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Feminist Biography

Susan Mann Trofimenkoff
University of Ottawa

ABSTRACT

After examining some of the difficulties feminists have with biography as a tool for women's history, the author explores the possibilities of feminist biography (its purpose, content and form) in order to distinguish it from conventional biography and to suggest that it may be a logical next step in feminist historical scholarship.

Can a historian write a feminist biography? Should a feminist tackle biography at all? Does a feminist historian have anything to say about a literary genre which is suspect both to historians and to feminists? To historian's biography appears to be "a minor part of history" or even in opposition to history.[1] One of my historian colleagues told me bluntly that biography wasn't history; he left unstated the second part of his reaction: why would you want to write a biography anyway? To feminists biography appears to be a somewhat old fashioned and probably wrong-headed acceptance of male notions of importance. One of my feminist colleagues let her scepticism show in her eyes: why study an elite woman acting in an exclusively male domain such as politics? Why indeed? Given the development of social history, of feminist scholarship and perhaps even the changes in our political culture over the past fifteen years or so, the reaction was quite understandable. Individuals appear to have lost their significance, buffeted by trends and forces, buried alive in groups and classes. Was a feminist biographer then merely on a rescue mission, tilting at historical windmills? Perhaps an exploration of the difficulties feminists have with biography, of the purposes to which feminist biography might be put and even of the format and shape of such a biography might serve some purpose if only the easing of my own conscience as I tackled a singular female figure of the past, Thérèse Casgrain.[2]

Feminists, particularly those who are historians, seem to encounter three stumbling blocks when they ponder biography. The first is the genre itself: just how appropriate is it to the study of women's history? Feminist historians are primarily committed to discovering and revealing the forgotten and the ignored women of the past in order to change the very conception of history that has rendered them insignificant. In such a program do the remembered and the known women of the past have any place? By definition, biography appears to select exceptional people, important people, individuals

who have stood out, "fellows [*sic*] who have changed the course of history".[3] When a Canadian historian can define a nation as a body of men who have done great things in the past and hope to do so in the future,[4] he leaves ample scope for biographies of men but none at all for women. Indeed, definitions of biography would appear to exclude women entirely. An occasional queen, saint or female "first" might be allowed to slip through the net of exclusivity but their presence among the Great Men merely accentuates their own marginality and even more so that of the entire female population which they do not represent in any case.[5]

And yet the biographical genre was in fact one of the early forms of women's history in Canada and elsewhere. Natalie Davis' "women worthies" are as present in Canada (although in smaller numbers) as in the European history she explored.[6] Mary Quayle Innis' edited collection *The Clear Spirit* or Emilia Allaire's more journalistic *Têtes de femmes*[7] are illustrations but so too could be most of the existing biographies of individual women in Canada. The authors implicitly accept definitions of importance which fit men's activity in the past and find their subjects worthy of attention because they happen to have entered some male realm of religious, political, diplomatic, military, economic, educational or legal leadership. Pictures of such women appear on the classroom walls of enlightened teachers while feminists worry about their impact: are they role models for young people or do they merely emphasize the exceptional nature of certain women? Is their struggle more intimidating then inspiring?

With the development of social history and feminist scholarship in the 1960s and 1970s "Greats" of either sex came under increasing attack. Social historians concentrated their attention on groups rather than individuals and studied interactions among groups rather than dramatic encounters between individuals. Feminist scholars shared the scorn for individuals while adding gender to the categories of class, ethnicity, region, and religion that the social historians were happily juggling. It made a difference, the feminists contended, if a particular group of striking workers, for example, was male or female. The female workers probably had an extra burden of discrimination coming from their male co-workers and they probably had an extra burden of familial responsibilities. Moreover, those patterns of inequality had to be investigated and understood before one could begin to change such patterns in the present. Given such an agenda, a biographer's selection of an individual woman, necessarily favoured by birth or class or talent so as to attract a writer's attention and yet probably so favoured as to be unaware of her own inequality, seems somehow misguided. Then, too, placing the spotlight on an individual, as the media so enjoys doing has always been problematic to feminists as they argue not just for equality between the sexes but also for equality within each sex. Hierarchies and leaders appear to be some of the evils of a society dominated by men. Might there be some other way to get along? The more one poses feminist questions as a social historian the farther one seems to be from biography.

But that is just the first of the difficulties encountered by feminist historians with an interest in biography. The second one is the approach biographers have taken to their female subjects. There is something decidedly odd about biographies of women, reflecting perhaps a more general notion that there is something odd about women themselves. Frequently authors will assume a proper place and proper behaviour for their subjects based on their own notion of appropriate female functions; historical characters are then moulded to fit the notion, exemplify the behaviour and thus provide some kind of moral lesson to the present.[8] Historian's should be able to avoid such pitfalls because of their training and feminists because of their suspicion of all received notions about women. But not all biographers are historians, let alone fem-

inists. The models then, with a few exceptions,[9] are rather dismal. A female subject may warrant a biography simply because she did something outrageous (usually of a sexual nature). *Mrs Chadwick* is only incredible, and therefore worthy of a biography, because she flaunts the expectations of her times, and ours, for proper female behaviour. She is a rogue in drag; the scandal is what makes her fit for a biography.[10] Even those more conventionally deserving—a Mary Wollstonecraft or a George Sand—frequently find their intellectual and literary work belittled in favour of their liaisons with famous or infamous men.[11] Or if, by chance, a female subject did something that a biographer is willing to recognize as legitimate, even autonomous, her accomplishment is always qualified. She did this at the expense of her femininity; she did that without neglecting her duties as wife and mother.[12] Biography thus becomes Harlequin romance[13] and feminists may well despair; for if the genre itself is debatable as a vehicle for women's history, the approach of many biographers has served to reiterate the very notions about women that feminists are calling into question.

However, the feminist perspective itself may cause problems. This is a third area of difficulty for feminist historians, who, in spite of the foregoing, may still be contemplating biography. Does our own critical stance contain a trap? Is there a risk of distorting the past by looking at it through feminist eyes? In our search for the roots of our own queries, do we expect characters from the past to conform to the criteria of our present? Turn-of-the-century feminists, for example, have frequently been burdened with our understanding: why did they not see class relations or family relations as impediments to their equality?[14] The assumption is that had they done so, we all would have been further along the road to equality now.[15] But if we go looking only for reflections of ourselves in the past we are likely to miss much and distort more. And yet, would a feminist want to study a woman of the past who may not have been a feminist or who may have been a different kind of feminist? The problem seems in fact to be more acute for literary scholars than for historians and the latter can take some encouragement from the former who begin as literary critics and, after confronting the possibilities of what might be called the feminist fallacy, turn to history and biography for a solution.[16] But even historians, trained as they are against displacing the values of the present into the past, have to wonder. Does the feminist assumption of contradictions inherent in women's lives between what is expected of them and what they wish to do illuminate or obfuscate the past?

Given these difficulties, is there anything left to be said for feminist biography? Can biography, history, literature or feminism be advanced by a pursuit of something so fraught with complexities? For historians the answer may be easy. In some ways, biography, having been one of the initial steps in women's history—and disdained in part because of that—now seems to be the logical next step. Two features of contemporary women's history would seem to predict biography by their very nature. The life-cycle approach to the study of women is really biography writ large: one looks at childhood, education, work, courtship, marriage, child-rearing, household management, old age and death for groups of women in certain times and places comparing their experiences and watching for changing patterns. While the numbers lend a certain credibility to the enterprise, that enterprise is basically biographical. So too is the method of oral history, used extensively in women's history to uncover facets of women's lives for which no written records exist. *Récits de vie* have become a popular research method, dressed up in sophisticated clothing for the granting agencies, but really constituting nothing more than biographies writ small.

To make biography into feminist biography, however, one has to add the political commitment of feminist scholarship.[17] The scholarship has to serve a purpose, however scary such a

notion may be to traditional intellectuals. The purpose may be as simple as uncovering a past that has been denied women (on the unspoken assumption that *les gens heureux n'ont pas de passé*) or it may be as complex as exposing the patterns of patriarchal society in order to be able to change them. It involves more than documenting the limitations that have been imposed on women's lives and it involves more than chronicling women's struggles against those limitations although a feminist approaching history for the first time often confines women's history to that. Indeed, by suggesting the purposes that feminist biography might serve one can specify not only the scholarly and the political commitment of feminist historians but also the contours of feminist biography itself.

What then might feminist biography be for? When so much of our cultural heritage has stressed women's passivity, feminist biography allows us to see women as actors. When that same cultural heritage declares the category female and all its attributes as natural givens, feminist biography allows us to see them as historical constructs. And when so much of our cultural heritage makes the category female into a symbol of permanence, feminist biography gives us glimpses of the changing forms of femaleness over time. Much of the foregoing is of course characteristic of women's history in general. What it resembles less is the conventional notion of biography. A Great Man doing Great Deeds may merit a story but rarely does he require an explanation. A woman in the same position immediately raises the question "How come?" As will be indicated shortly, that question in turn may demand some rethinking of the very form of biography. Hence feminist biography may well challenge literary and historical stereotypes just as the (probably but not necessarily) female subject of such a biography likely challenged stereotypes in her own life.

Where biography assists feminist scholarship is in the very individualizing it permits. Many a theory only makes sense as exemplified in the life of an individual. Constructing the past of women around abstractions such as production, reproduction, sexuality and socialization[18] may take the fancy (and tax the memory) of sociology students but most people prefer to approach such issues through an individual. As anthropologist Ruth Benedict remarked:

> One adventure through the life of one woman who has been profoundly stirred by a great restlessness and you will comprehend more than from a library of theorizings.[19]

Biography provides just such 'adventures.' It also furnishes measures by which our cultural heritage can be weighed and assessed. Just how did a particular woman in a given society cope with the particular aspects of that heritage? What choices did she, could she make in the face of society's assumptions about proper female behaviour? Biography can even be the laboratory for testing certain generalizations about a given society, a given social movement, the process of social change or even female behaviour itself. Do women in fact behave differently from men in politics? American surveys have revealed a "gender gap" in voting patterns—men and women voting differently on certain issues. But the presence of a woman as Democratic vice-presidential candidate in the American elections of 1984 seems not to have made much of a difference to the Republican outcome. Another example is the suggestion that the women's rights movement in early twentieth century Quebec was led by bourgeois women aware that their professional status was undercut by the presence of nuns.[20] However, one would want to know more about Marie Gérin-Lajoie, Sister St. Anaclet and Sister St. Anne Marie who collaborated so fruitfully in the establishment of higher education for girls in Quebec before spreading the generalization too far.[21] Certainly it does not fit Thérèse Casgrain. Even the feminist slogan itself, "the personal is political" should be subject to biographical scrutiny and verification.

Finally, biography may be able to cast light on the status of women in a given society. When a particularly favoured woman (likely to be the subject of a biography) encounters familial, educational, legal, professional or political barriers in her own path, it can be fairly assumed that these held for all women. Her ability to overcome, circumvent or even come to terms with them will be in part a function of her own character and circumstance but will also reveal just what is possible for most women. Then, too, just because so much more can be known about a woman chosen for a biography,[22] she can perhaps light up the darkness surrounding other women about whom little can be known. Thérèse Casgrain is likely to be more illustrative of the situation of women than John Diefenbaker could be of the situation of men.[23]

But need the subject of a feminist biography necessarily be a woman, let alone a feminist? Need the author necessarily be a feminist, let alone a woman? The preceding discussion assumes both but I am not sure that either is essential and each may be too limiting. For if the perspective has any value, it should perhaps be tried out by more than the handful of people—women or men—willing to declare themselves feminists. Indeed, one could argue that biographies of men from such a perspective are crucial in order precisely to assess the weight of social prescriptions, a weight that feminists assume lies heavier on women than on men. Perhaps then it is necessary to investigate the very format of feminist biography to see whether only the approach rather then the author or the subject need be qualified as feminist.

What might a feminist biography look like? In content and perhaps even in form, such biography may well be different from others. Two basic assumptions likely guide the research for and the writing of a feminist biography. The first, deceptively simple when stated but surprisingly lacking from most biographies, is that the sex of the subject makes a difference. The life story of a given individual would necessarily be different had that person been of the "opposite sex." Supposing, for example, that Thérèse Casgrain had been a man? She certainly was aware that her life would have been different: "Had I been born a man I'd be prime minister of Canada or in jail" to which she laughingly added: "What a choice!"[24] She meant to imply that being a woman had given her far more choice, far more variety and ultimately a more interesting life. But one may be permitted to wonder and a feminist biographer is under the obligation to do so. I doubt, however, that the thought ever crossed the mind of Ken McNaught or Craig Brown when writing about J.S. Woodsworth or Robert Borden.[25] Nor were they likely to have pondered the second assumption of feminist biography: that if the subject happens to be a woman she probably encountered constraints simply because of that fact. Male subjects may well have stumbled up against barriers of poverty or ideology or even ill health but seldom are they burdened with specific constraints because of their maleness.[26]

Given these two assumptions, feminist biography will likely have to investigate the life of an individual from at least three different vantage points. The first, the vantage point of the life cycle, seems obvious and even trite when speaking of biography for how else can one arrange the life of an individual except from birth through death? But an awareness of gender makes all the difference: the childhood, adolescence, work experience, familial relations will be quite distinctive depending upon the sex of the subject. And if, by chance, the subject happens to be a feminist as is the case with Thérèse Casgrain for example, a biographer wants to know many things about the stages of her life cycle. What was particular about the stages that caused her to emerge as a feminist? Or did she, as a feminist, experience some of these stages differently from other women? Might her feminism in fact have changed across the stages? And in light of that

can one explain the varying reactions to her during her lifetime?

The second vantage point for feminist biography is less obvious and perhaps more applicable to male *or* female subjects. It entails investigating relationships, something that seems peculiarly characteristic of women but need not be limited to them when used as a means of analyzing a given individual. It just may be possible to discern a historical character more clearly by looking specifically at the relationships of that character, be they familial, friendly or political with males, females, parents or children. Relationships may even define a person (one is one's connections) while attitudes to various relationships will certainly distinguish that person. Changes in relationships will then not only reveal character as it is affected by the change but also alter circumstance, limiting or enhancing what an individual can do. Marriage, for example, allowed Thérèse Casgrain to engage in social work on an unpaid and unprofessional basis: the income and position of her husband freed her from the training and professional experience that other young women were acquiring in the 1920s. That same marriage lent great credibility to her work for women's rights: Premier Taschereau might refuse her annual request for votes for Quebec women but he could not refuse to see her, the wife of a prominent Liberal M.P. Later, the end of the marriage allowed Casgrain to leap into active politics: as a widow during the 1950s, she was the first woman to lead a policital party in Canada (the CCF no less!). Another relationship, that of motherhood, should allow a biographer to probe further still. What limitations, what possibilities exist for an individual with children? Both Thérèse Casgrain and Nellie McClung, to add another example, used their impeccable credentials as mothers to gain entry into terrain very hostile to women's rights.[27] Some of Casgrain's children, however, were decidedly uneasy about their mother's CCF activities and that may well have made a difference to her behaviour.[28]

The third vantage point for feminist biography is likely to be a sensitivity to an exploration of norms, social conventions and roles. Once again the feminist assumption that these conventions weigh more heavily on women could come under scrutiny. Investigating men as well as women from such a vantage point might prove most enlightening. A biographer could begin by wondering just what a given society, be it family, class or nation, expects of a particular individual. From there the biography could scrutinize the reaction of the individual to those expectations. Are they absorbed, rejected, accommodated, circumvented or changed? Might an individual even derive strength from them or perhaps make use of them for specific purposes? A young woman of Thérèse Casgrain's background, status, education, wealth and marital expectations *had*, for example, to be charming. She was and that charm opened many a political door, disarmed many a chauvinist, attracted many a supporter and brought many a social issue to the fore. How did others cope with the expectations that surrounded them? The coping reveals character; feminist biography, by tracing that coping across individual life cycles and through myriad relationships, may have some of the answers.

Intertwined among these three vantage points are two other possible characteristics of feminist biography. One might require, for example, that such a biography hunt for and document an individual's struggle for autonomy. The difficulty with such a requirement is that it may be placing a feminist norm of the 1980s upon quite different people in an entirely different era. It may even be incompatible with the investigation of relationships: is one in fact autonomous within a relationship? Then too, autonomy itself may have a variety of meanings, some of them perhaps depending on whether one is male or female. But a feminist biography might be demanding even more. Could it legitimately require of its subject a commitment to bring about change in society? With change defined

sufficiently broadly, one could perhaps encompass all subjects of biographies in any case; the feminist qualifier could then be redundant. Or such a requirement may be confusing one of the purposes of feminist biography with its actual format.

Format, of course, is more than just content. The form itself, the structure, the shape of a feminist biography may have to be as different from conventional biography as are its purpose and content. Style may be a political as well as a literary device.[29] How does one fit a woman's life to the pattern of chronological, linear development so common in biographies of men: he developed, he achieved, he declined? Most women do not have such a single direction to their lives; usually if they become subjects of biographies at all they have been involved in hundreds of things at the same time. Once again, Thérèse Casgrain is an illustration weaving political, feminist, charitable, patriotic and pacifist activities in and out of her family and social responsibilities with a sleight of hand that leaves most observers gasping (and some critics, mesmerized by the male career pattern, hinting at flightiness). Is there some way of conveying that multifaceted activity in the style itself of the biography and hence of revealing the individual all the more?

Or should an altered form accompany a focus on explanation rather than on accomplishments? Standard biographies of men stress the latter; feminist biographies of men or women might have to stress the former. Structure and style may have to be different in order to accommodate that. Even though, for example, Pierre Trudeau and Thérèse Casgrain were both politicians, a biographer would likely approach them differently. He has accomplishments which can be noted and assessed; his activities are considered normal, no matter how exceptional an individual he may be. Her achievements need rather to be explained; how did an individual with her privileged background come to play such a prominent role as gadfly in a society unused to public women? Her activities are abnormal, no matter how conventional an individual she may be. An abnormal form may therefore be required to contain her.

What that form will look like has undoubtedly to await the structuring of feminist biographies in Canada. Likely the form will fit the purpose; authors may experiment with forms of film or of fiction in order to bring subjects closer to a larger audience. Or the relationship between author and subject may become of more interest than that between author and audience or subject and audience.[30] In that case one might foresee a biography/autobiography in the form of a dialogue between subject and author.

Whether it be in form, content or purpose, therefore, feminist biography appears to offer something a little different to readers and practitioners alike, whether they be feminists or not.

Notes

1. James L. Clifford, *From Puzzles to Portraits. Problems of a Literary Biographer* (Chapel Hill, 1970), p.vii; R. Craig Brown, "Biography in Canadian History," Presidential address to the Canadian Historical Association, June 1980. CHA *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* 1980, pp. 1-8 passim
2. The skeleton of this paper was exposed at a seminar as part of my duties as Seagram Lecturer at the University of Toronto in January 1984. Bits of the flesh (and bones) were examined during a semester-long course at the University of Ottawa in 1983. I wish to thank students Joan Busby, Denis Cousineau, Lynn Gorman, Nicole Lemire, Natalie Lerner, Candace Loewen, Deby Nash, Lisa Pottie and Shauna Tucker who willingly agreed to focus on feminist biography in a Canadian women's history course. Their interest and sometimes their scepticism were a constant source of encouragement to me. My own interest in the topic seems to have been running parallel to that of feminist scholars in the United States where a panel session on "Constructing Women's History through Biography" at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women at Smith College in June 1984, expected to attract an audience of twenty or so, drew some two hundred of the two thousand participants at the conference. And a fascinating collection of essays *Between Women* has just appeared (ed. Carol Asher, Louise De Salvo and Sara Ruddick; Boston, 1984) although it confirms the notion that literary scholars rather than historians are primarily interested in biography. Of the twenty-five biographers, novelists, critics, teachers and artists writing in a very self-conscious manner about their work on women, only one is a historian. Scholarly periodicals only hint at the topic: *Signs*, *Feminist Studies* and *Biography* combined have only

nine articles about biographies of women. Even a feminist publication *Hectate* proved to be a disappointment: an article alluringly entitled "The Methodology of Feminist Biography" (*Hectate* 7, 2 (1981), pp. 41-59) turned out to be an interview by Susan Gardner with Ann Scott and Ruth First about how they divided their joint authorship of *Olive Schreiner* (London, 1980).

3. John A. Garraty, *The Nature of Biography* (New York, 1957), p. 259.
4. Frank Underhill, long since dead but quoted with seeming approval by historians very much alive in a brand-new book: J.L. Granatstein *et al.*, *Twentieth Century Canada* (Toronto, 1983), p. 2.
5. The kind of criticism levelled at "traditional" history of women by feminist scholars implies this. See, for example, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman and the New History," *Feminist Studies* 3, 1/2 (Fall, 1975), p. 186.
6. Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women's History in Transition: the European Case," *Feminist Studies* 3, 3/4 (Spring-Summer, 1976), pp. 83-103.
7. M.Q. Innis, ed., *The Clear Spirit. Twenty Canadian Women and Their Times* (Toronto, 1966); E.B. Allaire, *Têtes de femmes. Essais biographiques.* 3e édition (Québec, 1965).
8. Margot Peters, "Biographies of Women," *Biography* 2, 3 (Summer, 1979) pp. 201-17 explores this issue through the biographies of Charlotte Bronte and Mary Wollstonecraft. She adds her own worry about what she calls a feminist version of such stereotyping which posits an eternal feminine psyche and thereby removes women from time and place.
9. My favourites are Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher. A Study in American Domesticity* [1973] (New York, 1976) and Cecil Woodham Smith *Florence Nightingale*, [1951] (London, 1964).
10. John S. Crosbie, *The Incredible Mrs Chadwick* (Toronto, 1975).
11. See, for example, Janet M. Todd, "The Biographies of Mary Wollstonecraft," *Signs* I, 3, 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 721-34. As for George Sand, Joseph Barry attempts to redress the balance in her favour but probably exaggerates in the opposite direction by making of her a thoroughly modern feminist. Nonetheless his biography is entitled *Infamous Woman* (New York, 1977), tranlated into French as *George Sand ou le scandale de la liberté* (Paris, 1982). Thanks to Marie-Laure Girou-Swiderski for drawing this illustration to my attention.
12. For all its scholarly charm and excellence, Maria Tippett's prize-winning *Emily Carr* (Toronto, 1979) has a hint of this: that Carr turned to art because of a failed marriage prospect. The point is made by Donna Smyth in her review of the Tippett and Doris Shadbolt books on Carr in *Atlantis* 5, 2 (Spring 1980), pp. 221-27.
13. For a new discussion of the popularity of romance fiction see Kay Mussell, *Fantasy and Reconciliation Contemporary Formulas of Women's Romance Fiction.* (Westport, Conn., 1984).
14. This is the approach of a number of the essays, only one of which is biographical in nature, in L. Kealey (ed.) *A Not Unreasonable Claim. Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s.* (Toronto, 1979).
15. Note the revealing title of Carol Bacchi's study of the ideas of English-Canadian suffragists: *Liberation Deferred* (Toronto, 1983).
16. See, for example, the painfully honest revelation of just such a route taken by Leah Blatt Glasser, " 'She is the one you call sister': Discovering Mary Wilkins Freeman," in Carol Asher *et al.* (eds.) *Between Women*, pp. 187-209.
17. Many of the papers at the annual meeting of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women in Vancouver (Nov. 1983) discussed the possible loss of this commitment as feminism becomes just another approach to literary, sociological or historical studies.
18. Juliet Mitchell's proposal for a theoretical framework for the understanding of women's lives: "Women: the Longest Revolution," *New Left Review*, 40 (Nov.-Dec. 1966), reprinted as a pamphlet by New England Free Press (n.d.). Other feminist scholars have argued with or added to Mitchell's four-fold containment of women, historians feeling particularly confined by it. A number of the papers at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women at Radcliffe in 1974 addressed this issue. See, for example, the articles by Gerda Lerner and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg in *Feminist Studies* 3, 2/2 (Fall 1975).
19. Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Ruth Benedict Papers, unpublished manuscript "Adventures in Womanhood" as quoted by Joyce Antler, "Feminism as Life Process," *Feminist Studies* 7, 1 (Spring 1981), p. 154. Some feminist writers understood this intuitively and constructed their book accordingly. See, for example, Adrienne Rich *Of Woman Born* (New York, 1976) and Susan Brownmiller *Femininity* (New York, 1984) both of which are part autobiography and part feminist analysis. This interweaving of the scholarly and the personal is characteristic also of the essays in *Between Women.*
20. Eliane Silverman's characterization of the work of Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart, in "Writing Canadian Women's History, 1970-82: an Historiographical Analysis," *Canadian Historical Review* LXIII, 4 (Dec. 1982), p. 529.
21. Although it is not a biographical study, Marta Danylewycz' "Changing relationships: Nuns and Feminists in Montreal, 1890-1925," *Histoire sociale/Social History* XIV, No 28 (Nov. 1981), pp. 413-434 does look at individual links.
22. Not that the sources, even for "known" women, are always satisfactory. Thérèse Casgrain's papers in the PAC amount to eleven boxes. While I chafed at the limitations during the summer of 1983, my colleague David Bercuson was happily devouring some two hundred and fifty boxes of a relatively minor Liberal politician Brooke Claxton. The difference seems to be Casgrain's lack of a secretary.
23. Thanks to Marta Danylewycz for this suggestive comparison.
24. Montreal *Star*, 8 Oct. 1970.
25. K.W. McNaught, *A Prophet in Politics* (Toronto, 1959); R.C. Brown, *Robert Laird Borden* 2 vols. (Toronto, 1975 and 1980). I was gratified to hear that Ken McNaught, very attentive during my presentation of this topic, intended to reread his Woodsworth in light of my remarks.
26. The hostility to homosexuals and the barriers frequently placed in their career paths throw some troubling light on this subject. Many cultures regard women as symbols of sexuality ("less personnes du sexe" in French for example) and much of the early opposition to higher education for women seem to have been based on the (sexually) disruptive presence of women among presumably vulnerable young men. Now that homosexuals are openly declaring men as sexual beings and thereby raising such a furor, one may have to state more frankly the basis for discrimination against women.
27. For all the McClung family humour about the situation (husband Wes trained son Mark to recite "I am a suffragette's son and never knew a mother's love." See photograph caption in Candace Savage, *Our Nell* (Saskatoon, 1979), between pp. 138-139), she was sensitive to it as well. "I was vulneraable in five places [her five children] and I tried to guard against any grounds for suspicion." N. McClung, *The Stream Runs Fast* (Toronto, 1965), p. 126.

28. The Casgrain children wanted her to delay taking on the leadership of the provincial CCF for fear that it jeopardize the settlement of her husband's estate. PAC, CCF papers, vol. 35, Jacques V. Morin to Lorne Ingle, 21 June 1951. The uneasiness was still evident more than thirty years later in a telephone conversation with the eldest Casgrain daughter, Madame Hélène (Bernard) Panet-Raymond. She reacted with a cry of disdain when I said I was particularly interested in her mother's work with the CCF. Telephone conversation, 14 Dec. 1983. For a more thorough examination of this time of Casgrain's life see Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "Thérèse Casgrain and the CCF in Quebec," *Canadian Historical Review* June 1985.
29. Autobiographies by women have hinted at this by deliberately eschewing a linear portrayal of their authors' lives. The approach drives conventional literary critics crazy. See, for example, the fascinating article by Suzanne Juhasz, "Towards a theory of Form in Feminist Autobiography: Kate Millett's *Flying* and *Sita*; Maxime Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*" as well as other essays in Estelle C. Jelinek (ed.) *Women's Autobiography* (Bloomington, 1980).
30. This is a curious thread running through many of the essays in *Between Women*.

MAVIS GALLANT, Paris, 1976.