

more persistent thumbsuckers than boys. Perhaps mothers intuitively sense a girl's affinity for oral comforting. This may provide a partial explanation for the discomfort Caplan states that mothers feel over feeding daughters.

It appears that the author is an exponent of critical period theorization and the irreversibility of effects of early behavior. Even though this sounds very negative, the author does see light in the dungeon. However, we are more than damsels in distress and her suggestions for improvement are based on changing stereotypical ways of reacting, primarily through increased communication amongst women.

This conflict over nurturance continues throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood. The subsequent difficulties between women wrought by the mother-daughter relationship are fears of homosexuality, concern of women about social disapproval by other women who are the guardians for society and general alienation of women from their own needs. Caplan sees the adult woman moving into working relationships and friendships with other women, and as she goes on to have daughters of her own, she carries with her the often still unmet needs, fears and hopes that informed her developing relationship with her mother.

The third section of the book deals with women's personal relationships and women in society. In this section Caplan discusses the bind women are in. Women find themselves divided against themselves in every kind of work.

The book is delightful to read as the author moves from personal observations, to attribution, Freudian and social-cognitive theories, and clinical observations. Although her style is engaging and her ideas stimulating, the support and argumentation for her position is often not fully developed and sometimes con-

fusing. Since her argumentation is based on a life-span analysis, deletion of discussion of menopause and old age seem to be major gaps. Yet female-female relationships are believed to be critical for the aging population. Caplan's brief comments on aging are extremely superficial. Also, different styles of mother-daughter interaction are only acknowledged in the section on adulthood. Caplan states in her preface that her observations do not apply to all women. Nevertheless it is easy to lose sight of this comment in the body of the book where there is little discussion of individual differences or multiplicity of patterns.

At an intuitive and clinical level Caplan's propositions ring true. For instance, the "Queen Bee" has suffered greatly in the literature, but is treated rather sympathetically by Caplan who realizes that the "Queen Bee" is also caught and dissatisfied. This volume is a treasure-trove of untested hypotheses waiting for those engaged in research on women. I have already encouraged many of my friends (male and female) to read the book.

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My Mother the Judge. Elsie Gregory MacGill. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1981. Pp. 248.

Originally published in 1955, *My Mother the Judge*, a biography of Helen Gregory MacGill (1864-1947), has been reissued in paperback with an introduction by Naomi Black. Although so closely related to her subject, Elsie Gregory MacGill has succeeded in balancing

distance with intimacy, authority with warmth. She also demonstrates how seemingly minor customs affecting women distort our estimate of historical significance and our understanding of social change.

As her biographer makes clear, the Family Connection loomed large in well-born Helen Gregory's growing-up years in late nineteenth-century Hamilton. Bored with balls, at homes and conversazione, restless young Helen announced her ambition to be a concert pianist and applied for studies in music at the University of Toronto. When the governing body of Trinity College refused permission for her to attend lectures in 1885 (women could earn degrees, as long as they did not clutter up the classrooms), Helen's grandfather, a senior judge, interceded "at the highest level" on her behalf, and the doors were opened. (p. 46). Thus comfortably and quietly did nineteenth-century Ontario go about its social adjustments, without recourse to ill-bred popular agitations. (Compare the coincidence of the Smith family's fortunate acquaintance with Principal Grant when Elizabeth Smith declared her wish to study medicine in Canada: Elizabeth and three other women were admitted to Queen's in 1880, toppling another barrier to the economic and intellectual independence of Canadian women.)

Elsie MacGill acknowledges a residue of snobbishness in Helen's middle-class outlook, but argues convincingly for the altruism behind her mother's long years of work in a variety of reform causes affecting women and children, among them access for women to higher education and the professions, female suffrage, maternal guardianship rights, married women's property rights, and especially later in life, prison and delinquency law reform. Helen MacGill's self-administered legal education earned her appointment in 1917 at age 53 to the Vancouver Juvenile Court, hard on the heels of similar appointments in Ed-

monton and Calgary, where Emily Murphy and Alice Jamieson presided.

The Family Connection did more than open doors, however. As chronicler of her mother's career, Elsie MacGill posits a "golden thread" in every life, a unifying principle that "reveals our moral purpose and dictates a recurring pattern of thought and action clearly discernible in our work." (p. xxx). Psychologists and philosophers may raise questions about this assumption, but its usefulness to the working biographer is beyond dispute. Furthermore, by looking beyond the individual into the past and (by implication) into the future, Elsie reduces the mystical and deterministic elements in this concept and transforms it into a process of conscious bequest and inheritance between generations.

For this reason the impatient reader should not skip too quickly over the genealogical first chapter of the book. True, male forebears are catalogued in meticulous detail, but so are female ones. Here we meet Jane Racey, who at eighteen was "competent to run a home of her own from the making of candles to the fining of wine." (p. 7). Jane acquired her competence as well as her beauty from her mother Ann, who raised eight children, ran the family farm while her husband engaged in Family Compact politics, and carried on mission and social-service work among the Six Nation Indians in her spare time. Jane was mother to Emma, who was mother to Helen, who was mother to Elsie, who wrote that "the 'golden thread' . . . for Ann and Jane and Emma and Helen was a fierce sympathy for the weak and the oppressed." (p. 93). These four women, and Elsie too, also shared a conviction, borne out by practice, that family responsibilities led inevitably to public ones. The golden thread, in short, explains more than a single life; it also provides the strand that connects sympathies, actions and principles over a century and a half

through transmission from mother to daughter.

David A. Gagan has taken much the same kind of approach in his useful little book of 1973 on the ultra-conservative Denison family of Toronto. There are other Family Connections in Canadian social and intellectual history—the Grants, Parkins, Masseys, Gordons, Creightons, McNaughts, to name a few—where patterns of continuity and change could similarly be drawn in. The difficulty, however, in tracing a historical profile of Canada's female pattern-makers is implicit in Elsie's formulation just quoted—"Ann and Jane and Emma and Helen"—as well as in Naomi Black's respectful reminder that "there are still MacGill women," by which she means the daughters of Helen Hughes, Elsie's elder sister. MacGill women, but without the MacGill name: each name-change at marriage obscures the family connection and leaves the achievements of these remarkable women vulnerable to involuntary dispersal among the chronicles of male relatives. We are fortunate that Elsie, the conscious legatee of four generations of MacGill women, had the wit to see that sharing a surname is less important to a family connection than sharing an outlook or belief.

Although unfailingly intelligent, informed and literate, *My Mother the Judge* was written without the documentation that a scholarly biographer would now provide. Elsie MacGill's sources are generally clear, however; newspaper and magazine articles, pamphlets, statutes and so on are often identified in the text, while family papers, anecdotes and personal memories make up the rest. Purists may on occasion question the attribution of feelings, motives, unspoken questionings to actors in the narrative, yet the net effect is one of judicious and reliable if affectionate portrayal.

Naomi Black provides a succinct, uncluttered introduction well suited to the reprinted

document, summing up the book's highlights and commenting on their significance for current feminist analysis. Remarking on the fact that Helen's most active years in public life followed her youngest children's entry into adolescence, Black explains that "for Helen, as for most feminists of the day, public service was an extension of family responsibilities and would never have been allowed to take precedence." (p. xvi). Black also answers those who criticize the stodgy conservatism of feminist thought in Canada. The vision of social reform espoused by the MacGill women is "not a conservative" one, she argues, despite its avowed gradualism, since the society where women and men could work with equal authority and effectiveness for humane goals has never existed in history. Black goes on to say that "relatively cautious reform techniques continue to be appropriate in the Canadian context." Where *realpolitik* is the cultural norm, the appeal to abstract rights and the expectation of radical change are equally out of place. In Black's view, "progress is made by a constant effort to exploit and expand existing constraints." Thus the MacGill women "represent a small part of a continuing tradition of changing a society by how one lives within it." (p. xxiii-xxiv). From this standpoint, *My Mother the Judge* serves as both record and blueprint.

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We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill. Margaret Gillett. *Montreal: Eden Press Women's Publications, 1981. Pp. 476.*

Some of the everyday experiences of the very first women who studied at McGill included being chaperoned by a Lady Superintendent who "sat with her knitting in the tiny labora-