

d'Andrée. Et d'un coup, elle abandonne sa préparation pour son premier concours de pianiste de concert, laisse Dan et s'enfuit.

Au début du roman, nous la retrouvons en Grèce. Le soir, elle égaie les clients d'un petit restaurant de quartier avec sa musique. Depuis quelque temps, elle voyage en compagnie du riche et gâté Suisse, Mitch, avec qui elle s'est liée d'amitié afin d'éloigner d'éventuel soupirez. Elle trouve en lui le contraire d'elle-même: «Andrée avait fui les relations équivoques, Mitch en avait fait l'apologie.» Le voyage et le rapport avec Mitch symbolisent le chaos spirituel dans lequel Andrée se sent, et dont elle cherchera à s'extirper. Les six mois d'évasion prennent brusquement fin lorsqu'Andrée reçoit un télégramme annonçant que son père vient de subir une crise cardiaque. Elle retourne à Winnipeg. Son périple mondial est terminé, mais le long voyage vers une nouvelle compréhension de la condition humaine avec ses revirements et son absurdité, reste encore à faire.

Simone Chaput saisit bien ce moment clé de la vie de la jeune femme, dans tout ce qu'il a de flou et d'incertain. Le style est pointilliste, avec des scènes brèves et un minimum de repères temporels. Nous sentons la brume qui enveloppe Andrée et qui la contraint à avancer à tâtons. Mais si l'action coule comme la vie, l'auteure réussit complètement à bien situer son histoire par une accumulation de petits détails. Dans la cuisine du restaurant grec, «les comptoirs étaient chargés de tomates en pyramides et de feuilles de vigne amoncelées, de courgette et d'aubergines, glabres, plantureuses, presque animales. Et de l'agencement des viandes, des légumes et des béchamels, avaient surgi moussakas, tzatziki et dolmadhes...» De retour chez ses parents, d'abord l'odeur la frappe: «le mélange habituel de la soupe mijotée, de la fumée de cigare, de la terre humide des nombreuses plantes.» Puis, elle revoit les trophées, les certificats, les plaques et les prix qui témoignent du travail communautaire fait par son père au fil des ans. S'ajoutent les noms de nombreuses pièces de musique, celles jouées par sa mère sur le piano familial, celles entendues lors de concerts. Ces listes, ces entassements, sont autant de traces laissées derrière soi sur le chemin de la vie, servant de points de repère,

presque de points cardinaux, dans un monde livré au hasard.

Pour venir en aide à la famille pendant la convalescence de son père, Andrée le remplace dans l'épicerie dont il est propriétaire. Elle y retrouve le «passé sensuel de l'enfance, [les] jours truffés de goûts et d'odeurs, qui n'avaient rien à voir avec sa vie plus récente—disciplinée et cérébrale—de pianiste de concert...» Cette période fera lieu de guérison pour elle aussi, car Andrée apprendra à mieux apprécier, sinon à accepter complètement, le côté irrationnel de la vie.

Simone Chaput a remporté le prix littéraire *La Liberté* pour son premier roman, *La Vigne amère* (Saint-Boniface: Les Éditions du Blé, 1990). Dans *Un piano dans le noir*, elle nous livre un *bildungsroman* dont les deux plus grandes qualités sont l'actualité et la crédibilité de la protagoniste. Le style de l'auteure est souvent riche, surtout dans les descriptions. Les dialogues manquent un peu d'intérêt et la comparaison du rapport héroïne-piano avec celui d'une femme qui aime l'homme qui la bat m'a semblé exagérée, sinon de mauvais goût. Cependant, ces faiblesses, en somme mineures, n'enlèvent rien au plaisir qu'éprouveront les lectrices et les lecteurs de ce roman.

CLAIMING THE FUTURE: THE INSPIRING LIVES OF TWELVE CANADIAN WOMEN SCIENTISTS AND SCHOLARS

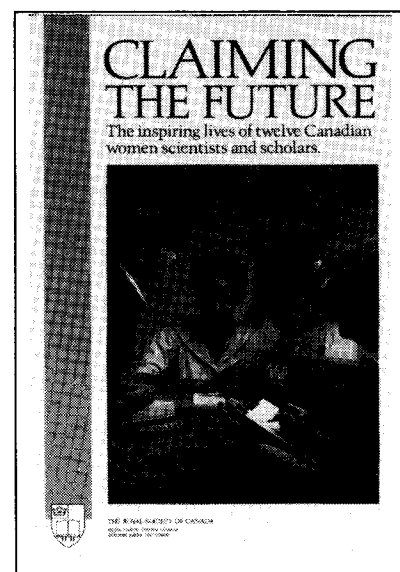
The Royal Society of Canada.
Markham: Pembroke Publishers
Limited, 1991.

by Jan Clarke

By presenting the life histories of twelve women scientists and scholars, *Claiming the Future* is intended to encourage young women to "claim a future for themselves in scholarship." The twelve women in-

cluded in the book are: Monique Frize, Sylvia Edland, Fernande Saint-Martin, Charlotte Keen, Judith Sayers, Julia Levy, Lorna Marsden, Madelaine Blanchet, Sylvia Olga Fedoruk, Thérèse Gouin-Décarie, Ann Saddlemeyer and Geraldine Kenney-Wallace. Even though there is no satisfactory explanation as to why these particular twelve were chosen as role models, they have made significant scholarly contributions and lived interesting lives. Unfortunately, discouraging young women from pursuing a career in science and scholarship is a more likely consequence of this uninspired and badly written publication.

If there is one approach which has been well practised in recent feminist literature, it is the writing of women's stories from the standpoint of women. Drawing



on this methodology to produce narratives which come alive and create vivid images of lived events and innovative research would do justice to the admittedly remarkable lives of these twelve women. Instead, these life histories are no more than dull biographies which do not capture the uniqueness of each woman's story.

The emphasis on grades in school, choice of courses in university, and brief career resumés is monotonous. The details of the men in the women's lives—with patronizing comments about choice of partners and friends—also trivializes these women's contributions. Obviously missing from these narratives are the voices of women talking about their expe-

riences from their viewpoint. Nonetheless, the encouraging message to young women that they can pursue their intellectual dreams, and with perseverance may even be able to 'have it all', does stand out as a strong statement throughout the book.

Since there are so few well written life stories of Canadian women scientists which do capture the excitement that is so much a part of innovative research and scholarly work, it is sad to see such a rare opportunity wasted. In fact, it is this work's weaknesses which reaffirm that writing herstories to vividly capture women's experiences is as important for the lives of scholars and scientists as it is for the rest of us.

WOMEN'S HISTORY REVIEW: v.1, no.1, 1992.

June Purvis, ed. Wallingford, U.K.:
Triangle Journals, 1992

by Jo Vellacott

Reviewing a journal is a challenge. I seldom read any issue of any journal from cover to cover, but select those articles I need to read for my own current work and then set it aside, though often with good intentions of coming back to read all that other interesting-looking stuff. But I am glad to have been asked to cover the first issue of this good new publication, which has provided me with an opportunity to stand back and take an overview of some trends in the writing of women's history.

Characteristically, women's studies expects to be relevant as well as academically sound; I am prepared to claim that relevance for all good feminist history. In addition, several articles here are of direct contemporary importance to feminist historians. We have a fascinating report by Hanna Behrend on her personal experience of developments in East Germany since unification. Although what really is a horror story is told here to put the record straight and for its own sake, Canadian

women may read in it a warning about what happens, under rampant capitalism, to the weaker partner of two hitherto separate economic "nations," and to women in the subordinated culture.

Behrend's article is good contemporary history, not written as a polemic, and I would have exchanged its position under the rubric "Viewpoint" (reserved, I understand, for controversial pieces), with the article by Rosemary Auchmuty, Sheila Jeffreys, and Elaine Miller on "Lesbian History and Gay Studies: keeping a feminist perspective." This too is an important article, timely and appropriate, and its main point, well taken, is that, as gay studies develops as a discipline, lesbians must make sure that they retain the power to define their own history, and to resist being made invisible or inferior within a male gay culture that has many elements in it which do not reflect their experience. The authors document the risk effectively from recent male gay writing. However, some of the opinions aired are controversial among lesbian feminists. And I feel obligated to record my view that it is seriously inappropriate in a feminist journal to find paedophilia listed as "one of a range of male gay sexual practices," a statement which, followed as it is by a claim that "for feminists paedophilia is the sexual abuse of children," barely stops short of endorsing the dangerous myth that every gay man is a child abuser, or at best finds paedophilia acceptable. And seeing the root of the evil as the abuse of power, I have trouble in contrasting and condoning, as the authors seem ready to do, "the kind of affair that sometimes happens between a woman teacher and her girl pupil."

A third article of current importance to feminist historians is David Doughan's short piece, "The End of Women's History? A View from the Fawcett Library," in which he describes the effects on resource collections of chronic underfunding, resulting in shortage of staff and the threat of the literal disappearance of significant documents left without the admittedly expensive protection needed to safeguard them from decay, or even from theft or misuse. Doughan speaks of what he knows (and many of us know *him*, and his work, with gratitude and respect). Implicit in his argument is the connection between the starvation of women's his-

torical resources and the overall slapping down by the conservative backlash of many of the women-supporting institutions which have grown up in recent years. We should take seriously his suspicion that "once more, a serious attempt is being made, possibly deliberately, certainly systematically, to exclude women from the mainstream of history."

Other articles found me reflecting on the relationship between history and theory. At one end of the scale, a historian may be content simply to tell a story, at the other end she or he may take a theory and rework a body of historical knowledge to show how it supports or challenges that theory. Both may be of use, although I think we should beware of acting as if it is the theory that validates the history, rather than the other way around. My bias is towards a middle position, that of research-based history from which the writer draws certain analytical conclusions. Sandra Stanley Holton's article on "The suffragist and the 'Average Woman'" is a model of this kind of writing. On her examination of the autobiographical writings of three suffragists, she bases her conclusion that suffrage work was often grounded in the personal experience of the domestic position of women, and should not be regarded as an activity marginal to the social history of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Eileen Janes Yeo's article on "Social Motherhood and the Sexual Communion of Labour in British Social Science, 1850-1950," though more complex, is similarly soundly based, an interesting and readable contribution to the debate surrounding the gains and losses made by those of our middle-class forebears who accepted the social division of labour but managed to subvert it to gain entry into public life, and eventually into academic fields. Her thesis is that, successful as the (conscious or unconscious) strategy of social mothering was in helping women gain a foothold in the public life of the middle class, it did little to break down—indeed, helped to create—barriers between social workers and the working class. Yeo's examples support her thesis well, though I am uncertain whether so much of the blame should be laid on the concept of "mothering" rather than directly on middle-class values. However, Mary Paley Marshall is