knowledge that remarriage even after divorce for Helen Huntingdon would have been legally impossible. Similarly, Sanders's discussion of conservative writers and marriage makes an excellent point,

> if antifeminist women were having doubts about the certainty of domestic happiness, the "gender crisis" of the 1880s onwards assumes even greater proportions than cultural historians have recognized.

The canonical authors did not operate in a vacuum; *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question* helps to illuminate complex cultural issues, and female writers' varied responses to them, which contemporary criticism is too apt to view as a single monolithic structure. The issue of canon formation is both contentious and fascinating; certainly a broader range of nineteenth century women writers should be available for both study and sheer enjoyment. Thompson's thesis is, however, problematic and ultimately unconvincing; Eliot's and the Brontës' attitudes to the woman question are as conflicted and complicated as Harriet Martineau's or Charlotte Mary Yonge's. Although this books' treatment of non-canonical authors is interesting and varied, it does not allow the same courtesy to the canonical authors to whom it compares them.

CHAPTERS IN A LUCKY LIFE

Clara Thomas.
Ottawa: Borealis Press, 1999.

BY NAOMI BLACK

Reading *Chapters in a Lucky Life*, I found myself murmuring, there's something about Clara—Clara being Doctor Clara Thomas, F.R.S.C., Professor Emerita of English at York University, founder and leading figure in the field of Canadian Literature, known widely as scholar, teacher, friend, wise-woman. An undiminished 80, she has now written for us a longer version of the story she hinted at when she presented herself as "Lotta Gutsa," who was "the only tenured woman in her department" at "Bigan New University." This was in the 1985 essay, "How Jane Got Tenure." In it, Jane, the archetypal female graduate student, reflected that "Lotta Gutsa was weird in some ways, but she did have flashes of inspiration." Well, yes, but perhaps Jane was not in a position to appreciate the breadth of Lotta Gutsa's experience and the depth of her insights—as we are, now that we can have the pleasure of reading these memoirs.

Some of us heard about Jane (and her husband, Dick) and Lotta Gutsa at Canada's first women's studies conference, held at York University, or read about them soon after in *CWS/cf.* If you do not know the piece, search it out in Clara Thomas's collection of essays, *All My Sisters*, published by Tecumseh Press in 1994. It remains, alas, a useful guide to transmuting a thesis into tenurable publications. It is also, at least for those who have survived the process, very funny.

Lotta Gutsa represents major elements of Clara Thomas's life and character: her commitment to scholarship and to the young, and her deep but unaggressive feminism. She states in the article's last footnote that "the informational content of this story is authentic to my experience and observation." So too is her memoir, which can be recommended to anyone interested in what it was like growing up in small-town Ontario just after the First World War. The book also includes a rare first-person account of the university system in Canada before and after the second world war, including the early years of York University.

In addition, *Chapters in a Lucky Life* recounts the life of a young Canadian woman in the 1940s and 1950s, another topic not much recorded. Admittedly, this was not quite a typical young woman of those days, but a particular and remarkable one, very bright, very pretty, who wanted to dance and sing, to go to movies, to travel, to marry well and nurture a family—and also to become a scholar. All of which she did. Clara Thomas writes, "Truth to tell, I had become a scholar in my last two years at Western, and, always obsessive, wanted only two things—to marry Morley [Thomas] and to go to Graduate School at some as yet unknown time in the future." In due course, these ambitions were achieved; see her account of how, in 1944, she produced her Master's thesis and, not long afterwards, her first son. She then moved on, gently but irresistibly, to a doctorate on Anna Jameson and a position as one of the first two women hired at the newly founded York University.

In the process she survived, with aplomb though also with some resentment, the difficulties encountered by women who pursued learning. We can understand, even while regretting, the discretion of the book's intermittent accounts of what its author calls "the politics of academic feminism." All the same, the reality of sexism leaks through from time to time. For example, an old academic friend was furious when, armed with that MA, young Mrs Thomas had the impertinence to apply for a doctoral fellowship at the University of Toronto. You want to compete with your husband, he told her, and— it was 1949— she dutifully withdrew the application. In "the conservative fifties," she recalls, she was "an easy prey for guilt" and accepted that she could not attend Northrop Frye's famous lectures because she would have had to arrange babysitting for her two small children.

However, over all, this book recalls what its author considers a lucky life. Perhaps we should say, instead, that it was a fortunate one. Fortune, after all, is something we help to make. Surely there *is* something, more than just luck, about Clara Thomas, who managed to publish her MA thesis, to acquire the legendary A.S.W. Woodhouse for a sponsor, and to have Northrop Frye as a dissertation supervisor. And who continues to awe and charm us in this book as elsewhere.

PAULINE JEWETT: A PASSION FOR CANADA

Judith McKenzie. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999.

BY CLARA THOMAS

In 1992, just three months before she died of cancer, Pauline Jewett received a Companionship in the Order of Canada. It was the final honour in a life that had been marked by many achievements, all of which signaled advances for Canadian women. When she was made president of Simon Fraser University in 1974, the first woman to be president of a Canadian university, those of us who were academics and, like myself, close to her age, were probably the loudest cheer leaders, for we knew only too well the difficulties she had faced and overcome. Judith McKenzie gives an even-handed account of those difficulties and, though I could wish for more detail in her account of Pauline's early schooling, I fully appreciate the skill and expertise with which she has handled the details of a many-faceted career.

From a close family environment and approving encouragement, especially from her father, she went on a scholarship from St. Catharine's Collegiate to Queen's and there entered the Political Science and Economics Department. McKenzie is excellent here in her account of the influence of Jean Royce, the Queen's registrar, whose encouragement had already affected many women's careers. Obviously Royce spotted unusual talent in Jewett and lost no time in nurturing it. She was one of three important mentors in the Queen's years, along with Dr. Alice Vibert Douglas, Dean of Women as well as a distinguished professor in the Department of Physics, and Professor J.A. Corry of the Political Science Department. Dr. Douglas provided encouragement with a valuable cautionary component as well, for the boring housekeeping responsibilities that were a part of the Dean of Women's job were not lost on Jewett. J.A. Corry's backing was invaluable in her post-graduate acceptance, with scholarship, to Harvard, but later he let her down badly, when he did not back her tenure-stream appointment to the Queen's Faculty, though she had taught there with success and was