

# *Raising Clio's Consciousness: Women's History and Archives in Canada*

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In the 1970s women's history emerged as a distinct field. The traditional focus of Canadian history slowly shifted in response to student demands to know "what happened to the women," to widespread concern over the nuclear family, bi-sexuality and women's liberation, to female activists' calls for "herstory," and to feminist historians' revelations of the blindspots of conventional approaches with their political, national and, above all, masculine biases. Each stage in the reshaping of a conservative discipline was and is accompanied by the usual hand-wringing from the jealous guardians of male-dominated narratives. Accusations of "faddism," "lack of rigour," and "relative insignificance" survive still, but these are merely the last refuge of academic protectionists reserving for themselves the definition of what is meaningful in the past. Fortunately, such carping appears on the wane. It would not do, however, especially in a period of contracting resources, to underestimate the strength of resistance to women's history. A similar misjudgement—essentially faith in the ultimate good will and good sense of the defenders of masculine privilege—was extremely costly to the first generation of feminists.<sup>1</sup> Every available resource must be mobilized if the history of that half of humankind which is female is to be recovered.

Women's history has been fortunate in finding in the "new social history"—particularly historians studying labour and committed to recovering the past "from the bottom up"—an ally in the reconstruction of historical scholarship in this country. Women's history and social history tackle critical variables long under-rated in conventional accounts. Both identify sex and class as crucial to the understanding of historical development. Neither interpretation can stand alone. Without the inclusion of gender as a significant category, social history runs the risk of sharing the overwhelmingly male per-

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1 The poor economic conditions of the 1970s with all the cutbacks they entail for universities and other institutions of higher learning call into question the optimism seen in such works as Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice's introduction to *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History* (Toronto, 1977). Women's history is a young field and it and its practitioners—for the most part untenured members of history departments—are extremely vulnerable when economic stringency strengthens the hand of conservative, male chauvinist members of the discipline.

spective of its predecessors; without the awareness of socio-economic cleavage, women's history could become little more than the female counterpart to the traditional elite accounts. A close association of the two provides the surest guarantee of discovering a usable and comprehensible past.<sup>2</sup>

Opportunities for new scholarship depend to a great degree on endorsement, not only from the public, but also from institutions and governments whose resources are critical to ultimate success. The most prevalent form of social history in Canada, labour history, has been notably successful in gaining this essential recognition. While women's history has more courses across the country, a reflection of its widespread appeal, labour history today receives the coveted distinction of a special journal (*Labour/Le Travailleur*), two labour archivists at the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) and relatively generous financing. In contrast, *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal*, which serves a much broader, interdisciplinary clientele, manages with difficulty on an inadequate budget, its precarious existence relying finally on the generosity of one of the smallest academic institutions in Canada, Acadia University. Despite a substantial lobby among its own personnel, the PAC refuses to appoint an archivist responsible for coordinating a programme for women's materials. This neglect in effect ensures that women's history as such is given very low priority by already overworked archivists. It is undeniable that labour history deserves its long-overdue encouragement. It is also clear that labour history, for all its chequered experience with the professional establishment, more easily fits the conventional criteria for historical legitimacy. It also appears not to threaten the traditional clarity of archival classifications. This is demonstrably not true for women's history which is notoriously "untidy," hiding out in a wide variety of more "natural" classifications. It is time that archivists, like historians, re-examine their traditional frame of reference. It is not enough to ask women to "make do" once again and to trust others' good intentions. Women's history requires a positive commitment on the part of archives at every level to combat the male biases distorting Canadians' awareness of their past.

Like much of Canadian history, the foci of the first excursions into women's history were often political and national.<sup>3</sup> Examples of the history of "women worthies" such as Marie de l'Incarnation and such "compensatory history" as the addition of women to the progressive movement abound even to the present day.<sup>4</sup> The standard of significance applied to such women has too frequently been merely that commonly applied to men. According to this, an

2 For a useful discussion of the relationship between women's history and social history see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman and the New History," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1/2 (1975): 185-97.

3 See Margaret W. Andrews, "Review Article: Attitudes in Canadian Women's History, 1945-1975," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 1977): 69-78.

4 See, for instance, Jacques Henneguin, "Marie de l'Incarnation (l'Ursuline Canadienne) et la pauvreté," *XVIIe Siècle* 89 (1970): 3-22, and Ramsay Cook, "Francis Marion Beynon and the Crisis of Christian Reformism," in C. Berger and R. Cook, eds., *The West and the Nation* (Toronto, 1976), pp. 187-208. For a detailed explanation of these terms see Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1/2 (1975): 5-6.

individual's memorability is directly correlated with proximity to the power structure, which is overwhelmingly male. Not unexpectedly, this model excludes the great majority of women, as well as most men, from serious consideration. Indeed, it does more than this. By applying such criteria of importance as military honours or high office-holding which societies have largely reserved for males, it renders the female experience historically meaningless. Unfortunately, until relatively recently, archival holdings in public repositories have emphasized the activities of politicians and the course of political issues. While it is possible to glean a few items for women's history from such papers as those of Sir John A. Macdonald, they rarely produce the wealth of material anticipated in them by labour historians.<sup>5</sup> Even when women of the calibre of Agnes Macphail and Nellie McClung operated on the political stage, sources relating to their contributions are most often scanty. Although records of prominent women will continue to appear, these will never provide an adequate basis of generalization on women as a whole.<sup>6</sup> One must look elsewhere for the documentation which will permit sustained analyses of women in Canadian history.

Like other types of history dissatisfied with the predominantly national and political approach, women's history must view Canada as an uncertain amalgam of smaller, sometimes discrete, but usually interrelated, elements: regionalism, class structure, family organization, cultural variation and economic substructures. Micro-analytical, not macro-analytical, data compilation is therefore the prerequisite for a thorough understanding of feminine role and function in the social matrix. But it must be micro-analytical research of a kind which looks beyond the circumscribed world of elite interaction.

In line with this shift in focus, our standards of historical significance must also be revised substantially. The personal, often intimate, experiences of individuals must be analyzed in ways that will permit insightful generalization about the relationship between the sexes and the connections between political, economic and social phenomena. What occurs out of sight, hidden away in bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, needs to be recovered not only for itself, but because it influences, directly and indirectly, activities carried out in public realms. It may be that domestic spaces are shaped and controlled by women and that their associations as daughters, sisters, mothers, friends and enemies structure the experience of these locations not only for themselves, but for men as well.<sup>7</sup>

An exploration of the particular content of women's lives might well be accompanied, as American historians are suggesting, by an investigation of "the female life-cycle—that is, the experience, conventions and rituals of adolescence, courtship and marriage, pregnancy and childbirth, nursing and child-

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5 See R.G. Hann and G.S. Kealey, "Documenting Working Class History: North American Traditions and New Approaches," *Archivaria* 4 (Summer 1977): 111.

6 This is especially true as few women enter the national elite structures. See Wallace Clement, *The Canadian Corporate Elite* (Toronto, 1975), p. 191.

7 For one assessment of the possibilities suggested by these relationships see Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 1-29.

rearing, old age, death and mourning.”<sup>8</sup> The dynamic, longitudinal quality of the life-cycle approach would bring us nearer to an understanding of actual female experience and behaviour over time. It could well become a model for examining male experience as well, thus allowing a much more informed comparison of the two sexes. Passage through these critical stages—the precise content of which is determined by material and ideological factors—defines personality and immediately influences the functioning of the entire society. The links between the individual life cycle and the particular milieu in which it evolves provide one promising approach to the investigation of social change and stability.

Examination of the female experience also raises central questions about the meaning of work in our society. The reluctance to treat housewifery as labour and to analyze it as such remains widespread, to the great disadvantage of the historical narrative. Labour that occurs at home, most often unpaid and largely unrecognized, is nonetheless essential to the maintenance of the market economy in a capitalist society. Work in and around the house and child care need to be examined not only for their economic impact, but also for their socio-political implications. The relation between the sexes, the performance of paid and unpaid labour, and the allocation of prestige and power are critical issues now facing historians of women.

In constructing new interpretations, historians must take care not to fall into old traps. Many years ago the American scholar, Mary Beard, criticized the “woman as victim” approach to the past.<sup>9</sup> Her warning is equally valid today. The majority of male-female relationships present not a simple case of male domination and female submission, but something rather more complicated. The oppression model, however sympathetically applied, is just not an adequate explanation in itself for associations which differ with individuals and over time. The contradictory and complementary needs of the larger society and individual personalities are complex, not well understood and easily misinterpreted. It is the operative mechanisms and the resistance they call forth, both in women and in men, that need closer study, not the fact of exploitation itself.

The task of writing good women’s history is formidable. It depends ultimately upon a commitment by all sectors of the historical community: museologists, historians, librarians and archivists. It is to the potential contribution of archivists which the remainder of this paper is devoted. New historical initiatives depend on the information available. Archivists at every level—national, regional and local—have already made impressive personal contributions to the recovery of materials relating to women. To date, however, the contribution of professional archivists has, in their official capacity at least, been insufficient, in part because the task of reconstructing the female experience is so awesome. Nevertheless, there is also real neglect, stemming in large part from time-worn classification systems which emphasize the activities of political, military, diplomatic and economic elites. Inevitably, priority of

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8 Smith-Rosenberg, “The New Woman and the New History,” p. 193.

9 Mary R. Beard, *Woman as Force in History* (New York, 1946).

recovery and classification is accorded the individuals and groups reaching the top ranks. As a result women, who rarely appear among the powerful, are largely excluded. The limited resources of repositories across the country further guarantee that only minimal time and money will be allocated to Canadian women.

Until now, much of the work relating to the identification, recovery and assessment of records of female Canadians has been performed by near amateurs in archival matters. Resulting studies are frequently supported, not by major repositories with their relatively substantial budgets, but by institutions and groups with feminist personnel and slender resources.<sup>10</sup> Their common aim is to "inspire archivists and librarians to initiate efforts of their own along similar lines."<sup>11</sup> These projects are heir to the long tradition of self-help that has distinguished women in this country. However laudable and valuable such initiatives, they remain finally insufficient to the task ahead. The omissions and errors of traditional history and archival practice in Canada are too numerous to be remedied in this way. It is time that archives recognize the importance of women's history, the widespread interest and the dangers of delay by providing concrete and meaningful assistance.

Two actions must now be undertaken if women's lives are to be illuminated: existing holdings should be reappraised for their value for women's history and additions must be made to present collections. It has been suggested that a re-inventory could begin with personal and family papers and then move on to government records, pamphlets, the periodical press and rare books.<sup>12</sup> The final determination of what sequence should be followed would depend on the nature of the collection and on the available finding aids but, in order for any substantial progress whatsoever, some systematic plan of attack should be established.

Over the long term, however, a fuller reassessment of materials is essential, as women are often camouflaged in finding aids through the use of initials or married names. Acknowledging the blindspots of their predecessors, archivists involved in the arrangement and description of new acquisitions should be more sensitive to the requirements of women's history. In many cases, reassessments could bring rich rewards. When adequate research tools exist, the records of the missionaries and the religious orders, for instance, provide a treasure trove for women's history. The United Church Archives is one insti-

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10 The leading examples are: Heather Rielly and Marilyn Hindmarch, comps., *Some Sources for Women's History in the Public Archives of Canada* (Ottawa, 1973); V. Strong-Boag and Jean Dryden, "Archival Holdings on Canadian Women's History: Ontario," in *The Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women*, (hereafter CNRW), (February 1976); Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart, "Rapport sur les archives au Québec," *CNRW* (October 1976); Elaine Silverman and R.A. Muir, "Archival Holdings in Canadian Women's History: Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan," *CNRW* (February 1977); and Beth Light and Marion Royce, "Archival Materials on Canadian Women . . . [in the] Archives of Ontario and . . . the Baldwin Room of the Metropolitan Toronto Public Library," *CNRW* (Supplement, February 1977).

11 Alison Prentice, "Foreword" to B. Light and M. Royce, "Archival Materials on Canadian Women," p. 169.

12 *Ibid.*

tution that holds an enviable number of reports, letters and memos written by female personnel from the nineteenth century on. The information available in government records also needs to be unveiled. Government departments specifically deal with such concerns close to women as mothers' allowances, minimum wage and factory inspection, but as government records are not familiar to most researchers, some general register would be extremely helpful. A model finding aid for the treatment of periodicals and newspapers is D.M.R. Bentley and Marylynn Wickens, "A Checklist of Women-Related Materials in the *Week* (1883-1896)," with its sensible subdivisions—articles, notes, poems, reprinted items, letters and reviews—which usefully mirror the character of the journal itself.<sup>13</sup> While indexing is extremely time-consuming, a list of magazines dealing specifically with women is a minimal requirement. As well, the location of women's pages, which first began to appear in newspapers and magazines in the nineteenth century, and the identification of their authors would also end a great deal of duplication of effort by scholars.

Concomitant with reassessing existing collections archivists must also assiduously scour the country for new material on women. It is noteworthy that three recent doctoral theses on the history of women cite much material not yet preserved in public repositories.<sup>14</sup> The National Council of Women is one of the few bodies whose records are housed in a public repository, although the records of its local councils often remain in private hands. Much of the documentation relating to such influential groups of women as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Girl Guides, the Hadassah Organization, the women's missionary societies, the Women's Labor Leagues and numerous religious orders has yet to be discovered and preserved. My own investigations suggest that the recovery of such association records will lead to the acquisition of the personal papers of members of those associations wishing to have their work and lives remembered. Institutions and agencies staffed by and serving women—refuges, hospitals, dispensaries, schools and prisons—should also be approached for their historical documents. Fuller runs of such periodicals as *Chatelaine*, *Woman's Century*, *Le Coin du feu*, *Canadian Good Housekeeping* and *La Bonne parole* should also be rescued from the private homes and second-hand book stores where often they risk being permanently lost.

However, much of the material, even should it be recovered, cannot easily answer the kind of questions now being asked. The Nellie McClung Papers in the Provincial Archives of British Columbia and the Emily Murphy Papers in the City of Edmonton Archives, for instance, have evidently been purged of most personal items by their donors, the greatest loss being McClung's personal diaries. Very few repositories are as fortunate as the University of Waterloo where the Elizabeth Smith Shortt Papers, never intended for public

13 *CNRW* (October 1977).

14 Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1929," (Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1975); Carol Bacchi, "Liberation Deferred: The English Canadian Woman's Suffrage Movement, 1877-1918," (Doctoral dissertation, McGill University, 1976); Wendy Mitchinson, "Aspects of Reform: Four Women's Organizations in Nineteenth Century Canada," (Doctoral dissertation, York University, 1977).

gaze, retain the intimate details of her life first as a teacher and a medical student and then as a wife, mother and reformer.<sup>15</sup> Other manuscripts of this quality exist but, since women's records are less common than men's from the start and less likely to survive dust-bin and furnace, new types of sources, especially oral histories, are essential. Any reluctance on the part of archivists to accept oral records as their legitimate preserve inevitably will have injurious results for the history of women and non-elites. The archival mandate to collect written sources originated in an earlier day when only political leaders were considered worthy of recollection. Fortunately, that day has passed. If archives are to serve the Canadian public, they must now include a wider variety of sources than ever dreamed of by their founders. Regional and local repositories have a special responsibility to rescue the lives of average Canadians from oblivion, for their intimate knowledge of their local communities can be employed to identify the essential oral as well as written documents.

While not as controversial as oral collections, visual materials are also particularly valuable for recovering the experiences of women, especially working class women. The creation of visual and oral life histories on a large scale—perhaps organized around changes in the life cycle—could contribute immeasurably to our knowledge of Canadian women. While such records have become more common in the last few years, the majority of photograph and recorded sound collections include relatively little on women, especially regarding their lives within the home and the family. Appeals should be made for the pictures which now deteriorate and disappear with each move. Women, both prominent and obscure, should be sought out and invited to deposit their testaments as housewives, factory workers, domestic servants, farmers, writers and businesswomen. The human resources of old age homes and chronic care hospitals, for instance, are relatively easily tapped, but so far almost unexploited. Each year one more pioneer dies before her memories have been preserved.

Archivists, like historians, should also be receptive to the possibilities of more quantitative methods and materials. The application of new computer technologies to information storage and retrieval seems a natural development of archival practice. The collection of vital and labour force statistics in a readily usable form would be of immeasurable value. Since the costs of such programmes are notoriously high, their utility to the historical profession as a whole (as well as to sociology, political science, and so forth) is greatest when they are coordinated with already existing information storage facilities such as archives. In this way scholars just starting out on their research, as well as established experts, would be well served. For historians of women such resources would be a godsend in their efforts to come to terms with the basic configuration of female life in Canada.

The task of archival recovery has, in some cases, already begun.<sup>16</sup> Archivists who wish to continue these efforts may find guidance in the following exami-

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15 Also included at Waterloo due to the efforts of former Chief Librarian Mrs. Doris Lewis is the Lady Aberdeen Collection of books of the National Council of Women.

16 The "Archives Notes" section to the quarterly issues of the *Canadian Historical Review* is a partial guide to these additions.

ation of the state of women's history in Canada. Since the publication in 1973 of the first bibliography, "Cousin Cinderella: A Guide to Historical Literature Pertaining to Canadian Women," women's history has welcomed a host of new entries, far too many to consider in this paper.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, additions can be broadly grouped into reprints of both primary and secondary sources and new studies of individual women, female groups and the perception and prescription of female behaviour by male society. The strengths and weaknesses of some of the major newcomers reflect, in part at least, the state of archival resources.

Republications beginning notably in 1973 with the reissue of Nellie L. McClung's *In Times Like These* (1915) have served several purposes: they promote interest in women's history, add to the readily available documentation and suggest further materials. An outstanding example of useful primary materials is *Women of Canada* (1900, reprinted 1975). The National Council of Women of Canada originally compiled this volume for the 1900 Paris Exposition and has now republished it, providing a broad view of the nature and interests of organized, middle-class Victorian women. Chapters entitled "Legal and Political Status," "Professions and Careers," "Trades and Industries," "Art, Handicrafts, Music and the Drama," "Church Work" and "Indian Women" are valuable indicators of the concerns and lives of a particular group of women in early twentieth-century Canada, just as their contents are guides to what data may remain on these subjects. *Women of Canada* also reaffirms the significance of such still-remembered authors as Agnes Maule Machar, Sara Jeannette Duncan and Marshall Saunders, along with their more obscure sisters such as Lily Dougall, Félicité Angers [Laure Conan] and Margaret McNaughton. The section on the Catholic Church directs attention to the role played by female charitable communities, confraternities and contemplative orders. The recovery of a good selection of the materials suggested by a thorough examination of this volume would add considerably to our appreciation of turn-of-the-century Canada.

A guide of a different sort is provided by the Coles reprint of *The Galt Cook Book* (1898, reprinted 1974) compiled by "the Ladies of Galt." In home labour, women were and indeed still are preeminent. Through the prosaic day-to-day world of the cook, laundress and nurse as revealed in this book, it is possible to reconstruct the diet, dress and health of earlier generations. Once we recognize that such documents have real significance for historians and archivists as well as for gourmets tracking down old recipes, we will be able to fill in much of the detail on the past which now eludes us.

Three notable collections of primary materials have also been published recently: Michelle Jean, *Québécoises du 20e siècle* (1974), Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson, *The Proper Sphere* (1976) and Linda Rasmussen et al., *A Harvest Yet to Reap* (1976). Jean's selection reveals the range of documents—

17 Strong-Boag in Marylee Stephenson, ed., *Women in Canada* (Toronto, 1973). See also for an updated bibliography, Beth Light and Alison Prentice, *Recent Publications in Canadian Women's History* (Toronto, 1977). For a valuable survey of the recent treatment of women in the Maritimes see Ruth Pierson, "Women's History: The State of the Art in Atlantic Canada," *Acadiensis* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1977): 121-31.



sermons, pamphlets, magazines and speeches—available for the study of twentieth-century *québécoises*. Often, as with Soeur Gérin-Lajoie's contribution on unions, they point to other records yet to be recovered. The collection of Professors Cook and Mitchinson sets forth much the same type of guide, concentrating on mid nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English Canada. Archivists who pursue these clues will discover a rich store for the study of Canada's middle-class French and English urban women. *A Harvest Yet to Reap* supplies frequently moving glimpses of a rather different experience, that of rural woman, often poor and an immigrant. By using not only private papers, biographies and periodicals, but also visual and oral records, the compilers may, it is hoped, have sowed a wider awareness of the value of these newer media which provide the intensely revealing accounts sadly missed in other collections. For all its great strengths, however, *A Harvest Yet to Reap* neglects, as its compilers appreciate, women from "non-white, non-English-speaking communities."<sup>18</sup> Archives and libraries with their greater resources can help rectify this all too commonplace omission. Translators could help characterize the women of the minority cultures as can no one else.

The reissue of secondary sources, particularly Catherine Cleverdon's *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (1950, reprinted 1974) with its fine introduction by Ramsay Cook, has made archives' task of obtaining the basic maps to women's history a great deal easier. Cleverdon's monumental study provides researchers with a provocative guide to both the primary and secondary material on the franchise struggle. Like the recent doctoral theses on the history of Canadian women, Cleverdon's bibliography contains a gold mine of documents meriting retrieval. Her attention to all regions—and rural as well as urban areas—demonstrates a breadth of treatment which no other historian has yet been able to match. As she makes very clear, traditions differ greatly from province to province, but our knowledge of these differences is little greater now than it was just more than a quarter of a century ago when her book was first published. More systematic collecting of women's documents by regional archives in particular will support the local studies essential to having something better than the central Canadian history which currently masquerades as national history.

New works focussing on the experience of individual women reveal the rich possibilities of personal histories. Among the best examples are Elizabeth Goudie, *Woman of Labrador* (1973), Phyllis and Rolf Knight, *A Very Ordinary Life* (1974), Margaret Ormsby, ed., *A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: The Recollections of Susan Allison* (1976) and Dorothy Livesay, *Right Hand, Left Hand* (1977). Homemaking on the Labrador frontier, immigrant poverty in the west, pioneering in British Columbia's interior in the nineteenth century and left wing intellectual life between the Great Wars are graphically depicted by authors who, for all the very great differences between them, share certain experiences as women within a male-dominated society. The experience of childbirth, for example, is vividly recalled by Allison, Knight and Goudie. In one way or another, all convey the distinctiveness of female sexuality. Allison's recollections have been preserved in the Provincial

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18 L. Rasmussen et al., *A Harvest Yet to Reap* (Toronto, 1976), p. 9.

Archives of British Columbia, but the Livesay, Goudie and Knight submissions illustrate what can yet be achieved by contacting survivors. These are just the type of case studies that are needed in substantial numbers.

Such accounts supply the raw materials of good biographies, the great majority of which remain to be written for even the most renowned of female Canadians. To be sure the publisher, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, has initiated a popular, nationalistic series including such "women worthies" as Pauline Johnson, Mary Pickford, Laura Secord and Emily Murphy, but scholarly contributions are almost non-existent. The remarkable communist and feminist, Annie Buller, treated by Louise Watson in *She Never Was Afraid* (1976), would never be admitted to Fitzhenry and Whiteside's respectable pantheon. Unfortunately, Watson's treatment is very much the effort of an amateur hagiographer. One of the very few scholarly works is Reginald Hamel's *Gaetane de Montreuil* (1976), the account of Marie-Georgina Bélanger Gill, a pioneer Montreal journalist. The biographies tend to be strongest on the socialization of their subjects, but only Hamel spends much ink depicting the world of work and sexuality. The relative abundance of popular biographies indicates the demand for information, just as the near-absence of scholarly works illustrates, in part at least, the poverty of the available archival holdings. Recent biographies of Emily Murphy and Emily Carr, for instance, largely rework the same tired material.<sup>19</sup> We can expect little more of forthcoming biographies of Nellie McClung. Only systematic collecting can adjust the balance.

Although biographies are a relatively familiar genre in the history of Canadian women, studies of women at work have not been nearly as common. Recently, however, a new generation of historians, inspired by the developments in social history and sometimes by a Marxist perspective, has made notable advances in this area.<sup>20</sup> For the most part, these studies depend heavily on two types of sources: official records, whether governmental or institutional, and periodicals. Together they provide the first collective picture of female workers. Suzanne Cross's treatment of women in nineteenth-century Montreal and Alison Prentice's examination of female teachers in Victorian Canada set high standards which not all their imitators and successors have attained. Cross's cautious yet enlightening examination reveals a range of documentation to which few have added. Her work with that of T. Copp, J. Stoddart and M. Lavigne on Montreal gives the most complete portrait of

19 Donna James, *Emily Murphy* (Toronto, 1977), and Rosemary Neering, *Emily Carr* (Toronto, 1975).

20 J. Rouillard, *Les Travailleurs du coton au Québec, 1900-1915* (Montreal, 1974); Janice Acton et al. *Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930* (Toronto, 1974); T. Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty* (Toronto, 1974); M. Lavigne and J. Stoddart, "Women's Work in Montreal at the Beginning of the Century," in *Women in Canada*, ed. M. Stephenson (Toronto, 1977); W. Roberts, *Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893-1914* (Toronto, 1976); S. Cross, "The Neglected Majority: The Changing Role of Women in 19th Century Montreal," A. Prentice, "The Feminization of Teaching," and R. Pierson, "Women's Emancipation and the Recruitment of Women into the Labour Force in World War II," in *The Neglected Majority*, edited by S.M. Trofimenkoff and A. Prentice (Toronto, 1977); Lavigne and Stoddart, "Ouvrières et travailleuses montréalaises, 1900-1940," *Les Femmes dans la société québécoise*, edited by M. Lavigne and Yolande Pinard (Montreal, 1977).

women in any Canadian city. Yet, for all the undeniable strengths of the new interest in female work patterns, deficiencies still exist. J. Rouillard's study often appears to forget that the sex of the workers in Quebec's cotton mills is a significant variable in understanding their predicament. Copp's impressive effort at integration frequently falls into the middle-class progressive reformers' trap of treating women and children as similarly and equally oppressed and powerless. His focus on women as victims simply excludes far too much of their experience to be satisfactory. The oppression model is all the more inadequate because none of these studies provides any extended discussion of demographic factors. What was the age at and frequency of marriage, childbirth and death for working women of all classes?<sup>21</sup> The failure to provide this information reflects the uneasiness of many historians in dealing with quantitative evidence. And the claim of those who ambitiously attempt to recreate the mind of the poorer woman through the use of fiction, articles and reports written largely by the reform-minded or the radical of another generation are not at all convincing. The absence of any significant information about working class women's feelings regarding "feminism, femininity and class consciousness" or about the psychological makeup of middle-class women requires the attention of archivists. One obvious remedy would be the collection of oral histories which, for instance, would add significantly to the more recent picture now being painstakingly recreated for World War II by Ruth Pierson.

While studies of women in the paid labour force are becoming more frequent, *les ménagères* are virtually absent from historical studies.<sup>22</sup> This is not only a problem for the more remote past, for housework is not decreasing. Even today, as more women are employed outside the home, "their housework hours have not declined . . . and several comparisons indicate an increase, particularly for women with paid work."<sup>23</sup> Archivists can help regain the lost world of the home by retrieving not only oral histories, but also architectural plans, store catalogues, cookbooks, family budgets, childcare manuals, laundry and ironing guides, and electrical and plumbing standards. Since the acquisition of such published sources may increase the responsibilities of archives to an unmanageable degree, libraries should be encouraged to add to their holdings in this area.

The organizational activity of Canada's middle-class women has also received a good deal of recent attention.<sup>24</sup> Most studies draw heavily on the

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21 This failure is all the more disappointing in Roberts' study which in its criticism of other writing on working women promises "a recognition of the structures that demographic and occupational influences placed on the possibilities for concerted action." *Honest Womanhood*, p. 5.

22 Lavigne and Pinard, "Présentation," *Les Femmes dans la société québécoise*, p. 23.

23 M. Meissner, "Sexual Division of Labour and Inequality: Labour and Leisure," in *Women in Canada* (1977 edition), p. 166.

24 Deborah Gorham, "The Canadian Suffragists," in *Women in the Canadian Mosaic*, ed. G. Matheson (Toronto, 1976); V. Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women* (Ottawa, 1976); M. Lavigne, Y. Pinard and J. Stoddart, "La Fédération Nationale St. Jean Baptiste et les revendications féministes au début du XXe siècle," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 29 (1975); W. Mitchinson, "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Towards Independence," *Atlantis* 2, no. 2, pt. II (Spring 1977): 57-75.

papers of relatively few individuals and associations such as the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), Nellie McClung, Flora Macdonald Denison and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Such familiar sources have usually been well served by public repositories, but a host of more local material also requires attention. Characteristically, all the studies on female organizations encounter difficulties both in generalizing from the policy of the leadership to the demands of the larger female constituency and in relating their public role to the private lives of the members. It seems likely, for instance, that club membership represented a common stage in the life of women after their children had grown up. More information at the local level could tell us whether this was in fact so. The majority of organizational studies, including my own on the NCWC, also appear unable to integrate the fact of class consistently into their analysis. Inevitably, then, the tendency is to generalize from a limited sample of bourgeois women the experience of female Canadians as a whole.

The relative richness of archival materials for middle-class women's organizations explains the initial concentration of women's history in this area. Working class women are much less well served, in large part because data on female unionists and union auxiliaries are both more rare and less systematically collected. Furthermore, little is known about the large numbers enrolled in women's associations attached to the Loyal Orange Order, the Order of the Maccabees, the Independent Order of Foresters or the Knights of Columbus. The female religious and lay orders and confraternities of the Catholic Church and such Jewish women's groups as the Zionist Women of Canada have been equally neglected. Many of these organizations still function and hold important records from earlier periods. Until such documents are readily accessible, it will be extremely difficult for even the most enterprising researcher to recreate the full complexity of the club world.

Farm women have been distinguished by the number and success of their organizations, but they too have received almost no attention from historians and archivists. This is particularly unfortunate because rural women's clubs frequently spoke out more boldly on issues, including those which touched their personal lives such as birth control, than the majority of their urban counterparts. They were also often characterized by the more active involvement of their membership, with less discrepancy between the lives and attitudes of the leaders and the members. Collecting outstanding material on Les Cercles Fermières de la Province de Québec, the Women's Institutes of Ontario or other rural groups would help offset a prevailing urban bias. Until then such first-hand accounts as *A Harvest Yet to Reap* supply the best insight into the experience of rural women. One recent volume does, however, paint a clear portrait of farm life and relationships. Seena B. Kohl's *Working Together: Women and Family in Southwestern Saskatchewan* (1976) is the type of sociological study that historians and archivists should examine carefully. It painstakingly describes and evaluates the basic social relationships and assumptions which knit together a rural community. The experience of female socialization and the nature of female work are particularly well delineated. The questions it raises could profitably be asked for earlier periods.

Given the male and middle-class bias of most collections, it is hardly surprising that much new work focusses on the ways women are perceived and the behaviour which is prescribed for them. For all the difficulties of relating perception and prescription to actual female behaviour and attitudes, this approach can be extremely thought-provoking. Sylvia Van Kirk's path-breaking examination of the early settlement frontier in western Canada, "The Impact of White Women on Fur Trade Society," illustrates the innovative use to which travel accounts, personal correspondence and corporate records may be put. Susan M. Trofimenkoff's reassessment of the nationalist, Henri Bourassa, and Mary Vipond's appraisal of magazines in the 1920s similarly employ traditional types of materials to suggest the range of views Canadians have held of women. Ruth Pierson's promising start to her study of women in the Second World War proves that governments were no more immune than the average citizen to sexist assumptions. The best extended study, however, remains Mona-José Gagnon's *Les Femmes vues par le Québec des hommes* (1974). Illustrating how closely the image of women has been tied to that of the family in the prevailing social ideology between 1940 and 1970, she provides an essential overview to any study of modern Quebec's women and society. Her book is exceptional because it touches on almost all the issues—birth, marriage, work—that most often affect women during the course of their lives. These treatments of prescription and perception set out the attitudes, restraints and opportunities which shape female experience, although they cannot tell us precisely what this experience was. They depend in the end not so much on material generated by women themselves but on male-centred collections which are well indexed.

Recent work on women, for all its limitations, has decisively broadened our understanding of Canadian history. Much, however, remains to be done, particularly with respect to domestic and private life as well as female-male relationships. Continued progress requires the co-operation of archives. An ad hoc search for materials on which to base more complete and sophisticated studies is not sufficient. Archives must commit themselves to a fuller recovery of the necessary sources. Major repositories should delegate permanent personnel whose job it is to guarantee that female Canadians are able to rediscover their own history. Smaller archives might allocate the clear responsibility for women's materials to some full-time staff member, even if the work can be done only on a part-time basis. Only a concerted effort will produce a complete and systematic retrieval of the essential documentation. With substantially improved archival support, women's history can achieve the more refined analysis and wider perspective which will at long last liberate the Canadian Clio.