

Meg Luxton et de Lemieux et Mercier. Le malaise tient peut-être au fait que plusieurs passages de contexte ou d'analyse sont souvent inscrits dans les notes de références à la fin de l'ouvrage, donnant ainsi l'impression que les témoignages et les descriptions prennent trop de place dans le texte.

Il reste que l'enquête démontre bien que les conditions de vie des familles de quartiers ouvriers durant la Crise, du moins la représentation que s'en font les informatrices, ne présentent pas de différences aussi marquantes qu'on l'aurait cru. Un peu comme si la gestion serrée du budget familial, les stratégies d'épargne et de travail intense (double emploi pour les hommes, les « jobbines » pour boucler le budget) et les activités domestiques rémunérées des femmes (couture et lavage du linge, travaux d'aiguille, perlage, tricot et ménage pour les autres, garde des pensionnaires) faisaient partie de la culture ouvrière du début du XX^e siècle.

Au chapitre sept, l'enquête se poursuit hors de la maison, dans le quartier. Les témoins racontent comment elles ont pu profiter des secours disponibles, qu'ils proviennent de l'État ou d'organismes caritatifs privés comme la Société Saint-Vincent-de-Paul. Elles racontent également comment elles ont su tisser des liens et établir des solidarités autour de la famille élargie et du voisinage. Contrairement aux chapitres sur le travail domestique, cette partie intègre bien les témoignages avec le contexte et l'analyse.

Dans l'ensemble, l'auteure a gagné son pari de montrer l'importance de toute cette économie informelle que constitue le travail des femmes au foyer, mais aussi tous ces revenus d'appoint apportés par un effort supplémentaire de tous les membres de la famille (femmes, hommes et enfants), ce qui fait dire à plusieurs témoins (qui sont de classe ouvrière et qui n'ont jamais vraiment profité de périodes fastes) que la Crise n'avait pas bouleversé leur vie considérablement :

Je peux pas dire que ça nous a marqués. On avait toujours l'espérance que c'était pour changer. [...] On se contentait de peu tout le temps, du nécessaire qu'on peut dire. Ceux qui ont perdu beaucoup, c'est ceux qui avaient de l'argent [...] Mais quand vous aviez pas d'argent, vous aviez pas de trouble avec ça, hein ? (235)

Cet ouvrage est un bel hommage à ces femmes de quartiers ouvriers qui par leur travail ont réussi à traverser la Crise, dans la pauvreté parfois, mais en évitant la misère. On y voit ces miracles du quotidien qui ont permis à nos familles ouvrières de survivre, et cela, seules les sources orales peuvent le rappeler.

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Carol Baines, Patricia Evans and Sheila Neysmith, eds. — *Women's Caring. Feminist Perspectives on Social Welfare*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991. Pp. 310.

There is growing interest among North American feminist scholars in exploring a gendered analysis of social welfare and the state. Some of the newest theoretical material on the American scene has been collected by historian Linda Gordon in *Women, the State, and Welfare* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1990). In her introduction, Gordon reminds us of the importance of "challenging models of the welfare state

in which women function only as recipients of aid and/or victims" (4). In her path breaking essay, "The New Feminist Scholarship on the Welfare State," Gordon lays out three phases of feminist welfare scholarship: 1) a critique of discrimination against women in welfare programmes; 2) a critique of how welfare policy reinforced women's systematic subordination in society; and 3) demonstrating women's social and political activism in constructing the welfare state itself. I would locate *Women's Caring. Feminist Perspectives on Social Welfare*, edited by Carol Baines, Patricia Evans and Sheila Neysmith, somewhere between the second and the third phase. This book is an excellent introduction to the Canadian experience of the creation and costs of caring work by women.

Women's Caring is a collection of essays about the invisible labour that constitutes women's social welfare work from the perspective of feminist scholars in the field of social work. It will be of interest to researchers and teachers in the fields of nursing, education and women's studies, as well as scholars exploring the topic of social welfare historically and for contemporary policy studies.

The central question for the authors of *Women's Caring* is: How does a society provide care for all of its members, but not at the expense of women? While not directly solving this dilemma, the authors do demonstrate the ongoing, vital contributions of women who in both formal and informal ways mend the social fabric by serving as the providers of social welfare. The essays explore women's caring work through examining several major themes, many of which centre on the family: child care, child neglect, juvenile delinquency, wife abuse, care for the elderly, and poverty among single mothers and older women.

Taken together, the essays illustrate the central role of "caring" for others in women's lives, how this has been both undervalued and reinforced by the welfare state, and the accompanying costs to women. They do an excellent job of unmasking some of the gendered assumptions behind the language of welfare policy. For example, several authors show that policy initiatives for "community care" for the elderly actually translate into "family care" that is performed almost exclusively by women.

The central premises of the book is that women, and girls, pay too high a price for performing their caring work for others. One of the most interesting essays in the book traces the development of caring by examining adolescent girls. Marge Reitsma-Street, in "Girls Learn to Care; Girls Policed to Care," provides a fascinating approach to the question of the costs of female caring through comparing females the state has identified as "juvenile delinquents" to their "non-delinquent" sisters. Reitsma-Street draws on data from a sister study that involved pairs of siblings, in Ontario from 1978 to 1981, in which one sibling had contact with a correctional or service agency and one did not. Her interpretation challenges the assertion that the two sets of girls exhibit significant differences in attitudes and behaviour, and instead points to the commonalities between delinquent and non-delinquent adolescent girls.

Reitsma-Street argues that both delinquent and non-delinquent sisters learned to put the needs of others before their own needs, and to attend to themselves only in order to please others, especially males. These lessons, she suggests, are reinforced through a variety of processes of defining and controlling deviance in females, including pressure to maintain a good reputation, threat of force from males, and judicial interventions. For example, she found that when courts responded to girls who

got into trouble, “the most serious judicial responses were reserved for running away from home and truancy from school, not for crimes against persons or property” (126). Girls much more than boys are punished for these status offenses, including sexual crimes, because they violate standards of femininity.

This essay on female adolescents raises a key concern I have with the focus of *Women's Caring* as a whole. The authors throughout the book convincingly argue that caring for others is invisible, unpaid labour performed predominantly by women at the expense of those very women. Yet, *Women's Caring* would have benefitted from a sustained analysis of the negotiations around caring in which women and girls engage. Despite Reitsma-Street's emphasis on the ways in which females are taught and policed to care for others no matter what the cost to themselves, there are hints in the text of some of the ways in which girls resist these messages and attempt to negotiate their own needs with the needs of others. There are some significant differences between the sisters, and not surprisingly, it is the “delinquent” sister who appears to have learned how to reject the disabling lessons. Reitsma-Street found that “the delinquent sisters were far more likely than their conforming sisters to explore their own interests and sexuality without adult permission: for instance, they spoke of travelling, learning to use birth control, and experimenting with lesbian relationships” (115). Furthermore, because the “delinquent” females did not place a priority on being “nice girls,” they were more likely to rebel against an abusive or unpleasant situation. Often, the “non-delinquent” sibling indicated admiration for her sister's quest for self-determination.

In “Dutiful Daughters and Undemanding Mothers: Contrasting Images of Giving and Receiving Care in Middle and Later Life,” Jane Aronson explored the ways women, who provide and receive most of the elderly care, negotiated acceptable boundaries. Even though she reports that many of the daughters experience a sense of guilt at not doing enough for their mothers, and many of the mothers felt shame at asking for assistance, both sets of women found ways to resist the expectation of complete self-sacrifice. Aronson discovered that daughters created ways to set limits on the care they provided to their aging mothers in order to secure time or privacy for themselves. Mothers, many of whom had cared for their own mothers earlier in their lives, continually asserted their determination to maintain their independence by setting limits on the assistance they asked for or accepted.

There is ample evidence in this book to document resistance to enforced caring, and still unexamined is the notion of resistance in caring. Overall, *Women's Caring* satisfactorily demonstrates how the need and desire to care for others has shaped women's lives. It offers a much needed perspective on women's relationship to the current welfare state in Canada, and provides new questions for historical exploration.

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