

explaining the extreme difficulties of sustaining a retraining program for women in a time of state cut-backs, while also showing why gender-specific training for low-income women is well worth pursuing.

Jan Kainer is an Associate Professor at York University. She teaches labour studies courses in the Division of Social Science and a course in the Scholl of Women's Studies.

TRANSFORMATIONS: THE LIFE OF MARGARET FULTON

James Doyle.
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REVIEWED BY CLARA THOMAS

In his introduction James Doyle tells us that he will focus on the public and professional aspects of Margaret Fulton's life. These are, of course, her long and successful career as a teacher and university administrator, beginning in 1942 in a one-room school near Birtle, Manitoba, where she was born in 1922. She retired in 1987 as President of Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax. Her public speaking career continued long after retirement, for she had early identified herself as an activist-feminist and she was known internationally for her advocacy of challenges to the accepted male-dominated system operative at all levels of the political and educational systems in Canada and elsewhere. She was the youngest of seven children in a farming family. Both her parents were notable for their involvement in community projects and in efforts to stabilize and improve the rural school system of the day. Writing of her childhood, Fulton considered her family to have been "shaped by independence, innovation, education, the work ethic, a respect for nature, and an awareness

of God as a spiritual source." From both her parents she also absorbed the socialist ideals that characterized the Canadian Cooperative Federation (CCF, later NDP). It was an upbringing that served her well as did a family closeness that remained throughout her entire career, especially among the trio of Fulton sisters.

Peggy Fulton, as she was called in the early years of her career, also had several outstanding pieces of good fortune helping her on her way; she had a natural "Presence"—when she came into a room you knew she was there; she had a good voice, an infectious laugh, and an endearing and easy smile. Most important, she had qualified herself for university work and a place in the company of movers and shakers in the early 1960s, when the Women's Movement was gathering strength and when there was an unprecedented establishment of new universities throughout Canada but especially in Ontario where she had come to do a PhD. Though she would have preferred to work on the papers of Thomas Carlyle's wife, Jane, she was persuaded to switch her interests to Thomas himself. That too turned out to be lastingly fortunate: she wrote her thesis on Carlyle's Public Lectures, and their rhetorical style and impassioned preachings suited her own platform manner thoroughly. Seldom has any student derived such lasting benefit from a dissertation topic. Her determined educational advance from Normal School in Winnipeg to a PhD in English from the University of Toronto in the '60s was fuelled by ambition, a capacity for hard work, an openness to new challenges and experiences, and a canny sense of timing which alerted her to likely paths toward her perceived goals. Along the way she read voraciously, discovering important models for her own feminism in various works by her precursor and fellow-Westerner Nellie McClung, the social critic Lewis Mumford, the early feminist Virginia Woolf, and the ecological critic Rachel Carson. Most important

for her future career path, she discovered her talent for public speaking: "For the first time I had the power of speech.... I saw what could be done with words, for I had the vision of a new world as I talked."

Her seven years in the English Department of Waterloo Lutheran University turned out to be her only full-time teaching assignment, for she went from there to be Dean of Women at U.B.C. and then on to be President of Mount St. Vincent. To be appointed President of a hitherto Roman Catholic-administered institution for women was a coup for E. Margaret Fulton as she now was professionally known and she made an outstanding success of her appointment. Like many another colleague who knew first hand the difficulties besetting a woman in the '60s and '70s, I consider her appointment and her achievements a splendid marker for women's acceptance in academia. Prime among her innovative ideas was the letter she sent out to a long mailing list of women asking them to contribute one dollar each to Mount St. Vincent's appeal for operating funds. The novelty and simplicity of its appeal worked: it was a fundraising ploy that was outstandingly successful. She went on, of course, from strength to strength, not without controversy, for her speeches were fearlessly outspoken and often could be understood as crossing the thin line between criticizing the world as men were running it and damning men in general. The Women's Movement gained ground, equity in hiring practices was more and more achieved and Women Studies' Programs, unthinkable in the '60s, became solid areas of many universities' structures.

In her final years as President of Mount St. Vincent Fulton devoted her speaking skills to advocating a complete transformation of society from its traditional hierarchical structure to a cooperative collegial one, away from what she considered a sterile "corporation" to a more benign model: "We need to teach

our students not only to recognize corruption and evil but to take a stand against it.” Always the feminist-activist, she was awarded several Honorary Degrees after her official retirement in 1987 and was tireless in participation in conferences here and abroad, particularly in Norway where as Scholar in Residence 1987-8 she shared in the establishing of Kvinneuniversitet (The Women’s University), the first of its kind in the world. Its purpose, Fulton said, is

to challenge all the old assumptions about male or female values and to seek alternatives which empower all people, aboriginals as well as oppressed national groups—to create a different global society.

Early in her career she picked up the word “transformations” from Lewis Mumford’s recipe for improving society and used it enthusiastically to describe her own ideals as well as the major moves in her own career path. At 85 she continues her crusade with indomitable will and courage.

It is impossible to find a clearly marked biographical path through Doyle’s narrative. Because he is primarily interested in Fulton’s thought and in commenting on her plethora of public speeches, he gives his readers no simple time-line through her life and career. Without it the overall effect of his work suffers and the reader is constantly back-checking for simple details of times and places, a frustrating necessity. Still his *Transformations* is a tribute to her rare stamina and spirit. Her name is an outstanding one on the Honour Role of Canadian feminism.

Clara Thomas was one of the two first women to be hired by York University. She has been with York since 1961, the year Glendon opened. She is now a retired Professor Emeritus. In 2005 York did her the honour of naming the libraries’ Archives and Special Collections the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.

RECOLLECTIONS OF WATERLOO LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY 1960- 1973

Flora Roy
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REVIEWED BY CLARA THOMAS

Recollections of Waterloo Lutheran University 1960-1973 follows Flora Roy’s *Recollections of Waterloo College*, telling the story of the evolving institution that we now know as Wilfrid Laurier University, a major player among Canadian universities. All three of the stages were achieved and maintained by groups of dedicated faculty and students; Dr. Roy is ideally suited to trace their story, having been Head and then Chair of the English Department throughout the often stormy times that inevitably accompanied their development. She begins her tale with a tribute to the Registrar, Tamara Giesbrecht, as well as to the many dedicated women who “kept us afloat . . . accountants, secretaries, cooks, et al” and who “did as much as faculty and administration, and perhaps more.” As a pioneer of York University, one of two women faculty members at the beginning of Glendon College (1961), I especially applaud her care to recognize the importance of the various women in their supporting roles, too often ignored by official historians. We certainly had our share at York, too, and they were very much its builders as the Board or the Faculty.

As was the case with her first volume, Dr. Roy is impeccable in her telling, with a constant wry wit that gives her account her own special flavour, implied in every sentence: “I was there and I know how it was: this is all that I choose to say about it, but it is by no means all that I COULD say if I chose.” Reading her

account is a constant realization of the effectiveness of a writer’s restraint as well as a constant testament to her own dedication to the institution. She divides her work into sixteen chapters, covering all the themes that were important to the growth and sustaining of the institution: Finances takes first place, after it University Government, Heresy Hunts, The Campus Family and Guests, and on to The Ending, a triumphant finale really, and a strong bridge to the institution we have today. Of course its transformation into Wilfrid Laurier was mourned by a number of its devoted Lutheran supporters. Its Seminary, preparing Lutheran Clergy for their careers, remains:

when the Lutherans gave over the university to the government of Ontario, they did not give up their presence. . . . I must leave you to decide, but in these days of pervasive distrust and self-seeking, the most rigorous opponents of religion in education might be persuaded to acknowledge the seminary’s considerable accomplishment.

Most, probably all of Ontario’s new universities in the sixties had a chaotic time in their early years and Waterloo Lutheran was no exception. In her Chapter III, Heresy Hunts, Dr. Roy writes of the presidential tenure of Dr. Villaume, 1961-1967, as being the period of their major crises. He had come from the States where he had held positions in several Lutheran schools and

he was not aware that Canada was not The United States. If we protested some of his suggestions—“You don’t do that in Canada”—he replied, “Well, you should.” He set up a regime of “family dinners” to which faculty members would be assigned as the “parents” and the students were expected to be the willing “family.”