

Murray and Dr. Johnson who were deeply involved in the womens' debate, we also come to know intimately the early women involved in the struggle through the way Gillett manifests and presents their experiences as individuals and as a group. Gillett does more than merely describe changes and developments that took place in those early years. She succeeds in bringing to life, and explaining these changes by mining the experiences of the women involved. In the first half of her book Gillett indeed writes women into the history of McGill in a manner that feminists would heartily applaud. However, towards the end of Part 2, and throughout most of Part 3, Gillett's talent wanes, and the book tends to be somewhat boring in its recounting of innumerable facts, accomplishments and such. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the fact that Gillett's writing strengths seems to lie more in dealing with personalities that dominate areas of history and through them breathing life into the history of the period, than in handling events in periods which are devoid of dominating persons, as is the case in the less interesting sections of her book.

The extensive use of carefully selected photographs enhances the book by bringing an added dimension to the personalities and events encountered in the book. Very ample appendices to the book provide valuable information on such things as: female enrollment from 1880-1980, the involvement of non-academic women in campus affairs, honours and honorary degrees conferred on women, women's "firsts" at McGill, chancellors and principals of McGill, as well as Wardens of the Royal Victoria College. Although Gillett comes to the book with a feminist perspective, she does not come with an axe to grind. She cogently sums up situations, asks hard questions and makes insightful comments about the position and role of women in the course of McGill's history. Her interpretation throughout is clear, scholarly and adds life to the documentation.

All in all, this is an excellent book which the general reader will enjoy, which scholars interested in writing women into history will find valuable as a model and which professors of women studies will find as an excellent reference text, or as required reading for students.

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**Pioneer and Gentlewomen of British North America, 1713-1867. (Documents in Canadian Women's History. Volume I).** Beth Light and Alison Prentice, eds;. Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1980. Pp. 245.

**Uphill all the Way. A Documentary History of Women in Australia.** Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane, eds;. St. Lucia: Queensland, University of Queensland Press, 1980. Pp. 335.

These volumes have much in common: they are similar in format, and represent recent trends in feminist historical writing. They stem from the quest of women to recover and to re-define our past, and represent our efforts to discover and create materials to aid us in that quest. Yet there are differences in the approaches taken by the editors of the two collections, as well as differences in the historical experiences the works seek to represent. These differences make it difficult for me to discuss the books together, so I have chosen to describe and react to them sequentially. Let me begin by saying I liked them both very much and intend to introduce to them as many students and friends as possible. Yet I would use the two books rather differently: *Pioneer and Gentlewomen* I would hand out unhesitatingly to all comers, while *Uphill* I would wish to introduce, to qualify, and to hedge about with supplementary

material. This is partly a reflection of my own comfort with the times and places covered and partly because I think that the former book deals with its material better than the latter.

*Pioneer and Gentlewomen* is the first volume of a planned series of documents in Canadian women's history. The aim of the series as explained by the editor Alison Prentice, is to "retrieve and make accessible" records of women's experiences and to help us interpret and understand our past, in order to create a history of women in Canada from a women's point of view. The documents in the series and in this volume come from a wide range of sources, including every variety of written record and communication, from photographs and drawings, from songs by or about women.

The series centres on three major themes: the life cycle, the apparently increasing "tension between public and domestic life" and "women's needs concerns" versus the "demands of changing economic conditions, of governments and churchmen, and of advertisers" trying to get us to do what they wanted. By representing the experiences of women of Acadia and New France, of British North America and of Canada, the series intends to help us find out "who we were and are, and who we might become." Noble aims! and at the risk of sounding starry-eyed, I think this volume accomplishes what it intended.

The introduction to this book is excellent and could serve as a model for works of this genre. The editors begin by specifying who they include: some native and French Canadian women, but mostly immigrant women from the British Isles and American colonies. The editors set out (thank goodness) the context in which these women found themselves, describing political events, military actions and population movements. This is a quick course in the history of the period, capped by a discussion of how these factors affected

women's lives. The discussion turns to economic life and explains the predominance of the rural setting, the workings of the rural economy and women's part therein and the impact on women's lives of technological and organisational changes in manufacturing. Included are consequences for women's paid and unpaid work, education and leisure.

Women's culture is also discussed, in terms of the impact of urbanisation, of women's social and social service activities (and the relation of these to class), and the irrelevance of much of these aspects of women's culture to the lives of the majority of rural women. Attention to the "prosaic daily round" permits the observation that it is hard to generalise about the typical daily life in the period, because of the differences in experience (immigration, for example), generation, race, class and locale, as well as the life cycle, which the editors have used as a major organising device for the collection. The life cycle allows the exploration of experiences women may have shared, despite all the differences between them.

*Pioneer and Gentlewomen* is divided into three major sections in eight chapters containing several subthemes. The first section deals with the experiences of childhood and growing up in rural, urban and upper class settings and the lives of single young women. The second chapter looks at household service, paid work outside the household and the reflections of these young women on their lives. The third chapter on education, includes home education, girls' schools and coeducation. The second section of the book examines marriage-related topics beginning with courtship, continuing to "the practical side of marriage," marriage and the community and relationships between the spouses. Chapter five describes the work of wives such as childbirth, motherhood and contributing to the household economy. (Note the categorisation here). Next are separation, widowhood and old age.

The third section explores women's public activities and reactions to them. Activities include the religious and charitable, the political and employment in the public sphere. The final chapter is concerned with attempts to regulate the roles and status of women: the law, community pressure and public opinion. This book is completed by a good bibliography and a useful index.

The introduction, organisation, topics and documents are admirable. So they might be, for they represent not only the considerable expertise of Light and Prentice, but the comments, contributions and cooperation of several of the women's and social historians in Canada. The high quality and utility of the work is continued in the introductions to each of the eight chapters, wherein the contents are related to some of the important studies of the topic, and particular documents are discussed to put the experiences they represent into perspective. Explanations, biographical data or other contextual material precede each document. All of these features (including the clean spare style) make this book a delight to read and a joy to use. What is particularly important, I think, is that the book can be enjoyed and used by the lay and academic reader alike, whatever her purpose or fund of background information. I recommend it for classroom use, research and just-for-fun reading. The book will also be useful in other countries; the background material is sufficient to permit the book to stand on its own, and to minimise the dangers of misinterpretation due to unfamiliarity with the Canadian setting.

Huzzahs aside, the organisation of the book warrants further comment. It seems to me that one of the primary dilemmas of the historian is the problem of representation. That is, she must assess to what extent an event or an experience that she confronts in the past, is representative of the lives of the group with which she is concerned. Further, she must try to

determine how far that group is representative of everybody else. Of course, she can't always (or even often) do this with any degree of certainty. Nevertheless, she must do the best she can to assess her data against this measure, and to tell us clearly to whom she is referring. That usually implies she must make some assumptions about how society was divided in the time and place she examines. A lot of hard thinking is required, always in terms of the context of data, of her topic, and about the unknowable answers to unanswerable questions.

Not easy, but it's sometimes fun and anyway it's a part of the job. I also suspect (and I have no wish to footnote here the literature on the psychology of women and female socialization) that it is a process for which our female (perhaps more than our historical) training leaves us well equipped. We can look to this volume to see how all this should be done.

The second point suggested by the volume's organisation is the importance of the categories we use. As a number of us have pointed out in a decade of "why women's history" talks and publications, traditional malestream elite academic history leaves us out because its topics are usually based on turning points in the lives of powerful men. Even "histories of the common people" often turn out to mean "the common man." So we have tried to integrate our experiences into (men's) history. We have also tried to start from scratch and create history based on categories representative of women's shared experiences. The results of this approach differ rather markedly from malestream history, not excepting its less traditional branches such as social and labour history. As an example, I refer to one of the better of these latter, Irving Abella and David Millar's *The Canadian Worker in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Oxford, 1978), wherein the unpaid work of women is listed under "Home Life", while only the paid work falls within "Women's Work." (Another case of 'Môman

a travaille pas, a trop d'ouvrage'.) Compare these with the categorisation of Light and Prentice. When David Millar brought these differences to my attention, he commented that he and Irving Abella had "known enough to include the material, but not enough to know what to call it."

When we began as fledgling feminist historians somewhat more than a decade ago in Canada, we faced a frustrating lack of resources which made our work very difficult. Much of our efforts of the last decade have been shaped by that lack. We undertook two major tasks: to locate existing resources and to create new ones. *Pioneer and Gentlewomen* is such a resource. Like much of its genre, it is a superb example not only of the type of resources we need to do good women's history, but of top-notch women's history in itself. I expect that the subsequent volumes in this series will be of similarly high quality.

Much as I enjoyed *Uphill All The Way*, I am not as enthusiastic about it as I am about *Pioneer*. Part of this is my problem; I cannot bring as much to my reading of *Uphill* because I am not well informed about the events of several significant periods in Australian history, and worse, I have rather fuzzy ideas of the major determinants of these events. I wish I knew more but reading *Uphill* has piqued my curiosity sufficiently to send me back to Australian history. Yet this is not quite enough.

*Uphill* is in many respects similar to *Pioneer*. *Uphill* comes out of the feminist movement and the movement to create resources for women's history; it is organized around women's shared experiences. Daniels and Murnane previously helped to edit a pioneering bibliography on women in Australia (*Women in Australia: An Annotated Guide to Records*, edited with Anne Picot, Canberra: Australia Government Printing Service, 1977) which they say led them to much of the material included here.

*Uphill* covers the period from earliest European settlement to the early 1950s—some 250 years. The material in the collection comes from a diversity of sources including government and other public documents, police records, the records of women's organizations, private letters and notes and transcripts of radio broadcasts, speeches and oral history interviews. The editors tell us what interest group each speaker represents so we can keep a sense of her niche in the situation. Each document is numbered; a list of locations is provided, as is an index—all good points.

Daniels and Murnane intended their selection of themes and organization of material to make visible their ideas about "the position of women in Australia and the way that the study of women's history can be approached." They explain that they selected topics partly on the basis of the existence of documentaton produced by "issues" (when women entered the official record as prostitutes, criminals or paupers). They also wanted to illustrate the resistance of women to oppression and exploitation. This resistance took various forms, from "fighting back against" individuals acting for repressive institutions and systems; to arson and similar violence against property; to the 1930's militancy of unemployed women and "wives of workers" (*sic*); to the more "sedate" rebellion of bourgeois women who wanted access to class privileges and did not want to give up feminine prerogatives. The two groups of women, say the editors, were separated by class and politics; they must be seen together and in terms of their divisions. (I think there are more than two groups of women, and more separations than those of class and politics; still I agree with the point).

The material is organized into four major sections, each introduced by an overview of the topic and documents, giving some background information and pointing out special cases and the significance of the subthemes in relation to

the material as a whole. The topics are: Outcasts of Society (Convict institutions, Girls' industrial schools, Destitute women and benevolence); Private Lives (Aboriginal women, Prostitution, Family and motherhood); Working women (Earning a living, Domestic servants, Professional women); Women and Politics.

The editors use a number of interpretive devices to highlight certain themes, such as a "cluster" of documents from several different points of view, relating to an event or issue. One such cluster concerns a dispute about the management of an Industrial School where inmates had rioted; others illustrate debates about prostitution, birth control and eugenics. These clusters are meant not only to illustrate the different attitudes of those concerned, but to illuminate the social relations between groups, and such processes as the transition from amateur to professional welfare administrators.

Daniels and Murnane have opted to use theme rather than chronology to set out the material. I found this somewhat confusing at times. The underlying causes of the situations or problems of the women were not always clear. Were they geopolitical or economic factors, such as the pattern of settlement or economic development, depressions or other crises, natural disasters such as droughts and the like; man-made disasters such as wars, conquest, seizure of aboriginal lands? Clearly there were socio-political constants at work. One was discrimination against the aboriginal peoples, if such is the proper word for the vicious practices of violence and segregation so central a part of Australian history. Further, there was systematic physical and social assault against aboriginal women and their children. Discrimination and to a certain extent, violence against *most* women was a constant, too.

These observations are commonplace. But how were these sets of influences interacting in

a given situation? To illustrate my difficulties, consider the theme of destitution. Certainly destitution was a common and recurring experience for women over the two centuries included in this collection. I can assume that destitution was widespread during the '30s depression, but I can't fill in the blanks for, say, examples from the 1860s. Nor can I assess examples from periods immediately before or after the '30s. The introduction to this section mentions various causes for the cases illustrated: unemployment due to lack of training for available jobs (Irish immigrant women in the mid-19th century); pauperisation of women workers due to competition from efficient modernised shops run by charitable institutions to train other women workers; injuries and disabilities caused by the shock and hardships of immigration and settlement conditions; restricted areas of employment for women (especially if they had children)—too few jobs, too many applicants, too little pay to live on; desertion or failure to support by male breadwinners; insufficient earnings. All of these are helpful, but they don't answer for me a central question of history: of whom and of how many is this representative?

These caveats aside, *Uphill* is a fine piece of work and is also a very good read. I think it can serve as a useful introduction to the history of women in Australia, although it needs to be supplemented with contextual materials. It could also be used to explore similarities and differences in women's experiences in Canada and Australia: we have much in common as colonies, as colonisers and as colonised. Like an imperfect mirror, the image of women's experiences in *Uphill* can guide us to new questions, insights and visions of women's lives in Canada and elsewhere.

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