

Sex-specific protective legislation stemmed from concerns about depopulation and social disorders. The health of the female workers had to be protected to ensure they would bear healthy babies. The hours a woman spent working outside the home had to be limited to ensure she could adequately care for and supervise her children, ensure their survival and prevent their slipping into delinquency. Working women also needed time for household chores and, hopefully, to make their husbands feel like staying home instead of hanging around the local cafés.

Legislation to protect women was usually inimical to their interests. It confined them more rigidly to low-paid, dead-end jobs: it excluded them from the better-paid night work and from work in occupations classified dangerous; it reduced their workday without financial compensation; it did not cover family shops, nor retail trade, nor agriculture, and industries traditionally employing a large labour force of inadequately paid women could easily secure exemptions. Protective legislation encouraged factory owners to physically segregate women and confine them to auxiliary tasks. Manufacturers also reduced the size of their labour force and subcontracted the work out to unregulated workshops.

Sex-specific legislation ultimately “protected” women from access to better-paid occupations and trapped them in occupational ghettos, dead-end jobs and inflexible schedules. Consequently, female workers, who had never been consulted, refused to co-operate with the implementation of those reforms and were even accomplices to their employers’ attempts at thwarting the legislation.

Although both books deal with the French experience, they will be of value to readers interested in similar problems in other countries, including Canada. They can help us place issues such as social control, protective labour legislation and women’s place in the labour market in a broader western perspective.

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Jean-Yves Mollier — *L'argent et les lettres. Histoire du capitalisme d'édition, 1880-1920*. Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1988. Pp. 549.

Today, when two publishing giants, Hachette and Presses de la Cité, generate half the French industry’s \$1.8 annual turnover, Jean-Yves Mollier offers us an account of the nineteenth-century origins of many of the famous firms that have recently disappeared into the maw of one or another “holding”. Mollier describes this new work as extending in time and scope his important study of 1984, *Michel et Calmann Lévy ou la naissance de l'édition moderne, 1836-1891*. In time, he will penetrate beyond the age of the editor to the world of the publishing house. In scope, he will move from an examination in depth of a single family dynasty to an attempt to construct a typology of “the editor”. I am not convinced that he is fully successful in either ambition, but this voluminous and detailed study is nevertheless a welcome addition to the still scanty ranks of scholarly works on French publishing. It provides a broader view than such firm histories as his own Lévy volume or Pierre Assouline’s work on Gaston Gallimard and a more focused perspective than the multivolume, *Histoire de l'édition française*, edited by Chartier and Martin.

Although Mollier aims at “total history”, his scope and conclusions are actually rather narrow. This is essentially a business history with some literary and social history of sorts thrown in. Each chapter follows the story of a family (or several related families), from the provincial printer or bookseller who came to Paris and eventually set up as an editor and publisher, through several generations who experienced varying degrees of business growth and success to about World War I, with a coda which traces the firm’s transfigurations in the twentieth century. Thus, the dates in the subtitle express Mollier’s thesis rather than his chronological limits. He devotes as much space to tracing his firms’ origins to 1880 as to trying to show how the next decades required radically new strategies in order to adapt to “the ineluctable laws of capitalism”.

These “laws” are not spelled out, nor does Mollier show exactly how they affected the publishing industry as compared to textiles, steel or automobiles, nor does he apply them to the history of publishing in other countries. But in late nineteenth-century France, they apparently required the transformation of the small family firm identified with an owner-editor who produced a quality product for a limited market into a corporate business financed by banks and managed by hired specialists who sought growth through economies of scale. Presumably, this new strategy would require cutting unit costs through technological innovation and exploitation of the workforce as well as expanding turnover by mass marketing a product designed for mass consumption. It seems clear from Mollier’s own chapters that these changes are not to be especially identified with the period 1880-1920. The pioneering efforts at mass marketing cheap editions date to the 1840s and 1850s, but some relatively successful firms still treated their books as luxury articles as late as 1914. Even those firms that formally became *sociétés anonymes* usually remained under the control of members of the founding family; marriage alliances were more important than stock offerings throughout the century. And Mollier has virtually nothing to say, even in passing, about changing technologies or labor relations.

In fact, because Mollier’s primary sources are the partnership agreements, personal wills, property settlements and other legal documents found in the historical archives, because he has not had access as he did for the Lévy study to continuous runs of family letters and business records, he cannot really penetrate the life of his firms, pinpoint the causes and consequences of strategic decisions, reconstruct the daily routine of their operations, or comprehend from the inside the motives and characters of the editors. His sources do provide, at irregular intervals, a vast trove of certain kinds of information, especially quantitative data: for the business, figures on capitalization, turnover, number of books sold; for the family members, their evolving strategies for investing their private wealth, the sumptuous furnishings of their houses, the names of the famous invited to their daughters’ weddings. Much of this is fascinating and suggestive, but business and social historians will wish that even a few of the thousands of numbers in the text had been placed in the comparative perspective of tables or that the evidence on furnishings had been considered with the eye of one acquainted with the work of specialists in material culture. It seems likely that Mollier wrote this book, first of all, for an audience of literary and cultural historians (*see*, for example, 356). Thus, his insistence on adopting the stance of a hardboiled realist. As between “l’argent et les lettres”, there was no choice; his editors were businessmen ruled by the “logic of capitalist development” rather than aesthetes or connoisseurs. It is a bit of a mystery, then, why Mollier, in a secondary theme that recurs throughout this study, is so hard on

his publishers for their increasingly successful attempts to subdue and exploit their authors. Nevertheless, anyone interested in the history of French business, publishing or the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century will be grateful to Mollier for this rich harvest of facts.

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M. Jeanne Peterson — *Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989. Pp. 241.

Historians of nineteenth-century England have generally portrayed the lives of middle- and upper-class Victorian women as trivialized by the economic and social changes brought about by industrialization and urbanization. With the creation of the factory system and the professionalization of skills such as medicine, productive work was removed from the home. Domestic life was increasingly privatized, with a sharp sense of separation between it and the public outside world of productive activity. Women of propertied families usually did not enter the public world of work, which became gendered as the male sphere. Without economic responsibilities and confined within the domestic world, women became, according to traditional historical scholarship as well as Victorian reformers, mere ornaments, the emptiness of whose lives was cloaked by sentimental gush about their new role as “angels in the house”.

The Victorian prescriptive literature assigned married women the responsibility of supervising the household and raising children, but the large staff of servants, characteristic of propertied families, relieved them of much of the actual domestic work. They were also to soothe the troubled brow of their exhausted husbands, but they did not have to worry about soothing his body. Medical experts and social authorities agreed that true women had maternal but not sexual instincts. She should provide her husband with heirs, but his sexual needs could be satisfied by discreet engagements with prostitutes. The lady of the house focused her energies, such as they were, on playing social calls and displaying pleasing if superficial accomplishments in music and art.

Recent scholarship has challenged this stereotyped negative view of affluent Victorian women. Rather than seeing women as mere victims of Victorian patriarchy, revisionist historians are uncovering evidence that many Victorian women experienced productive, self-determined and satisfying lives. M. Jeanne Peterson, in *Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen*, makes an important contribution to this revisionist scholarship. Peterson, whose authority as a Victorian scholar was established in her earlier studies of Victorian governesses and of the Victorian medical profession, convincingly argues that many upper-middle-class Victorian women enjoyed much fuller and more productive lives than previous studies have suggested.

Peterson bases her study on a three-generational collective biography of women in the Paget circle, connected by ties of family, friendship or work. The men in the Paget circle are for the most part professionals, with occupations in law, medicine, the Church or the universities. They, therefore, compose what Peterson calls the new urban gentry. Analyzing the letters, diaries and other personal papers of the wives and