

very constraints imposed on the data by the investigators' theoretical perspectives, for a man to dream about being a woman represents a fear, but for a woman to dream about being a man represents envy. No wonder such research finds support for its pre-conceptions.

Non-scientists cannot be expected to understand all the sources of error in studies of this kind. But more might be expected of psychologists such as Hyde & Rosenberg, writing a book intended for university classes. It takes considerable analysis and critical appraisal to separate truth and illusion in the turbulent area of sex differences.

Patrick O'Neill  
Acadia University

**Canada's Nursing Sisters** G.W.L. Nicholson. Toronto: Samuel Stevens Hakkert & Company-National Museum of Man, 1975. Pp. 272.

Official histories often tend to be narrow in focus and prosaic in tone. Canada's Nursing Sisters is no exception. As a history of Canadian military nursing it is very much an administrative study reflecting the conventional interpretation of Canada as a non-military nation,

never preparing for war, arming only in an emergency. In 1885 the emergency which prompted the introduction of military nurses was the North West Rebellion. Initiated as a temporary measure, little was done to integrate the nurses into or make them a part of the permanent force so that with the outbreak of the Boer War, some years later, an ad hoc arrangement again had to be made. Even when they became part of the permanent force the ebb and flow of their involvement continued. In peacetime their numbers were small and their work routine; only in wartime did they come into their own.

This is a frustrating book in many ways. We find out what these women did but not who they were. Their deeds, often heroic are suitably catalogued. And many of them deserve to be. Of the 3143 nursing sisters in World War I, 2594 served overseas and 46 died as a result of injuries or sickness sustained through military service. But why did these women do what they did--was it only for patriotic reasons as Nicholson suggests? Why did these women go into nursing in the first place? Were the reasons the same in 1885 as they were in 1939? Obviously the social context of opportunities for women had altered. Had the reasons changed as well? Once in the profession what prompted them to choose military nursing? No effort is made to answer these questions. When the first four Canadian nurses arrived in Cape Town during the Boer War they found they could not accompany their countrymen to the field hospitals as there was no accomo-

dation provided for them. Why not? Was it lack of foresight? Was it traditional antagonism to women being near battle lines? After the Boer War and before World War I, reserve nurses had to take a course on the ethics of military nursing. What were they? How did the ethics of military nursing differ from those of civilian nursing? Again no answers are provided. All these questions point to the lack of contextual perspective which pervades the narrative. The military nurses and the armed forces of which they are a part appear continually cut off from the society they are meant to serve.

As expected, the Army held traditional concepts of women. To be eligible for Permanent Force appointment, nurses were not allowed to be married. But what is surprising and should make Canadians proud is that nurses since 1901 have held military rank. In Britain this was not the case until 1949. Why? Colonel Nicholson rightly points out that Canadian nurses were more highly trained than those in Britain. Also he feels that Florence Nightingale had so upset the military establishment that nurses remained an auxiliary in order to maintain their freedom of action. Other reasons also come to mind. In 1901 the Canadian military establishment was not firmly established and its institutional framework was more flexible. Moreover the effects of granting rank to women would only be felt in time of war when nurses were needed. In peacetime their numbers and influence would be nominal.

The British situation was quite different. The British military had a long tradition in which the introduction of women would represent a radical change. And considering the active role of the British forces throughout the Empire, female nurses, if given military rank, would prove to be a visible and permanent part. Their numbers would not be nominal. Another explanation might also lie in the different concepts of women held by the Canadian and British people and what class perceptions they had about nurses.

Despite its deficiencies Canada's Nursing Sisters is a worthwhile effort. The military is or has been a male preserve and it is good to be reminded that women have long played a part in it.

Wendy Mitchinson  
Mount Saint Vincent University

