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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Passing Out of Memory:
Georgina Sime and the Politics of Literary Recuperation

BY

K. Jane Watt 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 1997

University of Alberta

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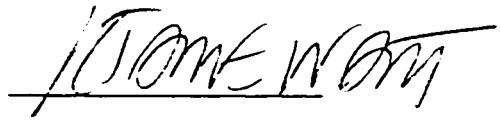

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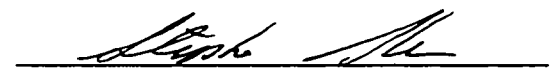

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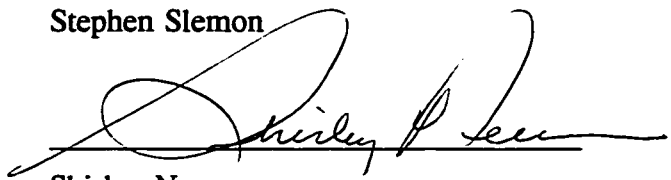

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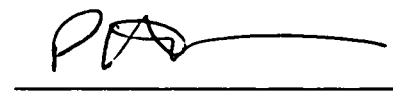

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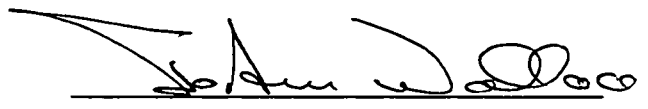

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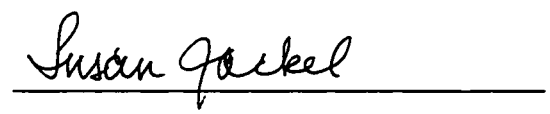

Susan Jackel

Heather Murray

March 25, 1996

Abstract

"Passing out of Memory:

Georgina Sime and the Politics of Literary Recuperation"

This document attempts to theorize the ethics, methodology, and feminist ramifications of the project of feminist literary recuperation that has been ongoing in English Studies for a number of years, along the way bringing the works of "forgotten" women writers back into academic circulation. It works in the specific cultural site of Canada between the turn of the century and the aftermath of World War I with the life and work of Georgina Sime (1868-1958). Sime was a vital part of the Canadian literary scene in the first decades of the twentieth century who has been all but lost to literary history: my dissertation examines the space of this forgetting, the politics of this aporia.

"Passing Out of Memory: Georgina Sime and the Politics of Literary Recuperation" is a hybrid: in part a recuperative biography and in part a reflection on the difficulties and promises of feminist literary recuperation, it attempts to articulate the paradigmatic messiness of the woman artist's life as it articulates the strategies of negotiation that inform such a life and make possible for women the bridging of the seemingly disparate domains of public and private, political and personal. Not only is Sime's a good story--traversing the pain of unrequited love, the many tragedies of war, and the petty jealousies of the Canadian literary scene--it constitutes proof that the materiality of women's lives in early twentieth-century Canada is important to literary and historical formulations, in spite *or because of* its essential unrepresentativeness with regard

to constructions of historical feminisms and to models of women artists. Women like Sime have much to teach us, not only about the past, but about political, academic, and pedagogical structures in our own day, about the feminist strategies of our own making.

This dissertation consists of nine chapters: a preface that articulates and examines the fortuitous circumstances under which the bulk of Georgina Sime's personal papers came into my possession; an introduction entitled "The Politics of Feminist Literary Recuperation" that attempts to provide a methodological and theoretical framework first by examining questions of value in English Studies through a discussion of notions of tradition, discipline, and professionalization, and second by articulating possible interventions including framing the space of feminist recuperative work in terms of notions of access, archival pragmatics, and critical responsibility; a biographical sketch; five body chapters that argue through specific texts for the unsettling possibilities of the individual life, including an examination of the negotiational strategies that made her work both possible and necessary across the diverse exigencies and expectations of genre and form and across other personal and professional moments that demand other strategies of negotiation and demonstrate the excruciatingly difficult task of being an unmarried, aging woman writer in urban Canada attempting to secure for herself not only an income from writing but even more importantly, a notion of herself as writer, as productive member of the Canadian literary community.

Preface

It is really a shame...that one can live a hundred years with gusto, and be happy, and agitate the stream, and pass at once out of memory.

Ethel Wilson, The Innocent Traveller.[1]

And so I would construct a history, a living tapestry to join the past to the present, to defy the blistering shimmering dusty bustle of city life outside which makes transients of us all.

M.G. Vassanji, The Book of Secrets.[2]

He sat by the fire in a small room enclosed on three sides by books and framed on the fourth by an expanse of glass registering first the tracks of raindrops and beyond a hanging blackness of cloud that threatened even more rain. As he spoke into this room at the head of the valley, his long thin fingers scrabbled over and caressed the worn corduroy on his knee and his feet moved slightly in their swaddling of slippers and heavy socks.

"When I'm gone," he said, "don't throw them out."

In a damp hutch in the other room, mixed with mementos of his family, lay the remains of a woman writer's professional life. These stacked papers, these scraps and piles, these things she had sweated over, loved, hated, made her living by were all that remained to mark that life. The faithful wife looked at her frail charge and wondered how this bent man could have ever believed that words could change the world, that his support of the writer whose work mouldered in the other room could have meant anything. But she agreed.

The old man died and the work remained hidden. And the house grew larger and larger around the unwilling guardian of papers, a woman whose aging bones confined her to a dwindling circle of activity centring on the fire, the picture window, the books. Twenty-five years later, a letter bearing an unfamiliar return address was delivered to her front door. She opened it and read:

I am a Canadian researcher working on the life of Georgina Sime (1868-1958). I am writing to you in the chance that you may know something of her friend and collaborator, Frank Nicholson (1875-1964)...

Know something. She had married him. She replied. We met. And the rest, as they say, is history. This history.

Preface

This project would not have been possible without the kind attention of Mary Nicholson of Keswick, wife of Frank Carr Nicholson--Georgina Sime's life-long friend, editor, amanuensis, and supporter. She was eighty-two when I met her, but was still possessed of a startling beauty and a joy in life and in art that seemed to carry her over the pain of her aging bones and the frustration of her recalcitrant limbs. She still drove, although perhaps a trifle haphazardly, and appeared at the station some twenty miles away to welcome me on my first visit to her home. Here, Mary provided me with what surely must be the novice historian/archivist's dream: unlimited access to all the documents in her possession, plenty of tea and biscuits and conversation in the comfort of a study lined floor to ceiling with books old and new, sherry by the fire at four, the chance to sleep in my subject's bed, to work at her worktable, and to consume at leisure the details of her life. Although I met the physical evidence of Sime's life and came to know anecdotes of her long relationship with Nicholson through the remarkable intervention of Mary, I always had the feeling of coming late into a complicated story, of stepping into a prearranged role. Mary had been waiting since her husband's death for someone like me to come along, someone who might relieve her of the burden of her trust and make the promises she had made to people long gone become a reality. Mingled with her relief, I think, was a regretful frustration that her husband had squandered a lifetime of creative potential in supporting and editing the largely "unsuccessful" literary production of Georgina Sime, and further, had wasted the years of his retirement in ordering her affairs that over the course of time and habit had become his own. He had bundled all his Sime correspondence by year, the solid white envelopes and matching letterhead of the early part of the century giving way to the standard blue of World War II era airgrams. He had carefully piled all of her unpublished manuscripts, along with the revised manuscripts and galley proofs of her work that had gone into print, and nestled them alongside his private library of hardcover Sime, sometimes in duplicate or triplicate. They were obviously valued

documents: as I poked around in the cupboard that housed them, I found bits and pieces of his family archive, moments in the lives of other people who had meant much to him. His loving care for Sime and for the papertrail of her life was also, however, the beginnings of the construction of a dignified silence: pencilled annotations on the outside of some of the later letters--reaching forward in time to the unknown scholar who turned out to be me--indicate his concern that whoever was entrusted with the manuscripts would get the story "right", be able to link the informality of the names in the letters with the deeds of people in the real world. But pages are missing, and bits of pages, and I can only guess at what his careful organization and concern with reputation might have repressed.

Georgina Sime was a woman whose life and art undercut ideas of the norm in so many ways that her example makes it difficult to conceive of a norm as a believable, "natural" entity. Again and again she disrupts expectations--about appropriate ways to live lives and conduct relationships, about the figure of the writer, about fit genres, modes, and forms for women's writing in a nationalistic era, about activists, new women, and the mannish, freakish creatures called suffragettes. She was a feminist--a woman interested in the equality of women--but was not of the monied, breathless-young-woman-intent-on-getting-the-vote set; instead, she was an "odd" woman, a single older woman writing of the gender and social climate of her time and seeing other social factors than the franchise as being critical to women's spiritual, economic, and social well being. Sime's personal papers present not only a different side of her own story from the one that has been hitherto recognized in the record of literary Canada, but also a different side of the Canadian literary milieu from the one we have come to believe in through standard literary histories and through the preoccupations of literary anthologies. Work like Georgina Sime's, then, is important because it exists, because its physical contrariness defies accounts of her time that necessarily ignore the writing of women or accounts of later times that classify it as outside the central concerns of the nation. Work like Sime's makes the continuous retooling of theory possible and necessary because it attests to the power of the document as a physical reality, encoding a certain palpable resistance to hegemonic

cultural determination in the very fact of its textuality, in its dusty presence on library shelves, or more recently perhaps on translucent rectangles of microfiche, on slippery loops of microfilm.

I told my prefatory story of triangulation and text, of love and the literary because it factors a certain politics of access into the authoritative linearity of the heroic biography, making clear the elusiveness of historical truth, the contingency of biographical and evaluative enterprises. I am interested in the challenges Sime's life and works pose not only to the variously described edifice known as Canadian literary history but also to perceptions about literary value that lie between and beyond the collection of texts that stands canonized, and which promises by this designation to encompass and represent the life and history of a nation. I am interested, too, in developing a feminist pragmatics of recuperation, an interrogation of the set of problems, questions, and challenges that arise when scholars return to the archives with the purpose of recreating, refielding into the discipline of English study the life and works of a literary artist dismissed by monolithic notions of value that depend upon, for instance, particular formal performances of gender, or attitudes of genius, or circumscribed notions of nation. Working with these forgotten texts is akin to the process Patricia Williams has called pinning herself in history,[3] understanding "the textual[ized] structure of history and society,"[4] and placing (or re-placing) the works "in the stream of time as significant, evolved, present in the past, continuing into the future. To be without documentation," she writes, "is too unsustaining, too spontaneously ahistorical, too dangerously malleable in the hands of those who would rewrite not merely the past but my future as well."[5] Recuperation is a project that necessarily works with and across time--using the oversights and biases of the past to interrogate ways of knowing in the present; using the vocabulary of the present to articulate an understanding of the past, tacking together disparate critical models in order to construct a frame on which to hang notions of literary value and concepts of artistic success.

Georgina Sime reversed the pattern of the exodus of "serious" artists from the New World to the cultural supremacy and solidarity of the Old by emigrating to Montreal in 1907 and fashioning a writing life out of what in her time--and in her chosen space--were unlikely materials. Steeped in the arts and culture of Europe, Sime placed herself alone in a large city in what seemed to British culture to be the literary backwater of colonial Canada with the intention of writing seriously, and what is more, of writing about women's lives in Canada and elsewhere in the early twentieth century. In some ways Georgina Sime succeeded: she did write--publishing novels, short stories, and essays in the next two decades as well as establishing a lucrative lecturing career. But if literary success in Canada--and the path to enduring literary value--lies in the embrace of the individual and his or her work by the literary establishment, Sime was a failure. Despite her absolute access to the discourses of literature and to the circles of the literary elite on both sides of the Atlantic, she remains virtually invisible not only to accounts of Canadian literary culture but to other explanations of the historical period of her finest work. If national fictions can be oppressive, subsuming the individual to the perceived interests of a specific point in history, ignoring or effacing the voices of those who do not fit into its narrative drive to a determined end, it is also true that the **lack** of stories, an inability to gain access even to these all-consuming fictions, can be equally oppressive. And this is precisely the situation of Georgina Sime--and other women writers of her time and later--in relation to the unceasing narrative that constitutes Canadian literary history.

How, then, does one represent human life, its measures of failure and of success in the medium of words? How does one constrain a narrative of life to a single person when its ripples extend and extend, touch others, and move on? I was given Georgina Sime's papers after sending a throwaway inquiry to an address I had seen on a letter almost thirty years old. I expected at best a distant relative armed with memories and yellowed photographs: what I found was a vibrant aging woman who had lived for fifty years the story I was trying to tell, outliving the principals in the process. Whose story is it then? And who should be allowed admittance to its telling or to its tale? I came to realize the

vagaries of literary history, of history in general. I came to appreciate the role of chance, maybe even fate, in scholarly endeavours. What would have happened to my project if Mary Nicholson had not lived so long? If she had moved even one house down the row? If she had done her house cleaning earlier? If she had loved her husband less--and been more willing to give up what he so treasured, despite her own antipathy for it? My interest, then, is as much in the story that is Georgina Sime's life as in the unsettling cognitive and historical problems such an invisible life poses for critical and other models; however, I am aware of the exponentially problematic nature of my own intervention into the "facts" of her life and the details of her business as a writer. I am also necessarily aware of my limitations as author, as distiller and creator, because at the turn of every page I am reminded that my own work can only go forward on the heels of other stories, other honesties and dishonesties, both public and private.

I became, quite suddenly, the guardian of Frank's promises and Georgina's life when Mary gave me her clutch of papers as an alternative to burning them as she began to think of ways of reducing the clutter that represented her own life. She answered my hopeful request for information with the breathless excitement that could only have come at the end of a long wait as she realized that perhaps Frank's lifetime commitment to Georgina's work would come to something after all. There is a tangled web of allegiances here: Mary's motives for getting the story out had little to do with her affection for Georgina herself nor, for that matter, her writing. They had a great deal to do with loyalty to a man she painted as a veritable saint in her rendition of his long professional alliance with Georgina Sime and her work. Mary handed me Sime's manuscripts early, but kept her letters and read through them before passing them on. Because I had no idea what the archive contained before her perusal, I have no idea whether she changed it as she read, mirroring the actions of her husband who, in organizing the letters carefully (as befitted his professional persona as Head Librarian at the University of Edinburgh Library) annotated in pencil in his own careful hand some letters and edited others by removing pieces of them, secreting the purloined fragments who knows where and obscuring the parts of

Sime's early life in Canada and the structuring of her sexual and economic independence that interest me most.

If my relationship to Georgina Sime is a troubled one, so too is her own relationship to her work. She is a classic unwilling subject of biographical speculations because her self-emplacement, her fashioning of herself as writer was contradictory, fuelled by her elusive personality and by her ever-changing and often retracted statements on the importance of her work and its relationship to the political or literary movements of her day. In her Autobiographies, the Canadian writer Elizabeth Smart confronts the problem of the literary persona when she writes: "Such a strange non-thing writing. Writers have to construct an importance, a sacred vocation, not to feel fiddling. Millions of demons whirl around suggestively. Cut through. Bash on regardless."[6] But "bashing on regardless" is wearing, as Georgina Sime admitted in 1946 when, virtually blind and quite frail, she wrote a letter to Walter de La Mare (a man she had adopted some years earlier as her patron, smothering him both with gifts from Canada during the war years and with an uncomfortable, cloying gratitude). She wrote: "I have always thought of myself, not in the slightest degree as what one may call a 'real writer,' but as one who tried and tried and bungled in the end."[7] What did she mean, for, looking back, she could not have forgotten the successes of her writing career. Perhaps she was lying. Perhaps she was simply an old woman looking for a pat on the back from an aging contemporary. Or perhaps she had no vocabulary to describe her work against the descriptions of Canadian writing--and of Canadian writers--she saw around her. Perhaps a comfortable fit within contemporary models was simply unavailable to her. Georgina Sime's position as writer, valued on some fronts in Canada but repeatedly outside the structures that would guarantee canonical monumentalization, is a useful one, for it demands a moment of reflection amidst the progressive march of theoretical models, each one calling down the last, each one constructing, explaining, maintaining, and defending different notions of literary value. Sime's elusive position as woman writer in Canada at a moment of profound national self-reflection provokes debates not only about critical assumptions in Canada,

but also about the symbiotic relationship between text and theory, about the point at which theoretical description becomes disciplinary prescription, twinning a body of texts with "enabling" reading strategies, then turning others less fit away from avenues of debate and from the classroom.

Where does this archival marauding leave us? Sceptical of institutionalized assumptions of value but unable to articulate any other. Unwilling to believe wholeheartedly in either the words of my central subject or of those close to her. Knowing that my critical task has been to create my own fiction, governed by own agenda and done by treading in the interstices of other fictions, other agendas. What I have tried to do is to provide a sketch of a figure who, on almost any scale, should have been valued by history, but wasn't. This is not just an argument about canonicity, about reputation, but the beginnings of an exploration of the way that assertions and assumptions of value grow out of, propagate, and maintain certain immediate and lasting material consequences. One thing I have had to put aside with this project is the notion of modernist purity that I brought to it, a notion that demanded a single line to an organic, explainable, truth. Paradigmatic contradiction and institutional access complicate and confuse even the simplest of literary historical formulations. And what about my own motivations? I have used merely the parts of Sime's life that suit my agenda, virtually ignoring the thirty years of life left to her after she completed what I consider her finest work. I have traded in the currency of facts and the market of information, using her life as the beginning of my own career, bartering bits and pieces of information for spots on conference programs, for scholarships, for letters of recommendation. Is this not what I have done? Where does biography start and end? And what are the borders of the study of "English?" These are some of the very real confusions and contradictions that mark not only the "great" life, but also the lives of the most ordinary. And shouldn't they be factored into theory? Into pedagogy? And how might that be accomplished? And here I must circle back to a moment of connection some years ago: my point is that, from such unlikely beginnings as a throwaway letter to an unknown address, all these problems have arisen that have not

only demanded attention to the exigencies of the local, but have also drawn from the local to test the global, to test traditional literary formulations. The archive of Georgina Sime's life and writing reminds us, also and always, that she was not merely a literary figure, but was a human being, too, a woman for whom the demands of her body and an early and debilitating aging necessarily turned her away from the things she prized above all--independence, the ability to write, intellectual connection with a range of people--and made her renounce her interest in the democratization of society.

The document that follows is a hybrid: in part a recuperative biography and in part a reflection on the difficulties and promises of feminist literary recuperation, it attempts to articulate the paradigmatic messiness of the woman artist's life as it articulates the strategies of negotiation that inform such a life and make possible for women the bridging of the seemingly disparate domains of public and private, political and personal. Her work grows out of--but is not delimited by--events of her personal life, like her fortuitous contact with others as passionately interested in literature as she. But because this private world is as much shaped and guided by national, international, or literary events as it is by individuals, it demands a careful context, an examination of the cultural communities and social events that both fostered and dismissed her artistic production, sometimes simultaneously. This is important work, I believe, for a number of reasons ranging from the mundane to the exotic. Not only is it a good story--traversing the pain of unrequited love, the many tragedies of war, and the petty jealousies of the Canadian literary scene--it constitutes proof that the materiality of women's lives in early twentieth-century Canada is important to literary and historical formulations, in spite *or because of* its essential unrepresentativeness with regard to constructions of historical feminisms and to models of women artists. Women like Georgina Sime have much to teach us, not only about the past, but about political, academic, and pedagogical structures of our own day, about the feminist strategies of our own making.

Notes

1. Ethel Wilson, The Innocent Traveller (1949; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990) 94.

2. M.G. Vassanji, The Book of Secrets (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994) 8.

3. Patricia Williams, "On Being the Object of Property," Black Women in America: Social Science Perspectives, ed. Micheline R. Watson et al (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1988) 19. Cited in Kelvin A. Santiago-Valles, "Trying to Pin Myself Down in History: Race, Sex and Colonialism," Border/Lines 29/30 (1993): 73-77.

4. Santiago-Valles 74.

5. Williams cited in Santiago-Valles 73.

6. Elizabeth Smart, Autobiographies, quoted in Rosemary Sullivan, By Heart: Elizabeth Smart, A Life (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992) 307.

7. Georgina Sime, letter to Walter de la Mare, 6 February 1949, uncatalogued in Walter de la Mare Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

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Table of Contents

Introduction:
The Politics of Feminist Literary Recuperation

Introduction

The project of feminist literary recuperation has been ongoing for a number of years in English studies and has worked across a variety of geographical sites--primarily in England and in parts of the United States. The mammoth project of The Feminist Companion to Literature: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present, purported to be "the first fully international biographical and topical guide to women writers,"[1] gathers some of this first order scholarship--archival work that provides basic biographical and textual information on overlooked women writers and represents the first stage in the process of rethinking the lives of women writers--into a reference book capitalizing on the fact that, according to the editors, "the tight grip of a narrowly defined tradition of writing in English has been loosened and a broader refiguring of women's contribution to the various literary cultures in English has been made possible by the development of feminist scholarship, whose powerful growth in the last two decades has opened works of history and reference to an adjusted focus and a renewed vision."[2] In the Canadian context, this recuperative drive has yielded in the past five years a number of anthologies of forgotten women's writing, among them Campbell and McMullen's New Women: Short Stories by Canadian Women[3] as well as the continuing republication of facsimile editions of the work of women writers under, for example, the auspices of Tecumseh Press's "Early Canadian Women Writers Series." While the last decade of Canadian feminist work has also yielded groundbreaking scholarship in collections like Neuman and Kamboureli's A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing and McMullen's concentration on rereading the feminist literary contribution of more canonical figures in Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Writers[4], subsequent scholarship in Canada, as far as I know, has failed to carry in any sustained manner the theoretical implications to the recuperative project begun by works such as these. Reasons for the lack of continued theorizing of recuperation to accompany the reprinting of out-of-print women's texts are likely many and various and may be due not only to the excruciatingly difficult questions

these works raise, but also to their complex emplacement in (and displacement from) seemingly unrelated or unrelatable discursive sites--value, pedagogy, nation, gender.

This introductory chapter, then, is devised to provide a methodological and theoretical framework for what, in light of its predecessors, might seem to be an overly-eclectic scholarly project. It is divided into five sections: the first section "Questions of Value: Antecedents and Interventions" provides a brief outline of the problem of literary valuation in English Studies and draws on current interventions into ideas about value and tradition; section two, "Access," frames feminist recuperative work in terms of physical access to texts as well as to productive debates by reflecting on the nature of academic work; section three, "Archival Pragmatics," constructs an enabling space of access through the bridging of the archives and contemporary theoretical debates; section four, "Responsibility," discusses critical responsibility in the recuperative enterprise; section five, "The Individual Life," argues for the unsettling possibilities of the individual life, turning to the specifics of Georgina Sime's situation in Canada and to the strategies of negotiation that marked that life and are the subject of subsequent chapters.

Questions of Value: Antecedents and Interventions

That Georgina Sime's life was lost to formulations of Canadian culture is difficult to dispute; that it should be restored, the terms under which it might be entered into the currency of Canadian literary and historical debates, and the meaning of such a restoration are questions wide open to critical and philosophical scrutiny. I am a member of what Harold Bloom has characterized in his curmudgeonly way in The Western Canon as "the School of Resentment," one of the coterie of thinkers who seek (in Bloom's words) "to overthrow the Canon in order to advance their supposed...programs for social change"[5] (and in mine) to interrogate the structures of aesthetics that have dictated literary value in the academy, to interrogate the professional assumptions and critical strategies that have vigorously championed certain writers, sometimes over centuries, while consigning others

happily to the dead-end classification of mediocrity, all the while insisting on a code of professional potency, involving in Northrop Frye's words, "informed good taste,"[6] or, in Bloom's, a chosen people: "Pragmatically," he writes, "aesthetic value can be recognized or experienced, but it cannot be conveyed to those who are incapable of grasping its sensations and perceptions. To quarrel on its behalf is always a blunder."[7] It surprises me that in the heat of the crisis of legitimation that is seen to plague the humanities, a critic can say unselfconsciously and with grave certainty that it is possible to *instinctively* identify "great" work, refusing to acknowledge that we have insisted through a century and more of pedagogical decision-making and professional acculturation that certain works will be identified as such[8] by preaching to the unconverted,[9] by exacting essays from our students that indicate in their own words their initiation into culture[10] through their understanding of different writers' claims to greatness. While Bloom's is a late-flowering version of English nineteenth-century literary humanism, it nevertheless points to the exportability of pedagogical and critical values, the transplanting of issues of professionalization to the Canadian context and their working out in and through Canadian criticism to our own day. In mid-century, Northrop Frye, arguably one of Canada's most influential critics, would write of the critical need for a perceptual unity of literature, for the creation of Bloom's "instinctiveness" through the critical development of a "conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literary field."[11] The bounds of the norm that would be traced under the imperatives of literary value in the Canadian context--universality of meaning in the landscape of the decidedly local, the upholding of a chastity line with respect to issues of morality and ethics, a preference for the realist or the historical over the sentimental--were carved from the stone of the turn of the century and shaped by these post-war attitudes of unity, autonomy, and objectivity.

The terms by which tenets of aesthetics and value can be articulated only in a quarrelsome, blundering, unprofessional spirit forestall even the possibility of discussion of ideas of literary community and value. I confess I want to quarrel, I need to quarrel, with such smugly closed doors, such skilfully deflected criticism. This project began in a spirit

of feistiness, in an impulse of feminist recuperation structured by the singlemindedness and clarity that only a sense of righteous indignation can impart. My anger, then, as well as my continuing astonishment were directed at an undifferentiated patriarchy that worked to suppress the voices of women. Over time, however, I have come to a much greater understanding of the institutional contradictions and personal ambivalences and ambitions that structure, in the first order, the relationship of the individual to something we call *culture* and, in the second order, the representation of that relationship through writing at the time and in retrospect through official history. "Culture," writes Gayatri Spivak, "is but the product of cultural explanations,"[12] the stories of the art world mingled with those of academia, of officialdom. My indignation grew from the facts of Sime's canonical and historical invisibility in the face of writers no more gifted, nor prolific, nor widely reviewed than she. I saw her not as an individual or a writer or a woman but as a *problem* for theory and for theoretical speculations. I saw her as an example of telling critical oversights with resonances in Canadian literary history, feminist historiography, and Post-Colonial theory, to name a few. That I have come to know her and her work, that she has become my imaginary friend and I her literary mentor has complicated our relationship, but has not clouded the central reason for my early interest: puzzled indignation. A chance mention of her name by a colleague a few years ago sent me to the library to find some of her work and to seek out information on her life. It did not surprise me that both were hard to find; however, what did surprise me were the fundamental inequities in information on Canadian writers of her period. Some of her contemporaries--Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, Stephen Leacock--had reams of material devoted to the unravelling of their works and the buttressing of their reputations while others, principally female, were virtually ignored largely because of their inability to support--and fit into--the approved critical discourses of nation through which the reputations of their male contemporaries were secured. Feminist calls for a retrieval of women's history have recently reminded us of this loss of our literary foremothers[13] but my experience with Sime set me on another tack.

Constructed in the passive, this notion of loss seems to hang suspended between blame at an undifferentiated patriarchy and celebration of the moment of feminist recuperation that has permitted a program of recovery. But the point is not so much that this work has been lost like a set of keys or a twenty-dollar bill, slipping from the cultural purse on the mad dash between front door and bus stop, but that this varied corpus of writing has been subsumed and, finally, silenced by the clamour of more powerful voices. It happens not at a single point in time, but through time: culture is not given, not found, but forged in the fire of competing agendas, consolidated and fielded into the future by an elite in its own image. Similarly, canons of literature--taxonomies of value--are historically inscribed, made to fit the goals, aspirations and interests of specific thinkers at specific moments in time; this historical inscription, however, has a lasting legacy. In Canada, these interests range between and beyond the political, the moral, the economic, the national, the personal. To understand this process we must look not only to the writers whose voices did get heard, whose work was published, anthologized, criticized and reprinted, but also to those others--like Georgina Sime--whose vocation and passion was writing and whose work was known and appreciated in her own time by some constituencies, but not, apparently, by the right communities to guarantee her an enduring reputation.

In working with the life and writing of Georgina Sime, in attempting to make some sense of her relationship to her chosen profession, and conversely in attempting to make sense of its reception of her, I have conscripted to my own ends some work of theorists of value. I have broadly adopted Barbara Herrnstein Smith's economic model through which value is understood in terms of a set of relationships within a system, the relationships being, as she terms them, "radically contingent," for value is "neither an inherent property of objects or an arbitrary projection of subjects but, rather, the product of the dynamics of an economic system."[14] Contiguous elements in this study--gender, work, and the spacial dynamic of the domestic--cluster around a central, overt, but in many ways extremely elusive idea of nation, and are articulated in the cultural exigencies that fall out of this idea

(or ideal) of nation at specific historical moments. It is significant, both to this study and to the lived experience of Georgina Sime in Canada, for example, that her life/work coincided with a national quest for cultural origins by intellectuals of a "fledgling" nation attempting to establish cultural sovereignty, to delineate difference both from the proximal threat of the United States and from the more distant but nevertheless powerful mothering hand of England and her empire. This construction of originary difference, of national rationale, was done in part through the validation and circulation of a body of "indigenous" literature and art. This consolidative drive intensified during Canada's participation in World War I, and was symbolically solidified following the independent signing by Canada of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. It was given institutional purchase and a certain pan-Canadian presence by the professionalization of the academy and the movement of the evaluation and vetting of art from the hands of the popular press and laypersons to a cultured university elite.[15] Von Hallberg notes this "direct relationship between nationalism and canon-formation" by writing that "certain historical moments, those of consolidation, such as after a war, say, when a nation is given to patriotism and appeals to shared traditions, seem especially propitious to canon-formation."[16] In his essay entitled "Creating the Canadian Canon," Leon Surette tailors specifically to the Canadian scene the nationalist telos von Hallberg has identified: "Canadian literary criticism," he writes, "has always been an enterprise in which the central purpose was the discovery of the Canadian-ness of the literature written in this country."[17]

The threads of value theory I have found useful are frequently woven around questions of institutional power, especially the influence that the intellectual production of critics and scholars in settler cultures--Canada, Australia, New Zealand--have had on the culture at large. Academic constructions of nation, and more particularly large reference materials--the Literary History of Canada[18], for example, housed in elementary and public school libraries, in public libraries, and in university libraries across the country in settlements large and small--have had an enormous impact on the circulation (that has yet to be fully documented) if not of a stable canon of literary works, at least of a set of

assumptions about literature in general, and more specifically, about Canadian literature and the parameters of its discursive field. The problems and questions raised by Sime's work, particularly as they relate to gender, engage with two questions as von Hallberg outlines them, first "how poet-critics and academic critics, through the institution of literary study, construct canons" and, second, "how institutionalized canons effectively govern literary study and instruction."[19] Mine is not an argument about the necessary demolition of canons, for they are indispensable in pedagogical terms; rather mine is an argument for what von Hallberg describes as the adoption of, and teaching of "a critical approach to canons."[20] Canonical enquiry, is, however, by its very nature "deliberately aimed at destabilizing authority through its analysis of the intermingling structures that uphold the political, economic, social, and cultural institutions that house the prevailing versions of literary history, tradition, form, and taste."[21] We need to see the writing of literary criticism--and the early literary histories upon which the later ones were built--as valuable beginning points, as repositories of information useful to the study of "English"; however, we also need to see them as vital sources touched by the hands of their authors, their times, their perceived audiences, their publishers. It is only through custom and use that they become inescapably authoritative and come to be seen as *prescriptions for* value rather than *descriptions of* a body of work. The Literary History of Canada (1965), for example, stood for twenty-five years--through the period of the proliferation of interest in Canadian literature and Canadian studies to many countries--as *the* authority on the field and has set the critical and pedagogical agendas that we are still clinging to. Its structuring assumptions about value and about the range of possibilities for "Canadian" literary articulations in all their gendered guises were not countered substantially until much later. Neither the scope of the document nor its facticity is at issue here; rather, the uses to which it has been put in tandem with the assumption of its users that there is, indeed contained within its covers, a single, overarching narrative under which all relationships between literary art, culture, and power within the context of Canada can be explained.

Part of the allure of literature--and by this I mean, "great" literature and not the dangerous second-rate--to the fielding of conceptions of nation has been a belief in its humanist solidity, its ability to encapsulate immutable and worthwhile human characteristics and to convey them to a large and diverse audience. The perceived power of the fictional document--both its national purchase in the representation of Canadians to themselves and as a unique entity to the rest of the world, as well as its power to convey the unnational or unnatural--was one of the reasons that women's reading of novels (especially of women's novels) was considered dangerous well into the twentieth century. In A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada, Carole Gerson outlines these relationships:

> Canadian literary opinion reveals a spectrum of attitudes (all tinted conservative) ranging from absolute abhorrence of the novel, to restrained attraction to it, to qualified justification of prose fiction as a didactic instrument or a harmless way to "while away an idle hour, or fill up the blanks of a wet day." After Confederation, overtly nationalistic fiction gained increasing acceptance due to the political need to create for Canada an identity distinguishable from that of the United States. Canadian commentators acknowledged the astonishing ability of prose fiction to seize the imagination, arouse the emotions, and consciously or subconsciously persuade the reader. They dreaded the abuse of this power by unscrupulous writers and dolefully warned of the detrimental effects of excessive novel-reading upon the morals and industry of an infant nation.[22]

It is necessary in this discussion of the relationship of value to nation to allude to the temporal framing that initiated, and then fostered the devaluing of certain "unnational" kinds of literary texts. The first moment is Sime's time, during which the discourse of nationalism and its attendant expectations modelled certain texts and representations of the writer as part of a national cultural lineage representing the genesis of a Canadian

literary tradition. The second is constituted of countless subsequent moments when critics unable to think outside of the parameters of their profession (for many reasons) looked to the words of their intellectual predecessors and repeated or amplified their originary thoughts, at the same time pronouncing the death knell over works outside the boundaries of the sanctioned. According to Tim Heath, however, embedded in this critical fiction of origin "is a straightforward evolutionary assumption that maintains Canadian literature is continually undergoing a progressive development from colonial inauthenticity to post-colonial authenticity and originality."[23] Heath identifies as a critical progress model the perception that there can be a recoverable lineage of "representative" Canadian texts, a notion that has continued to shape Canadian literary studies, for, when this myth of progress was mapped onto the task of constructing a national literary history at the moment when the study of Canadian literature was emerging as an identifiable field in its own right, it had a profound effect on the apprehension and teaching of this body of literature. It had equally profound effects on the consolidation and entrenchment of fit avenues of inquiry by foreclosing on the possibility of a great deal of debate and solidifying a whole range of critical blindnesses even as it made thinkable a discipline called Canadian Studies or a field called Canadian Literature.

And the difficulties persist: these questions about the relationship between literary value and field construction land us squarely within a situation analogous to the circularity of the riddle of the chicken and the egg: what comes first, fiction or theory? Do the needs and interests of fiction press for creative answers from the critical arena? Or, does theory come first and then go recruiting, marshalling to its borders an army of texts to sustain it, bolstering literary reputations by the repeated valorization of specific texts in the shaping and definition of its argument. Because literary history works at the conjuncture of differing notions of critical space and historical time to take a small number of "visionary" texts from the past and re-examine them in a teleological sweep toward the shaping of a national tradition--it must rely on the words of its predecessors, sometimes erecting a fragile house of cards on the judgements of master critics from the past by failing to give

appropriate weight to the range of cultural expressions of each period, or by failing to acknowledge that most literary movements--like the literary nationalism that has defined Canadian letters--may not tell the whole story.

But telling stories may not be easy: for many years a tacit institutional understanding about critical appropriateness has tempered the power relationships between criticism and literature by forestalling in some instances the will to the establishment of a critical mass that might guarantee works a seat at the campfire of literary value.[24] This discourse of the appropriate worked to prevent precious scholarly and financial resources being "squandered" on "inappropriate" primary or critical work--which for many years, in the Canadian realm at least, meant the necessarily second-rate production of those women who would not or could not live up to critical expectations of virility and progress acted out in an immensity of landscape. In the context of Canadian literature, too, such solidity of approach has been rationalized by, and anchored to, the critical nationalist imperatives of "universally" recognized standards of value and identifiably, even wholesomely, Canadian content and concerns. From Sime's time until recently, to become professionalised in the practice of English studies in Canada was to enter into, at least to some degree, the gentlemanly game that we are all taught and encouraged to play, a game that is in part a professional code of standardization and mutual intelligibility, and in part a confining social and disciplinary code. *Avoid bad manners, sloppy scholarship, adhere to the chivalric code of criticism, and don't make trouble* we are taught, almost without knowing how. We need to recognize how limiting such a code, purported to be objective or value neutral, has been to the cultural production of women both within and outside the academy. The ideological norms that standard rules of critical etiquette have encoded and obscured have had tremendous material effects on women writers and pose questions like *who has been left out or given short shrift because of fear of transgressing the demarcations of the appropriate? How does such an absence change our understanding of the texts and issues deemed important?*

The almost domesticated scepticism--of which feminist theorists, theorists of value and canon are a part--that surrounds us today in the academy has forced a quiet rethinking of notions of the appropriate through its effects on assumptions about cultural and literary truths: while its interest is, at its most avant-garde, to call down possibilities of authority, of the individual in command of the literary situation[25], it has at minimum created a fissure in the soul of criticism, allowing the entrance of all manner of heretical ideas, including assertions of the importance of the personal in the domain of the political and the acknowledgement, in feminist, queer, and autobiography theory particularly, that one's writing is ideologically circumscribed by personal circumstances--including the banalities of economic survival, health, happiness--as much as by local or national political stratagems and consequences. According to the editors of Higher Education Under Fire, Michael Berube and Cary Nelson, "humanities disciplines could hardly be more engaging: 'theory' has made us far more self-critical about our intellectual assumptions; a vastly expanded canon has made hundreds of forgotten texts available for interpretation; and after a series of rapid-fire critical revolutions, a diverse intellectual scene, with space for many different kinds of work, has finally settled in."[26]

The dichotomy between the humanistic possibilities of great or good fiction and the degenerative promise of the second-rate has underpinned the academic study of literature and has stood as a keeper of the gates, policing the boundary between valuable texts--that is, texts deemed valuable in advance of, or as a prerequisite to, sustained academic study--and works upon which it is understood academic attention is merely wasted. According to Herrnstein Smith, this obsession with value has blinded critics to some of the possibilities of texts and textual enterprises.

> It is clear that, with respect to the central pragmatic issues as well as theoretical problems of literary value and evaluation, American critical theory has simply painted itself out of the picture. Beguiled by the humanist's fantasy of transcendence, endurance, and universality, it has

> been unable to acknowledge the most fundamental character of literary value, which is its mutability and diversity. And, at the same time, magnetized by the goals and ideology of a naive scientism, distracted by the arid concerns of a philosophic axiology, obsessed by a misplaced quest for 'objectivity,' and confined in its very conception of literary studies to the narrow intellectual traditions and professional allegiances of the literary academy, it has foreclosed on its own domain the possibility of investigating the dynamics of that mutability and understanding the nature of that diversity.[27]

It is the contestatory power of diversity that interests me, especially the troubling nature of the local document and of the individual life to historical and literary certainties. Thus, part of working with this notion of the appropriate is to move away from discussions merely of textual value, to reconsider--perhaps to revalue or to re-appropriate--certain kinds of academic work in order that the material and personal realm of women's writing-lives be factored into what has been considered a purely textual pursuit. According to Herrnstein Smith, the discipline of English is organized by two independent pursuits: scholarship (work in the archives and in the library with bibliographical and biographical information) and criticism (a textual pursuit concerned more with evaluation and interpretation than with the production of fact). These two "conflicting and mutually compromising intellectual traditions" she identifies as "positivistic philological scholarship and humanistic pedagogy" have meant that

> while professors of literature have sought to claim for their activities the rigor, objectivity, cognitive substantiality, and progress associated with science and the empirical disciplines, they have also attempted to remain faithful to the essentially conservative and didactic mission of humanistic studies: to honour and preserve the culture's traditionally esteemed objects--in this case, its canonized texts--and to illuminate and transmit the cultural

values presumably embodied in them.[28]

What happens when scholars encounter what Elliott and Wallace characterize as the "troubling" or "messy" life of the individual artist that fits neither the didactic mission of the humanities nor "any easy narrative of literary or art history, whether traditional or feminist?"[29] Such lives and works that do not seem to transmit representative and valued cultural norms call for an inversion of the scientific method by which a hypothesis is proven through recourse to data; instead, the contradictions introduced by the lives and works of these messy women at the level of the archive call for a hiatus on early theoretical shaping, a pause from work in which new data is imposed on an already existing model. Instead, the contradictions need time and space to become manifest, and contingent, temporary models need to be developed that respect and work with these spaces of contradiction. Interrogative work such as this bridges and redefines what Herrnstein Smith calls the scholarly and the critical by beginning in the dust and confusion of the archives and building theory from amid the compromises and negotiations of real life by questioning how critical debates are played out on the ground in material and sometimes very painful ways.

Part of the difficulty of working within feminist recuperation is its very dangerousness, its ability to call into question the foundational assumptions of the discipline, assumptions upon which lives of academic work have been structured, upon which passions for teaching and knowledge have been based. This fear of change and nostalgia for the known has in some cases manifested itself in an entrenchment of tradition and a lament for some kind of recognizable order; as Bloom writes: "Things have... fallen apart, the center has not held, and mere anarchy is in the process of being unleashed upon what used to be called 'the learned world.'"[30] What Bloom identifies as anarchy, however, is merely change: it is change that necessitates the examination of our terms of reference, our tools, our methods; it is change that necessitates examination not only of the work we do, but also of the way in which we choose to do it.

We need, then, to be aware of the tools we use, the biases informing the methodologies we employ as we conduct our research, and the powers of identification and authority residing in the scholarly apparatus we employ to transmit our writing. In my case, one stab at intrusive patterns of scholarly authority has come in the choice of anecdotal endnotes over the more "scientific" parenthetical citations. My purpose here is to make available not only what I know about Georgina Sime, but as far as possible, how I have come to know this information. Feminist historians will readily acknowledge that much of what they write about their subjects has not been taken from direct sources, but has been gleaned from the margins, from the footnotes, the endnotes, from the ledgers and the letterbooks, from conversations recollected in tranquillity and transcribed in wildly diverse contexts. Marginalia, then, in feminist historiography, is transposed from the periphery to the centre of its methodological formulations. To find information on women writers whose maiden identity and family connections are effaced at the moment of their marriage, for example, involves a good deal of archival guile as well as hours of immersion in the ephemera of other people's lives. Information, so hard to come by, then, should not be easily lost, should not be diminished by the exigencies of a citation style developed for a different purpose. It should, instead, be allowed to stand, not only to assist scholars who come after, but also to ensure the continued troubling of paradigms, the constant reminder of the sometimes fortuitous nature of extraneous information. My intent here is to lobby for the retention of information gained through hard work: it involves, however, not only a rethinking of the idea of academic work, but also of what constitutes quality and thoroughness in such a context, for, footnotes, the sanctioned marks of erudition that to the feminist historian can be the life-line to the life, are used today as an index of scholarly networks and self-emplacement, a borderguard to the standards of the discipline: *if you can't write like this, cite authorities of this calibre in this manner, then your work is not good, not worthy of scholarly acclaim.*

My reasons for choosing the less intrusive, more anecdotally informative style over the parenthetical, then, are in part theoretical, but there is also a feminist pragmatics at

work here: copious notes are necessary so that some other historian need not cover, necessarily, the same tedious ground, the same long patterns of searching for something as simple as a new name, or a magazine article lost in the haze of changing familial connections. Such a feminist pragmatics allows theoretical conceptualizing in the present without shutting the doors of the past; it allows a fluidity, a grounding to theory that makes accessibility and interchange a priority. It is imperative that, in the course of our work, we refuse to separate the inseparable by thwarting easy access to information in the name of "good" scholarship, or, for example, by cutting off early feminist ideology from contemporary and contiguous ideologies of empire, race, or nation. We must question the isolation of paradigms,[31] and make for ourselves a space in which the contradictions that characterize all of our lives can be theorized. Such productive places might look like what Mary Louise Pratt characterizes as "contact zones," "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."[32] Pratt's theory emphasizes relationships: "copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices."[33] Because they make possible a space between, a rift in paradigms, it is to such theoreticians of connection that I look in my own work, where to believe in standard literary accounts and historical formulations is also to believe that the works of my subject and the events of her life are trivial and unimportant.

Access

When reduced to its simplest form, the politics of feminist recuperation is about access, about theorizing or exploring structures of access to different kinds of power-- public, institutional, personal-- across a variety of temporal moments. In order to be valued and revalued texts need to be talked about and written about, be physically available to scholars in order that they are incorporated into written debates in the humanities and factored into debates about the interests and aspirations of academia in

relation to the public, to government, to fiscal policy on a range of institutional levels. This concept of access accommodates not only book culture, but a wide range of bibliographical methodologies, from large, ongoing projects like the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM) in Ottawa to strange twinnings of the textual and the technological as yet undreamed of--like the fielding of early Canadian writing on the Internet. The reprinting of "forgotten" texts in a variety of media, as well as ideological and technological changes that are making a wide variety of documents available regardless of geographical location mean that Canada's printed history is no longer lodged only in a few select locations--the National Library in Ottawa, the Toronto Public Library, the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library in Toronto, the British Library, the National Library of Scotland--but in most university libraries and in some public libraries across the land.

Because both reclamation and preservation of the sum of knowledge are important in order that theory be able to ever change, ever be cognizant of its own methodology, its own relationship to a constructed past and to a lived present, archival access--or the continual turn to the historical--is imperative. Not only do texts need to be physically available, they need to be incorporated into debates, to be given initially some sort of productive categorical home--despite the fact that such a home might prove confining, might be exceeded or revised once the debates are underway. In order to get the writing and speaking and thinking of their subjects back into such productive circles of debate, feminist historians need to capitalize on strategic critical alliances. Such alliances allow our work to achieve a cloak of disciplinary appropriateness--and therefore a place in disciplinary discussion and in decisions about financial support--while at the same time situating the "new" work of these forgotten writers within critical paradigms in which it might mean something, might mean differently than it has in the past. In my work with Sime, the alliances I have found useful are the work of a range of feminist critics of modernism who have recuperated, identified, and more importantly, made relevant a number of different modernisms that contest the highly simplified structure we have been handed in the form of the Eliot, Pound, Williams triumvirate.[34] Feminist modernist art, in

these new formulations might reveal itself in a variety of guises, each exploring women's relationship to the sudden reallocation and renegotiation of gender roles allied with the turn of the century and the "ungodly"[35] assault on traditional sexual morality and gender relations.[36]

Feminist recuperative work has, necessarily then, an oblique relationship to literary history and to ideas about literary value as they have been practised, particularly in the nationalist context of artistic and critical self-determination in settler culture. It is from the outset interventionist, and based on what I call *interrogative* archival work: critical and historical scholarship that uses new archival data not only to enter the currency of facts, to add factual information to the totality of knowledge about specific periods, or specific genres, but also to enable or provoke a discussion of the difficulties of modelling human history. Such work, I hope, insists on an interrogative pragmatics of connection rather than a traditional evaluative pragmatics of certainty and hierarchy. Such work must pay attention not only to the facts of the life and to their intricate relationships to each other, but also to the underpinnings of the bio-graph, to the philosophical debates always behind and in front of the pen. My goal is not to disregard the fabric of history and culture as it has been woven in Canada, but to attend to its biases, to question the threadbare certainties of tradition. Such work, however, erodes the disciplinary boundaries we have come to rely on to define the kind of work we do as critics, writers, biographers. Such work alters fundamentally how we have been taught to look at, to appreciate, and to evaluate literature. *"Literature does not relate to life," they told us, "only to itself." Only unto itself. Who intended this? Who tended this turning away?*

It is for these reasons of interrogation that I break with programs of recovery and canonical theory that emphasize pure information, or pure data--in the form of biographical or bibliographical fact--or simply the reproduction of old texts, as in themselves interventionist. Although first order information is essential to the feminist recuperative project, without being twinned with notions of access and interrogation, it

runs the risk of supporting the very structures of evaluation and tradition it seeks to challenge. The liberal argument for "opening the canon" that John Guillory outlines in his essay, entitled "Canon," relies on the same notions of evaluation it purports to reject. According to Guillory, the argument runs as follows: although "one can never be sure about the actual goodness of literary works, [one can nevertheless] take measures to be certain that the canon is properly representative."[37] However, this "appeal to the standards of representative democracy...[that] always seeks to guarantee the rights of minorities to representation....must smuggle in a concept of real literary value if it wants to claim that some works--formerly noncanonical works--are just as good as the canonical works."[38] Simultaneously relying on and mystifying the nature of literary evaluation in the name of some notion of cultural justice, such a stance never interrogates the thorny underlying issues that construct and maintain canonical versions. In order to temporarily sidestep the circular, and finally closed and enclosing, issues of canonicity in favour of a reading of circumstance, it is useful to take up Elliott and Wallace's proposition of the suspension of the evaluative. They write of their necessary and useful, but nevertheless anxious, choice in their conclusion:

> Throughout this book we have insisted on the messiness of our case studies and the ways in which they disrupt received discourses of "modernism;" however, we also found that our case studies--even though they focus on a relatively homogeneous group of relatively privileged women--resist easy feminist *evaluation*. Marie Laurencin, for example, produced representations of women that seem to our eyes hyperbolically "feminine" and certainly not progressive; and yet, when we examine the context of their production and the odds of her success, we see those same representations *differently*.[39]

My work, like that of Elliott and Wallace, grows out of the essential unrepresentativeness of the individual life.

Archival Pragmatics

While it is vitally important for critic-historians to recuperate the works and the lives of these "lost" women, it is, as I have mentioned, no simple task because unsettling effects of interrogative recuperation reverberate throughout the study of literature. The insertion of other histories, other stories into the fabric of Canadian literary history is not merely a cosmetic change that expands its parameters and necessitates a loosening of the belt; instead, such a collectivity of stories as have been recently told works to challenge the shape of Canadian literary history as well as the foundational assumptions of that history. "Lost" women writers, like Georgina Sime, can no longer be simply found and feted and inserted into an unchanged (although perhaps more "representative") canon; their sheer volume bespeaks a momentous cultural forgetting and provokes hard questions about critical legacies of the past and critical practice of the present, questions about the work we do. What does it mean to be--to become--lost to cultural history? Found? Exhumed and canonized (or even more recently anthologized) as a marginal writer? As someone working in a "popular" genre (and one can read the burden of institutional anxiety into this word). As someone writing "ephemera"? And these are only the simple questions, for they get harder when the preoccupations and interests of these women writers seemed to chip away at the bulwark called Literature, at the perception of unitedness called Nation, or at carefully organized pedagogical domains. Is anybody who writes a writer? What is good writing? And bad? And for that matter, what is literature? What are the parameters of the field with which we all engage? So the newly unearthed, retrieved, resurrected figures do not, and should not, go gently into their places, grateful for attention at all. Their legacy of silence is a profoundly unsettling one that goes to the heart of our disciplinary persona.

These questions about perceptions of value and the shape of the discipline of English studies coalesce temporarily in a steady ground of something I have come to think of as an *archival pragmatics*, a rationale for attempting to bridge the sceptical domains of

theory and first order recovery with critical work that draws from both and informs both--that uses the shimmering allure of sanctioned theories to create strategic alliances, to draw an audience to newly illuminated textual possibilities while at the same time drawing on the unsettling possibilities of those texts that repeatedly elude an easy fit within theoretical or historical models. This archival pragmatics also works obliquely against a prevalent, if unspoken, notion that archival work is passe, that theory and theoretical speculations represent the cutting edge of contemporary English studies,[40] the location of committed critical politics. The allotment of resources to the recovery of "lost" women writers in Canada has so far been rationalized largely in terms of coverage with the argument that although such work does not represent the finest of Canadian letters (or it would have survived as have other national "classics") it nevertheless deserves recognition as a historical or social document. However, I would like to argue that the first order recovery of such forgotten women writers and the introduction of their lives and works into contemporary debates can generate new contexts for understanding literary works, can necessarily unsettle much of what the discipline of English studies has held dear: a corpus of recognizable "great texts," an understanding that literary merit is intrinsic and may be understood by the properly taught, a belief that personal connection with (or enjoyment of) a text may have nothing to do with value--indeed, the learning curve to the classics may be an arduous one. At the same time, such a program of recovery tests the limits of the temporal, generic, and thematic models by which we organize our work and in turn valorize texts and textual strategies that fit comfortably within these established boundaries and their attendant strategic prescriptions for reading.

Responsibility

Part of the contract of feminist recuperation is acknowledging the difficult sense of responsibility one has as a writer over another person's life and reputation--both of which issues are more boldly foregrounded when working with lost figures, historical personages about whom little is known. Working in the void in this manner is what makes it possible

for someone like Hugh Kenner to singlehandedly claim the creation of the modernist canon beginning with the figure of Ezra Pound:

> So in six weeks in the summer of 1949, on a picnic table in Canada, aided by books from the University of Toronto library, I banged out on a flimsy Smith-Corona the 308 typescript pages of The Poetry of Ezra Pound...which to my wonderment was instantly accepted by New Directions and by Faber and Faber....Pound before long was a stock on the academic exchange: a safe "subject."[41]

Kenner's critical hubris, his claim to the originary moment of the scholarship of high modernism bears scrutiny precisely because of its affiliations with my own project. While I am not claiming the same sweeping importance of my work as Kenner has done, I would like to claim a similar moment of possibility, a choice between roads not yet travelled. The stewardship of Sime's papers has, in my case, always been tinged with a good deal of anxiety, and a recurring question over the course of this project has been "what to do about my relationship with Georgina Sime's life and writing," a problematic one in part because of my aspirations for her work, and in part because of the refusal of her work to fit comfortably within critical models that provide contexts for understanding literature while providing contexts in which literary works are valued. It has been ever in my mind that in rescuing this "lost" woman from obscurity, I must recover her as something, into something, into some kind of a place in the continuum of literary history, but in engineering this recovery, by constructing a context of value, I am trespassing in the borderlands of sanctioned territories, questioning the models that have worked to provide an appropriate vocabulary for the discussion of literary texts. Is she Feminist? Modernist? Colonial? Post-Colonial? Is her writing radical? Reactionary? Experimental? Politically engaged? I am reminded of the normative work of names, of classification, even as I consider both their necessity and the possibilities for their refiguring: certainly, Sime was a woman working in Canada for gender equality, but she was no feminist if feminism in

Canada meant militant membership in a woman's organization for social change--the Women's Christian Temperance Movement for instance, or if feminism and social change rested on the vitality of "mother-love," meant seeing the Anglo-Saxon family as the key to a strong Canada, indeed a stable world. Unmarried and staunchly independent, Sime was no feminist if an ideological commitment to "mainstream" feminism meant putting its ideas into practice, marrying and raising a family. Or perhaps the specifics of her emplotment in a national history are not as important as I once believed. Perhaps her value for my purposes lies in her very elusiveness. Perhaps it lies in the silences she bridges, the contexts (and recontextualizations) she demands.

The points I am trying to make about the importance of first order recovery to the continued negotiation of categories and disciplinary boundaries can be illustrated by the example of the critical highs and lows of Modernism--a "radical" transatlantic literary movement, considered for many years the overarching literary explanation of the period 1910-1930 in writing in English. Looking closely at the constructions of High Modernism, however, as recent feminist critics have begun to do with the help of attention to a new range of archival material, we find that many other "modernisms" were possible: we find that the transatlantic impetus of the "movement" was located in four metropolitan centres: London, New York, Berlin, Paris, with particular interest, of course, in London. In Ezra Pound's words, "if a man is doing the fine thing and the rare thing, London is the only possible place for him to exist."[42] We find that on its movement into the universities this radical movement became tremendously conservative and elitist both in terms of cultural and representational politics: while its interest was in formal play, in breaking "traditional" forms, it nevertheless promulgated a potent rationale for "The Great Tradition" of literature.[43] What has come to be considered High Modernism was profoundly masculine, interested in flamboyant personalities and deeply imbedded in nineteenth-century male notions of genius.[44] Finally, the central figures were American and had traversed the physical and ideological terrain of the Americas to return "Home" to the seat of Empire, bringing with them (in an intellectual reinscription of the imperial quest for *El Dorado*) the

vitality of the New World.

Other modernisms, feminist modernisms, have come to contest this version of literary history by working from the ground up, by twinning careful archival work with intelligent theorizing and by insisting on a sexual, political, and material dimension to what has been considered a purely formal movement.[45] Such a large scale rethinking of the literary production of three decades was made possible by critical attention to detail and by the creation of a space in which new models for literature could be imagined and re-imagined, by creating a space in which the complexities and ambivalences of women's lives and relationships to power could be addressed. In this light, feminist recuperations of literary history have sought to set up new feminist models, new archives, new constituencies as a way of reimagining the past. But they are not without their blind spots: the exemplary essayist and novelist, Virginia Woolf, has been produced as a feminist icon of the twentieth century and anchor to an entire tradition of women's writing.[46] Her injunction of "five hundred a year" and "a room of one's own" has become a slogan for the possibilities of writing women. Yet these very exigencies that enabled Woolf to write unhampered--money and long stretches of privacy--are rooted in a particular middle class English lifestyle and specific personal (or perhaps biological) choices and were not universally available to colonial women (or even English women of a different class) of the same period who write of the difficulties of managing families and the necessity of earning a living. Miles Franklin, the Australian author of My Brilliant Career (and its unlikely successor My Career Goes Bung) complains of "the wear and tear of interruption."[47] Eleanor Dark (also of Australia) writes of getting up before dawn and writing "in the still blue almost eternal hour before the baby's cry."[48] The Canadian activist Nellie McClung, conditioned to the clamour of her household, finds only distraction in silence:

> I had no concern with meals. I took no outside engagements. I had a round table in an upper room in another woman's house. The lighting was good, the windows were too high for me to see out, I had piles of paper, a

> dozen sharpened pencils and not a thing in the world to do but write. For two terrible days I sat looking at the paper with my mind as dry as a covered bridge, not an idea shining. It gave me a queer panicky feeling. I wondered if this really could happen to me. Did I really have to carry weight to run at all?[49]

Can, as in Virginia Woolf's famous formulation, a woman be a writer **only** if she is possessed of the requisite income, solitude, and freedom from noise? Or is it possible that there may be other models of the literary woman somewhere out there? My quarrel is not with Virginia Woolf herself nor with her stunning prose, rather with her mythic colonization of considerations of women's writing that has occurred (and is perpetuated) in the absence of information about many other female figures of her era that might serve to temper her reputation, to put hyperbole at bay. Canada is not England: there surely must be more routes to artistry than the empirical ones we have relied on thus far. Mine is not a new argument. Following other feminist theorists[50] I argue in the Canadian context that in order to adequately theorize writing, we need to know what is there, to have a varied archive to work from and a fundamental understanding of the local conditions under which such work was produced and read.

The Individual Life

Local conditions, what Wallace and Elliott call "detailed examinations--'thick descriptions'"[51] are vital to the project of feminist recuperation and its attendant project, literary valuation. It makes sense, then, that feminist literary historiography should work in biography excavating the material conditions of women's lives as it creates or unearths a believable woman--a writing subject--to assume the authorship of recovered works. It is, it seems, not merely the establishment of an oeuvre of a woman's writing that contests literary history, but a palpable self and a community, a network that will stand up to constructions of the past that have effaced not only the work of these women but also the

circles in which they meant something.

To "biographize," according to the OED, is "to write a biography of," to write "the history of the lives of individual men, as a branch of literature" or to write "a written record of the life of an individual." I would argue with this notion of superstructure that remains tied to gendered notions of isolation, genius, and competition and argue instead for feminist recuperative work underpinned by a different set of relationships: because of the facts of the life and the details of community, the work constitutes an vital archive that must somehow--whether with comfort or discomfort--be factored into the historical and literary record. The axis of value shifts from the cocooned artist and his or her rarefied literary work into the troubled and troubling domain of the popular, the political, the communal, the cultural.

The following tale of one of Sime's encounters with the Confederation poet Bliss Carman, one of her contemporaries who has been accorded a pivotal place in Canadian literature, hints at the possibilities of using new archival/biographical information to pry into the interstices of cultural history, to provoke different kinds of questions. Of Carman, Sime had the following to say:

> Last night we had a P.E.N. Club dinner, with Bliss Carman as our guest. I never was so much impressed with the fact of how far sheer stupidity will take you. I don't believe he has two ideas to knock against one another in his head, but he is so pleased with himself--never has heard of anyone or read anything; just scribbles down that trash and lives on the proceeds. I don't fancy he lives in a princely way, but still, he lives. At the end of the dinner he offered to read us some of his poems, and very poor they were (so far as my opinion which is, as you know, of no value at all, goes). I plied him with glasses of port hoping the poetry might improve under that stimulus, but it didn't. Nothing could improve Bliss Carman's poetry but

the Judgement Day, and perhaps not that.[52]

Certainly there is a measure of economic jealousy in the passage, but there is also a contestatory view of Canadian literature and of its lauded figures that has rarely been heard. The importance of this passage lies neither in its truth or fiction, in its vehemence of opinion, nor in its personal motives; its importance lies instead in the gap, the discrepancy between this version and a seamless historical narrative. "The scholar's business," according to Richard Altick (whose textbook on bibliographical method entitled The Art of Literary Research has schooled thousands of graduate students in the methodology and ethics of their chosen vocation of literary scholar) "is in part constructive--to add to the sum of knowledge relating to literature and its makers--and in part constructively destructive--to expose and dispel the mistakes that...fox the pages of the literary record."[53] In the context of an enormous and vital archive of women's writing that has been overlooked in part because bibliographical methodology has assisted in encoding the realm of the possible, the borders of the appropriate, into its practice of scholarship, this sentence appears exceedingly ironic. However, it spells out a straightforward invitation to the kind of intervention I ascribe to--intervention on the level of the archive so that other stories, different stories may be allowed to be told. And this is our task as feminist literary historians--to excavate what historians Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot call "a rudimentary feminine archaeology of daily life"[54], to question the gender inscriptions of the sources we use and the methodologies we employ, to find allies where we least expect them, to ascribe to what I have heard described as a "theoretical opportunism"[55], using whatever is at our service to mine the contradictions of theory and of literary methodology, to work the gaps in literary history in order to pull the work of women writers into the realm of the appropriate, into a forum where sustained debate is possible, into a forum where their words and writings will carry their own weight and impart their own messages in a constructive milieu.

The chapters that follow examine Sime's life--primarily in terms of her non-

collaborative literary work done between her arrival in Canada in the early years of the new century and the aftermath of World War I--to frame her experience as a woman writer in Canada in terms of the strategies of negotiation she used to engineer both enabling professional spaces and productive personal spaces from which to speak.

Notes

1. Virginia Blain, Isobel Grundy, Patricia Clements, ed., The Feminist Companion to Literature in English (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990). This quotation is from the dustjacket to the volume.

2. Blain et al vii.

3. Sandra Campbell and Lorraine McMullen, New Women: Short Stories by Canadian Women 1900-1920 (Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1991).

4. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli, ed., A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing (Edmonton: Longspoon/NeWest, 1986) and Lorraine McMullen ed. Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Writers (Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1990).

5. Harold Bloom, The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages (New York: Riverhead, 1995) 4.

6. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957) 27.

7. Bloom 17.

8. For information on the history of the discipline of English, see for example D.J. Palmer, The Rise of English Studies: An Account of the Study of English Language and Literature from its Origins to the Making of the Oxford English School (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965). He argues that the establishment of the School of English at Oxford (in 1894-95) "was a decisive challenge to the long supremacy of classical studies, for the small group of men who created the Oxford School believed that the study of English language and literature not only deserved but now needed to draw upon the traditions and resources of the ancient university. It was their achievement to secure the advent of English studies as a fully-developed branch of humane learning..."(vii-viii). To mount such a challenge, a body of demonstrably "great" texts was needed (and the same can be argued in the Canadian context). For information on the way that the study of English was used consciously as a "civilizing" force in India, see Gauri Viswanathan, "The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India," Oxford Literary Review 9.1/9.2 (1987): 2-25.

9. I have taken this phrase from a panel entitled, "Converting the Unconverted? Resolving the Unresolved? Towards a Creative Post-Colonial Pedagogy" held at The Edmonton Conference--Post-Colonialism: Audiences and Constituencies, Edmonton Alberta, October 1-3, 1993.

10. In an article entitled "From Novitiate Culture to Market Economy: The Professionalization of Graduate Students," ESC 19.4 (December 1993): 471-484, Donald B. Goellnicht writes that within the New Critical orthodoxy that shaped many departments of English, "graduate students were the equivalent of novices, training through an elaborate system of unquestioning imitation...to become the next generation of academic clerics" (476).

11. Frye 7.

12. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990).

13. The term is McMullen's and is taken from the title of her collection of essays, Re(dis)covering our Foremothers.

14. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," Canons, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984) 15.

15. For more on nineteenth-century antecedents, see Carole Gerson, A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada (Toronto: UTP, 1989).

16. Robert von Hallberg, "Introduction," Canons (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984) 3.

17. Leon Surette, "Creating the Canadian Canon," Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value, ed. Robert Lecker (Toronto: UTP, 1991) 17.

18. Carl F. Klinck ed., Literary History of Canada (1st ed., Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1965; 2d ed., Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976).

19. von Hallberg 2.

20. von Hallberg 2.

21. Robert Lecker, "Introduction," Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value (Toronto: UTP, 1991) 3.

22. Gerson 18.

23. Tim Heath, "'Methinks my monument, some *feeble* praise': Canadian Colonial Texts and Post-colonial Constituencies,"The Edmonton Conference: Post-Colonialism--Audiences and Constituencies, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1-3 October 1993.

24. One need only be present at a debate on changing the fields represented on the syllabi of first year English courses to hear this operating: suggestions for women's writing,

marginal writing, popular culture (like Harlequin Romances or Westerns) immediately invoke a fierce protection for the "purity" of English studies.

25. See Stephen Slemon and Helen Tiffin, "Introduction," After Europe: Critical Theory and Post-Colonial Writing (Sydney: Dangaroo, 1989) for a discussion of the relationships between post-colonial theory and post-structuralist criticism.

26. Michael Berube and Cary Nelson, ed., Higher Education Under Fire (New York: Routledge, 1995) 17.

27. Herrnstein Smith 14.

28. Herrnstein Smith 6.

29. Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace, Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (im)positionings (London: Routledge, 1995) 16.

30. Bloom 1.

31. Arun Mukherjee, "A House Divided: Women of Colour and American Feminist Theory," Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States, ed. Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1992) 170.

32. Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (New York: Routledge, 1992) 4.

33. Pratt 7.

34. For a useful survey of recent work in the modernist field, see Wallace and Elliot, especially their introduction and conclusion.

35. The term "ungodly modernism" comes from W.J. Simmons, minister, travelling salesman, and the founder of the second Ku Klux Klan, a movement that began in the U.S. in 1915 and was markedly different than either of its more terrorist phases, namely its post-Civil war beginnings or its post World War II resurgence. It is cited in Kathleen M. Blee, Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991) 18.

36. One striking example of the need to expand definitions of women's modernist art and its relationship to lived experiences is Lisa Tickner, The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987).

37. John Guillory, "Canon," Critical Terms for Literary Study, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLauglin (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990) 235.

38. Guillory 235.

39. Elliott and Wallace 166.

40. An indication that this view is changing (and that the radical divide between theory and archival work may be breaking down) are recent works such as Virginia Blain, Isobel Grundy and Patricia Clements, The Feminist Companion to Literature in English (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990). Here the editors make plain the possibilities of their work for a challenge to "intellectual history" by suggesting that their contribution of (what for the most part has been considered non-standard) information "will alter existing conceptions of literature in English in ways we cannot forsee" (ix).

41. Hugh Kenner, "The Making of the Modernist Canon," Canons, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984) 373.

42. Louis Menand, Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and his Context (New York: Oxford University P, 1987) 98.

43. To trace these debates, a good point of access is Shari Benstock's essay, "Expatriate Modernism: Writing on the Cultural Rim," Women's Writing in Exile, ed.Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 1989).

44. On the question of constructions of literary genius, see Christine Battersby, Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989).

45. See, for example The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology,ed.Bonnie Kime Scott. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990) and Shari Benstock, Women of the Left Bank (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986) for large-scale works on the renegotiation of modernism. Specific interventions into stylistic and generic aspects of the modernist debate can be found in works like Marianne DeKoven, Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991) and Suzanne Clark, Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991).

46. I am referring, for example, to Woolf's position in the collection of excerpts from essays called Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader, ed.Mary Eagleton (London: Blackwell, 1986) as a sort of authorizing figure from the past.

47. Drusilla Modjeska, Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925-1945 (London: Sirius, 1981) 191.

48. Modjeska 195.

49. Nellie McClung, The Stream Runs Fast (Toronto: T. Allen, 1945) ix.

50. In "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse" (boundary 2 12.3/13.1, 333-357) for example, Chandra Talpade Mohanty outlines what she sees as the homogenizing tendencies of Post-Colonial theory in relation the Third World constituents it seeks to represent.

51. Elliott and Wallace 14.

52. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 26 November 1925.

53. Richard D. Altick, The Art of Literary Research 3rd ed., revised by John J. Fenstermaker (New York: Norton, 1981) 22.

54. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, "Writing the History of Women," A History of Women: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints, ed. Pauline Schmitt Pantel, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1992) xv.

55. Helen Tiffin, address to Post-colonial Reading Group, University of Alberta, Edmonton, winter of 1991.

Getting the "Facts" Out:
Sketching the Life of Georgina Sime

What arrogance...to presume to peep into other lives--to lay them out bare and joining them like so many dots to form a picture.

(M.G. Vassanji The Book of Secrets)[1]

Sketching the Life of Georgina Sime[2]

Jessie Georgina Sime (known by her second name, Georgina) was born on February 12, 1868 in her father's manse in Hamilton, Lanark, Scotland. Her life, like her career, was long and varied, dipping in and out of the boundaries of the socially and professionally appropriate, always experimenting with changing lifestyles, and engaging with contemporary ideas that she might understand herself and her relationship to a world that troubled her. As a subject of biographical speculation, Georgina Sime is terribly elusive, at one moment arrogantly condemning the obtuseness of a reporter or the style of a fellow fiction writer, and the next bereft and despairing over the unconscionable loss of life in a world consumed by the madness of war. The contradictory nature of Sime's private assertions (which repeatedly challenge those statements she intended for public consumption) is in part what makes her such a fascinating figure to study. Sime's letters register the ebb and flow of a life lived alone and document her alternating euphoria, guilt, frustration and deep displeasure at the amount or quality of her writing--a passion that seemed to consume most of her waking hours. This irascible, witty woman, also capable of great compassion, was eminently aware of her contradictory self, writing to her friend and confidante Frank Carr Nicholson on December 10, 1925:

> I hurried to write to you this morning because I found myself on waking up--<u>myself</u>, I really often find myself quite somebody else, whom I don't know and don't want to know: a most unpleasant person, from whom I would get away as soon as I possibly could if I had my way. A selfish, idle, suspicious, mean, ignoble, contradictory, spoil-sporting self. A detestable self, and I wish I could truthfully say I had nothing to do with it....This morning, and for no reason that I know of, I said to myself as soon as I opened my eyes, "Good morning, Georgie Sime...how are you? It's a long time since we've met." And even to such an imperfect thing as J.G.S. I

cling on hard, terrified lest it should disappear and leave the demon instead.

Sime's contradictory self, her "demon," as she described it, gave her an acute sensitivity to the feelings of others, and formed the background to the enduring focus of her early work--woman in her many manifestations, alive both in the pages of literature and on the streets of Canada. I have grouped her non-collaborative[3] work from the period 1907 to 1921, including the "ephemera" of published essays and unpublished plays as well as the four sustained works, The Mistress of All Work (London: Methuen, 1916), Canada Chaps (London: John Lane/Bodley Head, 1917), Sister Woman (London: Grant Richards, 1919), and Our Little Life (London: Grant Richards, 1921; New York, Stokes, 1921), under the rubric of "early work," perhaps an ironic classification for the writings of a woman in her forties and fifties. This early work has been the focus of my attention largely because similar concerns about (Anglo-Canadian) immigrant women and their negotiations for a place in Canadian society run throughout the group. Sixteen years elapsed before Sime's late literary production began to appear: In A Canadian Shack (London, Toronto: Lovat Dickson, 1937), The Land of Dreams (Toronto: Macmillan, 1940), Orpheus in Quebec (London: Allen and Unwin/PEN Books, 1942), Dreams of the World of Light (London: privately printed, 1951), Brave Spirits (Plymouth: privately printed, 1952), A Tale of Two Worlds (London: Chapman and Hall, 1953), and Inez and Her Angel (London: Chapman and Hall, 1954). By this time, and in these years of virtual blindness and declining health, Sime's early political engagement and interest in the definition of possibilities for equality for women seemed to all but vanish: in 1945 she wrote in one of her almost daily letters to Nicholson: "I might here state that I am NOT a democrat. I am hierarchist of the First Degree. I want everyone in his place and made to stay there, myself included. Do you agree?"[4]

Georgina Sime moved to Canada from Edinburgh in 1907; she was thirty-nine, unmarried, and financially independent. She had been a working woman for many years and had an impressive list of "professional" qualifications: dressmaker, secretary, and

writer-of-all trades (including essays, reviews, and editorial work).[5]. It is likely that her move to Canada came in the aftermath of her mother's death; it is also likely that much of her inclination to emigrate had to do with her relationship with a prominent Montreal surgeon and professor, a relationship that seemed to centre Sime's life, and one that lasted for almost fifty years; indeed Sime's return to England in the early 1950's was precipitated not only by her need to find a place to settle and to work in her (very) old age, but also to find a way to allay the numbness and desolation she felt upon his death[6]. Her move to Canada was real expatriation: but for some cousins in Britain--the remains of what in her mother's day was a large and vital family, she had little in the way of familial connections. She did, however, seem to have a name that mattered in literary circles, at least in those circles that were anchored in the tradition and establishment of the nineteenth century.

Sime's life in Britain was lived flirting on the edges of circles of literary power, but her prodigious connections were something she refused to rely on in Canada, choosing instead an independent path to her own notoriety. Born in Scotland, she was raised in central London, but moved with her family to the London suburb of Chiswick when she was eleven, living quietly among (as the book jacket to her memoirs, Brave Spirits[7], suggests) "Great Victorians": William Morris, George Meredith, Jane Welsh, Thomas Carlyle. She was born to two writers--James Sime and Jessie Aitken Wilson--and was thereby connected both by familial and acquired ties to the literary and scientific elite of the late nineteenth century. James Sime, the son of a Scottish Presbyterian minister grew up in Thurso, the northernmost town on the Scottish mainland. Like his father, James Sime was a Church of Scotland minister, and had studied first at the Aberdeen "Gymnasium," then at the universities of Edinburgh, Heidelberg, and Berlin. He left the ministry shortly after his daughter's birth and turned his attention to literature. Besides writing the biographies of Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe, Sime edited the Mendelssohn correspondence and was, at various times, on the staff of The Pall Mall Gazette, the St. James Gazette, and the Daily Graphic. He wrote a large number of articles for the Encyclopedia Britannica and was a reader at Macmillan and Company.[8] In the years prior

to his death he was Assistant Editor of the scientific magazine, Nature.[9]

Throughout her personal writings Sime repeatedly allies herself with her father by reiterating their likeness in temperament, their similar literary and musical tastes, and their difference from the "puritanical" Jessie Sime. However, despite Saturday afternoon outings together, Sime's relationship with her father--a man immersed in his literary pursuits--was something decidedly tenuous. In what is calculated to be a fond remembrance of her infancy, Sime recalls that, because her father would have nothing to do with her unless she was perfectly groomed, she would, upon hearing his footsteps in the hall, beg her nurse to wipe her face so that this fastidious man might pay attention to her. Sime's mother, however, a woman she described as "well-read, with a liberal mind and a natural turn for that very rare thing, common-sense,"[10] possessed a pragmatic modernity--an insistence that her daughter learn to make her way in the world on her own terms and in pursuit of her own interests. This insistence on a widened sphere of opportunities for her daughter was likely arrived at through her own lengthy career as a care giver, first to her own rapidly diminishing family in the years prior to her marriage, later to her husband's, and finally, to her sister's orphaned flock. It seems clear that in Georgina Sime's family, strong, capable, intelligent women--specifically her mother and her maternal grandmother--were central, not only housekeeping, but (as in the case of her mother, a biographer and teacher) maintaining a core of independence while literally home-making, orchestrating the details of the interior life of the family and occasionally assuming all financial responsibility. By the time of her marriage in 1865[11], Jessie Wilson had written a biography and edited a posthumous collection of her brother's essays[12], securing the ties to the intelligentsia which were to so fascinate Georgina. Jessie Wilson's first book, Memoir of George Wilson, details the life of her older brother George, first physician, then chemist (who became friends with David Livingstone, famed "explorer" of Africa while working in the same London laboratory for a summer), then Professor of Technology at the University of Edinburgh, and finally, Director of the Scottish Museum of Technology. It paints a vivid portrait of the Edinburgh family of eleven children from

which Jeanie Wilson, future sister-in-law of Mrs. Oliphant (English novelist 1828-1897), and Sir Daniel Wilson, noted archaeologist, professor of History and English and President of University College (eventually University of Toronto) as well as co-founder and President of the Royal Society of Canada, also came.

Sir Daniel Wilson, the man Sime calls in her memoirs her "religious uncle" remembers his childhood in this accomplished family as involving "dim visions of little sisters and brothers whose cradles I rocked and whose sick beds I watched as they faded away in their early years, and the dark shadow was again and again thrown across our diminished circle."[13] It was a life of oppositions; beneath the ever-hovering shadow of death lived a great vitality: the names of the five children who did not survive past childhood were used to christen the ones who came after. Wilson describes his quiet father, Archibald, as "an amiable, kindly man who should have been a happy one,"[14] He was first a tea merchant, then a spirit seller, but fades out of reminiscences of family life--a place where his wife Janet "a woman of strong intellect, and of an impulsive, artistic temperament"[15] was clearly the centre. Her disdain for fashion gives a brief hint of her "original" character:

> The changing fashions of dress annoyed her; they seemed unnecessary; they were undoubtedly expensive, and they had not even the merits of being improvements either in comfort or in beauty. So when she was about thirty years of age she designed for herself a sort of uniform, which is said to have been by no means unbecoming, and from which she never varied for the rest of her life.[16]

Mrs. Wilson's originality and strength were passed on to her daughter, Sime's mother, who fashioned a similar garment, the appearance of which horrified Georgina as they strode the streets of the fashionable London suburb of Chiswick. Sime recalls in an unpublished autobiographical manuscript what she calls her mother's "saddle-bag" that "resembled the bags that my childish fancy pictured Arabs as using to carry their portable

property about and as throwing across their saddles." According to Georgina, her mother:

> made them herself out of black material and flattered herself with the illusion that they looked like a black shawl or wrap when thrown carelessly over the arm. They did not. In the first stage of a shopping expedition there might perhaps have been some justification for the shawl idea, but when we were returning home, the saddle-bag full at both ends with unwieldy parcels, I will defy you to say that they looked anything but awful.[17]

Jessie Sime's disregard for aesthetics and her inventiveness point up the kind of household she was raised in, dominated as it was by a caring, intelligent mother who nurtured an array of relationships that enriched the life of the family: when her sister and brother-in-law died within a few months of each other, Mrs. Wilson took in their four children and raised them as her own. When Daniel Macmillan, founder of Macmillan publishing company, and a close friend of the family took ill en route to Edinburgh by ship--it was to Mrs. Wilson he went and she "nursed [him] for a fortnight as if [he] had been her only son...".[18]

The written word and education were important in this household. Mrs. Wilson had a fine mind, and it was his mother's love of verse that Sir Daniel Wilson remembered for she "read us into an admiration of Cowper at an early age, and so delighted us with some of the anti-slavery passages in his "Task," as well as his minor poems, that both George and I, in a fit of youthful enthusiasm, renounced sugar in our tea, as a practical protest against the slave-labour to which it was due."[19] Mrs. Wilson lived to a grand old age and with her daughter Jessie, Georgina's mother, saw the family through many years of adversity. Together at the end of 1842 they nursed George through the amputation of his leg below the knee--a procedure performed in his own bedroom without the comfort of anaesthesia or whisky and amidst "irrepressible cries of agony."[20] It was after this operation that his

medical colleagues from Edinburgh University (who performed the amputation) began to lobby for the use of chloroform: it did not come into more general medical use until early in the next decade. Despite such obvious troubles, the diminished Wilson family during these years prior to Jessie's marriage to James Sime seemed to be largely a contented one. George's career (first as MD, then as Professor of Technology and later as the Curator of the Scottish Industrial Museum[21]) was advancing rapidly, he had a wide circle of friends including Daniel Macmillan, who admits in one of his frequent letters to George that "few things have given me more pleasure than the sight of so long a letter from you--and the promise of more.--I hope very many more."[22]), and he wrote poetry (of dubious quality) in his spare moments.[23] Jessie taught what became under her guidance the largest Sunday School in Edinburgh, acted as her brother's private secretary, and was matriarch of a busy home.

Letters of this period reveal the two to be more like a middle aged husband and wife than the relatively young brother and sister they were. In April 1855 Daniel Macmillan asked them to be god-parents to his infant daughter. They agreed and although they never met the baby until much later, she introduced a spark of new life into their quiet existence. Jessie, a self confessed "old maid" admits, in a letter to Macmillan, to the change this new responsibility has made: "I have felt a new tie linking me to the generation following--a lived link extending in many directions" and feels grateful: "Many a time have I thanked you for the bond, --you parents don't know that such affections need to be cherished, and that it is possible for hearts to turn in on themselves.[24] But their quiet happy life together was not to last long. George died (at 41) in 1859 leaving Jessie in the house to cope with the deaths both of her mother and of her beloved Uncle Peter in the next few years. By 1863 she was living alone but for her dog Stronach and her maid Hannah; her independence had been assured by a legacy from her uncle which she had carefully invested in property. While it must have been a lonely time for her after the ceaseless bustle of a large family, it was virtually the only time in her life in which she had only herself to care for, to worry about, to feed. When she married James Sime, a young

divinity student, in 1865, her hands and house were again full, this time with troubled relatives apparently seeking the stability of the Sime household, soon expanded to include Georgina, and relocated to London where James Sime wrote feverishly--essays, biographies, histories--and clubbed his way into the metropolitan literary scene. Given the models of marriages she saw in her mother's generation (including that of her own parents--a sort of lukewarm affair), it is not surprising that Georgina chose never to marry and indeed distrusted the institution of marriage as it had emerged from the nineteenth century.

Sime's personal writings provide numerous examples of cautionary marriage tales, from the fiery mismatches of her uncles with their wives to gossip about her parents' contemporaries. Two stories, however, stand out: in the first, an excerpt from her autobiographical work, Brave Spirits, Sime recalls the story of a chop that halted the convivial relations between George Meredith's family and her own. The Merediths were frequent dinner companions of her parents and, according to Sime, at one dinner, Meredith sent his dinner back, saying that all he wanted was "a chop, a single chop, grilled, served piping hot--nothing more than that" (86). His wife answered, "'That chop... has haunted me all my married life. There is no chop like that,' she continued, half addressing my mother and half the Creator of all things. 'It doesn't exist in the world, but my husband won't stop talking about it'" (89). Sime's mother's disgust at the spectacle of Meredith's behavior was long-lived, as Sime recalls: "My mother never condoned his behavior on that occasion, and steadfastly refused all further invitations to Box Hill; she said she did not wish to enter the house of a man who could make his wife so unhappy by harping on a chop that existed only in his imagination" (93).

The second cautionary marriage tale whose details are woven through Sime's personal documents (and those of her mother) is constituted of the disaster that precipitated the closer connections between Georgina's mother and her distant cousin--the Victorian novelist Mrs Oliphant. This connection was sparked by the marriage of Jessie's favorite sister, Jeanie, to Mrs Oliphant's brother, Frank[25]. They lived in Birkenhead where

Frank held a position in a bank. Together they had four children, and maintained good relations with both families--when Mrs. Oliphant was widowed in 1859, she stayed with the Wilsons in Edinburgh for some time while she recuperated and tried to plan her future. When Jessie Wilson married James Sime, it was at Jeanie's that they chose to celebrate. There was, however, a collective family concern about Frank's extravagant spending habits and by the late 1860's he seemed unable to meet his financial obligations. Hoping to solve for a time his chronic debts, Frank "borrowed" money from the bank to tide himself over until his own pay came through, at which time he intended to replace the original sum. Unfortunately for his family the money was missed; before he could be charged with embezzlement, he fled to France and then to Hungary, taking with him his wife and, eventually, his two youngest children. Jeanie's sudden death in Europe of "putrid fever" (an event that happened with her alone, but for attendants who stole her clothes and even the rings from her fingers) meant that her children were dispersed, with the eldest going to her Aunt Jessie Sime, living in London with her new husband and infant daughter Georgina. When Frank returned to England, abdicated all responsibility for his offspring, and died six years later, Jessie Sime and Mrs. Oliphant shared parenting responsibility for the orphaned flock[26] and thus the two families remained in what might be termed a sort of oppositional contact through the years. In Brave Spirits Sime philosophizes about the possible reasons for her mother and Mrs. Oliphant "never being able to get on"[27] and concludes that their differences lay in temperament and attitude. They became joint guardians of Jeanie and Frank's children and it is possible that Mrs. Oliphant's possessiveness of the children created friction in the family. Nelly, the eldest, divided her time between the two households,[28] and became quite a handful, perhaps becoming mentally imbalanced. She was eventually boarded out and disappears from the picture in the 1870's. Frank, an engineer whose education had been financed by his uncle, Sir Daniel Wilson, moved to India in 1875 and died in the Punjab in 1879[29]. The two youngest daughters continued to live with Mrs. Oliphant (indeed, Denny, the youngest, nursed her until her death and even changed her name legally from Wilson to Oliphant to reflect her new allegiances)[30]. The two families remained in contact through the years; when the

middle daughter, Margaret Oliphant Wilson, married in 1893, Georgina Sime was one of her bridesmaids.[31] In fact, when Sime returned to England to settle after almost fifty years in Canada, she sent off the family silver to the descendants of this family in Scotland.[32]

Likely because of her mother's advanced age for marriage and first childbirth--she was forty-one when her daughter was born--Georgina had no siblings. She was a precocious only child and, I suspect, quite a handful at times, as is suggested by her recollection of her first European tour organized by her uncle Daniel Wilson, "home" on holiday from Toronto) in which she deliberately ignored the sights arranged for her benefit and enjoyment:

> Now this uncle of mine was very "religious" and had never liked me since I had been unable to give him, in reply to his question, the name of David's father -- the David, I mean, who was the favorite of the Lord. ... My mother...was always anxious that I should make a good impression, and she always hoped, I fancy, that I might redeem the disgrace that my ignorance of David's parentage had brought upon me. What must have been her feelings and what must my uncle have thought of me when it was seen that all the literary sustenance that I had provided for the trip was a bundle of "Family Herald" Supplements! ... The "Family Herald" Supplement was not, at its best, an aristocratic-looking paper and my frequent packing and unpacking of these copies of it did not tend to improve their appearance... My uncle, with the idea of saving hotel expenses, "travelled" us continuously. And I, with my eyes on the pages of what seemed to have become my breviary, and wholly absented from all that surrounded me, passed through the scenery of the Swiss mountains or sat in medieval churches without paying the smallest attention to them. We were abroad three weeks...and I read the "Family Herald" Supplement nearly all the time.[33]

While this excerpt from her memoirs hints at her independence, specifically in her refusal to humour her mother by attempting to impress her uncle with her learnedness, it also alludes to the means of her early education. Being an only child, she had cultivated early a companionship with a variety of reading material, and, in time her light reading was supplanted by a voracious appetite for fiction, drama, and philosophy. Through her haphazard meanderings through the family library, Georgina was educated competently, if rather unevenly, at home until her mother's desire for formal education prevailed over her father's resistance to it. At the age of thirteen Georgina was sent for a year to Queen's College School and thereafter for three years to Queen's College,[34] alma mater of writer Katherine Mansfield, historian Gertrude Bell, and Sophia Jex-Blake, "another fighter for women's rights and pioneer in medical training for her sex."[35] Judging from later accounts, Sime's years at Queen's were more a social than an intellectual initiation, but they did generate interest in the quality of her voice and the possibilities of a singing career. A teacher counseled sending her to Berlin, and after some negotiation, her father's permission was secured and Georgina set off on Boxing Day 1886 [36] for what was to be at least one year--but more likely three--of independent living and musical instruction.

She spent the following year living at Frau Bertel's pension with a friend from Queen's College and studying at Stern's Conservatorium. Her voice was good and she was considered an easy candidate for a professional career, but under the rigour of the training and the unhealthiness of her lifestyle, her voice broke. Specialist treatments in the form of direct caustic applications to the throat, not surprisingly, did not help; finally, she was sent home (likely in 1890) to rest her voice, but it never fully recovered and remained unfit for a musical career ever after. When her voice failed, in part because of overuse and in part because of the "rackety"[37] life she was living in Berlin, she was forced to consider another avenue for her talents. Following her time in Berlin (during which she had sampled not only personal independence, but also the newest of European music and drama, while polishing her fluency in French and German) her life in Chiswick fell into a dull routine. Seeking some kind of "useful" career, she apprenticed herself to a

dressmaker for the mornings, gave piano lessons in the afternoons, wrote for a ladies' magazine and helped her father as reader for Macmillans. She had, she admits:

> the feeling of being shut in, of being enclosed in bounds too narrow for me to move about in. The longing to rove, to explore this strange and surprising world of ours, East and West, was still strong in me, and I felt vaguely that Chiswick was rather a poor place for me to set about doing anything of that sort: there wasn't room enough there. I loved being at home again, but--yes there was a "but" following this perfectly truthful asseveration, and when investigated, this "but" proved a "No Thoroughfare" leading nowhere at all.[38]

It is likely during these years in the early 1890's that Sime attended the meetings of the Socialist Society held in William Morris's Kelmscott stable (also attended by Oscar Wilde and G.B.Shaw) and struck up a friendship with Shaw's sister, Lucy, a singer in light opera, who said of her famous brother: "George listens to all I say...and then he takes the good bits and writes them down as his own, and everybody laughs and thinks how clever he is."[39] It is likely that during this period of virtual apprenticeship under her father that the young Georgie Sime also began to create her own career. The short biographical essay appended to her work on Thomas Hardy indicates that she "contributed short stories to various magazines, did reviewing for the Athenaeum, contributed for a time a weekly column to the Pall Mall Gazette, and worked at translations, both from the German and the French."[40] In all this, she was aided by the travel writer, George Warrington Steevens[41] of whom it was, apparently, her "habit to say that she could never express how much she owes to this brilliant writer--dead, alas, too young--who helped her to place her work, and, more important still, never tired of assisting her in the shaping of the thought she was as yet too inexperienced to be able to express."[42] Upon her father's death in 1895, Sime moved from London to Edinburgh with her mother. She disliked this city and its air of cultural provincialism and Protestant righteousness, but it had been her mother's home

and the place to which Jessie Sime wanted to return in the changed circumstances of her widowhood. It is possible that Georgina worked as reader for the publishing firm of Nelson and Company[43] during some of her time in Edinburgh, but the place to which she returns again and again in her letters is the home and office of an eminent gynecologist and professor at Edinburgh University, Dr. A.H. Freeland Barbour. It was here she was working in 1901-1902 when William James came to the University to deliver a series of lectures under the auspices of the University of Edinburgh's Faculty of Divinity.[44] Sime "became for a time his informal secretary...and worked with him more or less regularly helping him to clear off batches of correspondence and so on."[45]

In the very early part of the century, Sime met two men who were to have a profound effect on the course of her life, both personal and professional. The first was a young Canadian doctor, Walter William Chipman [46] whom she met while working for Barbour, whose house and surgery were at 4 Charlotte Square, a Georgian district of Edinburgh one block from Princes Street. Chipman had graduated in medicine from the University of Edinburgh but had remained in Edinburgh for further study.[47] Somewhere in amongst the typing and dictation, the lectures and speeches, and the innumerable pregnancies and deliveries and reports thereon lay the beginnings of a love affair that was to last almost fifty years[48] and that was to entice Sime to Canada in the first place and to induce her to stay in Montreal for four decades until the point when, her "special friend" having died and her affairs wrapped up, she returned to England to live until her own death eight years later. He returned to Canada; in 1907 Sime followed. Their relationship, it seems, danced carefully between public and private domains, between the constraints of his marriage and his expectations as her employer. While a personal relationship of some kind continued for five decades, it is unclear how long their professional relationship lasted. According to Sandra Campbell:

> she initially worked for Walter Chipman, who had returned to Canada in 1900 and begun to make his name as Montreal's premier obstetrician-

> gynaecologist, a leading professor and surgeon at McGill University Medical School and the nearby Royal Victoria Hospital. Married since 1889 to Maud Angus (d.1946)--the daughter of one of the wealthiest men in Montreal, the financier and CPR director R.B. Angus--Walter Chipman moved in the most exclusive circles of Montreal society and lived in a mansion on Drummond Street, near the upper reaches of Montreal's fabled and fashionable "Square Mile."[49]

For many years, Sime worked in Chipman's Montreal office and helped him after hours with the preparation of lectures and papers to be delivered at meetings of medical and learned societies. They had a great deal in common, according to historian and biographer Sandra Campbell, who writes in her introduction to Sister Woman that "Chipman was, for his part, a well known authority on women's health whose writings are scattered with literary references from Ruskin to O. Henry."[50] In an essay entitled "Sociological Aspects of Medicine," for example, Chipman "attacked the working conditions for shop girls: 'Ruskin rightly tells us that the worth of any civilization may be measured by what it makes of its girls--its potential mothers.'"[51] Clearly, as Campbell notes, his work has "obvious affinities" with a good deal of Sime's, including her plays. Georgina Sime's surviving letters to Nicholson--likely as a result of his assiduous editing--indicate merely the barest facts of this liaison. It seems possible that Sime's relationship with Chipman put her in touch with the Montreal intellectual community: in the early years of the century, she began publishing regularly in Andrew MacPhail's University Magazine, alongside such Canadian notables as Stephen Leacock and Pelham Edgar. In these years, too, Sime began to work in literary organizations, and was one of the founding members (and eventually President) of Montreal PEN, an international literary organization of "Poets, Editors, Novelists" begun in London by John Galsworthy and boasting the membership of writers such as Thomas Hardy. A biographical note in a monograph published in 1928 catalogues her membership in other organizations: "Vice-President for the Province of Quebec of the Canadian Women's Press Club; Past-President of the Montreal branch of

the Author's Association."[52]

In her early years in Canada, Sime had lectured to professional women on literature and had liked her connection with social spheres other than her own as well as the idea of introducing unread women to "great" characters in fiction. By 1925, however, in preparing a course of lectures on "The Russian Novelists" for "the sillies"--rich, idle women in whom she can see no usefulness--her tone is pragmatic, if a little jaded: she insists that she would rather receive ten dollars for a series of six lectures to sixty people than charge half that much and lecture to one hundred and twenty.[53] Certainly Sime was still working in the 1920's while writing and lecturing in hopes of making her living by literature. She was tremendously popular as a speaker: indeed, an undated newspaper clipping pasted to the dust jacket of a copy of Sister Woman indicates her appeal: "Her recent tour throughout Ontario proved a great success. During Book Week in Toronto she addressed on one occasion three consecutive audiences totalling some 3,700 persons." At a PEN convention in Vienna her speaking abilities were noted by American author/anthologist, May Lamberton Becker who wrote subsequently that she "met Sime just once...and heard her put into a five-minute speech as representative of Canada at the World Congress of P.E.N. clubs, more of the essential spirit of the Viennese and what it meant to the rest of the world, than any other delegate had been able on that occasion to do in far more time."[54] Some time later, prudent investments in the stock market allowed her to retire and to devote herself to her writing. Sime was so pleased with her success in this territory that she compiled a treatise--not surprisingly left unpublished--entitled "Market Maxims by the Monna Lisa of the Market-Place." "Play the market long enough, and it will catch you in the end," and "the end of a market-career and the close of a passionate love are alike in this: one never ceases being thankful to be done with both, and one is never finished longing to be in the thick of the two once more," are but two of these collected aphorisms.

The second important man in Georgina Sime's life was Frank Carr Nicholson. If

Chipman mattered to her day-to-day life, it was Nicholson to whom she turned for advice on the shaping of her ideas and her work. She had been introduced to Nicholson by mutual friends in Berlin in 1900 or 1901 where he had taken his mother on holiday. Nicholson was born in Aberdeen in 1875 and educated at the University of Aberdeen and Christ's College, Cambridge.[55] He began his career at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich,[56] but resigned his job suddenly to return home to be with his mother following his father's death. In 1901 he was appointed Assistant Librarian at the University of Aberdeen and in 1903 became Librarian of the Royal College of Physicians at Edinburgh.[57] Sometime around 1909, Georgina convinced him to move with her to New York to open a literary agency: it was, apparently, a dismal failure, not only in terms of business, but also in terms of general health: he became very ill; Georgina suffered what was likely a nervous breakdown. Nicholson's brother, Harry, a physician in Edinburgh, was so alarmed by the situation of his brother in New York that he submitted an application on his behalf to the University library. Details of what happened in New York with Sime remain sketchy: until his death, his wife noted, this "adventure" was something Nicholson was disinclined to talk about.[58] Nevertheless, he returned from America to join the University of Edinburgh library in 1910 and continued to work there until his retirement in 1939. He wrote one book, a translation of medieval German love songs entitled Old German Love Songs[59], but published little more during his lifetime, instead, directing his efforts to Georgina's career. In his professional persona, he orchestrated the massive project of cataloguing the University of Edinburgh library holdings, ranked as "one of the four greatest European catalogues--with those of the British Museum, the Bibliotheque Nationale and the London Library."[60] He did not marry until after his retirement from the library just prior to World War II: with his young wife, Mary, he moved to a new home in the Lake district[61], a home that was planned to be a retirement home for Georgina Sime as well.

Their friendship, which lasted until her death in 1958, was from the first literary. Their early letters are peppered with references to a litany of literary personae: Conrad,

Synge, Carpenter, Dickens, Morris, Tolstoy, Ruskin, Hugo, Barrie, Austen, Scott, Gaskell, Kipling, the Brownings, Butler, Shakespeare, Bennett, Shaw. Later, others would be added: Dostoevsky, Woolf, Galsworthy, Chekhov, West. But their relationship was far more than literary. Not only was Nicholson an unfailing supplier of books unavailable in Canada (not to mention information from his vast personal knowledge), he was also a kind host to Sime during her working trips to Scotland and England--attending to her personal comfort and orchestrating her movements around the country. He was, in addition, a good friend to whom Sime wrote religiously (especially as she grew older) receiving professional encouragement and personal praise by return mail. It seems that Nicholson's early professional help consisted not only of providing a sounding board for ideas and reading drafts, but also of collaboration on her first collection of sketches entitled Rainbow Lights: Extracts from the Missives of Iris. Nicholson also acted as Sime's agent, at least until 1921 when she may have engaged a professional to sell her short stories on both sides of the Atlantic. Correspondence between Nicholson and Grant Richards, the astute publisher of Sister Woman and Our Little Life, confirms that Sime authorized Nicholson to "act in every way for her," even signing contracts on her behalf.[62]

The details of their early work together, like the details of Sime's relationship with Chipman, are sketchy, lost in the stringent editing of her letters by Nicholson that left her opinions on life and her philosophies on art, but removed much of her daily interests and preoccupations. It is clear, however, that for many years Nicholson devoted himself to Sime's work, describing himself to the writer Walter de la Mare in 1942 as her "what am I to call it? -- amanuensis, private secretary, counselor, editor-at-discretion..."[63] In a letter to the librarian at the University of Edinburgh following her husband's death, Mary Nicholson makes clear this connection: "Miss Sime...was a very old friend. As you probably know she was a writer and for over fifty years my husband devoted himself to her literary ventures; sometimes he allowed his name to be printed with hers on the title-page of such books as were published."[64] As the years wore on, her sight deteriorated and she was forced to rely more heavily on Frank's editorial assistance, and eventually on his facility

with the pen. A complicated collaborative arrangement saw Sime's drafts moving from hand to hand across continents. She would send page upon page of barely legible pencil marks on yellow paper to Nicholson's Keswick home. Here he would patiently transcribe the bits and pieces into his own hand, edit the handwritten text, and send it to a typist (one of whom lived, incidentally, on the Isle of Man). The typescript would be sent to Sime in Montreal to be read to her by a woman hired for the purpose or would wait at Nicholson's home for Sime's yearly visit. Fortified by Mary Nicholson's food and ministrations, Nicholson and Sime would sit in his book-lined den overlooking Derwent Water and read over the creations of the previous year, pausing to alter the text as necessary. A letter from Sime dated April 14, 1946 explains her progression on what would be published as A Tale of Two Worlds while indicating obliquely the increasing demands she placed on her friend as the years passed:

> I am sending you an airgraph today, so this is simply a slip to note that enclosed, instalment six is going to you., containing ... about 400 hundred [sic] pages in all, and I can almost hear, above the wind and the waves of the Atlantic Ocean, the sigh that you will heave when the postman delivers the parcel to you! You cut down I remember, a delivery of 600 pages to 60; cut down this of 400 to 4, and you will oblige me very much.[65]

Clearly in these later years their work is completely cooperative for without Nicholson there would have been no progress. Nicholson was a stickler for grammatical precision; Sime sometimes held stubbornly to her guns. In a letter to de la Mare dated January 3, 1953, Nicholson outlines the changes he has made in what would eventually be published as A Tale of Two Worlds. He insists that the novel:

> has gained greatly by my recent prunings, which have certainly not been too drastic. It isn't a new book, you know; J.G. and I wrote it seven or eight years ago, and I had hard work then to get it into anything like a

> reasonable compass. I must have spent the best part of three years in dealing with it, and even then there were sections of it that J.G. was so loth to forego that I hadn't the heart to remove them, though I knew they would be better away. So I wasn't sorry when Chapman + Hall asked me -- very nicely! -- to abbreviate the MS. at my own discretion.[66]

In a letter written shortly after the book was released, de la Mare praises him for his dexterity: I "wanted to tell you how engrossed I have been in A Tale of Two Worlds, and of course to ask your latest news of J.G. ... What an indomitable spirit, and how unusual a book. First, I cannot distinguish her strands in it from yours -- they are so closely interwoven. And next, how seldom one reads a book of so marked a double interest -- in the book itself, its story and characters; and -- certain no less -- in the [writing] of it."[67]

The complexity of Sime's collaboration with Nicholson in her later years places this writing apart from her early writing, a range of literary work in which Sime told women's stories, often with an ironic edge. In her first collection of sketches--an early collaboration with Nicholson in which he provided a preface--published under the pen name A. de Silva and entitled Rainbow Lights: Being Extracts from the Missives of Iris (1913), the young debutante in "The Bud," described as "a victim to 'social duty' or 'social pleasure,'"[68] is caught in an endless social whirl and worries about what will happen after her much envied marriage to a rich man she neither knows nor cares to know. This dependent woman's observation that "getting married is a tough proposition"[69] stands in contrast to the early industry and optimism of the young hairdresser of "The Working Ant" who pulls a curtain across the corner of her office during business hours to conceal her home--in the form of a bed and a hotplate--and who would jump at the chance to marry into the kind of money "The Bud" eschews. Sime argues throughout her early fiction for the necessity of women having useful, congenial work and for dignity for women in Canadian society. Her domestic manifesto, The Mistress of All Work (1916), contains a view of the home as an empowering domain for women and aims to restore a healthful balance to women's lives,

especially to the lives of women juggling the dual responsibilities of work within and without the home. Canada Chaps (1917), a collection of short stories commissioned by John Lane in London, is designed to capture the experience of war in Canada. Sime was criticized for her unwarranted inclusion of the experiences of women in this wartime collection[70]. Sister Woman (1919), a short story sequence about immigrant women's lives in Canada in the early years of the twentieth century, details women's varied and conflicting relationships to power and the economic and social consequences of any divergences from the path of "normal" morality. By the time Our Little Life was published in New York and London in 1921, Georgina Sime was fifty-three and had lived in Montreal for fourteen years, all the while viewing the "New World" with a mixture of fondness and condescension. This is a novel about the love of an "elderly feminine thing"(21) for a younger man in the context of Canada in World War I.

The publication of Sister Woman and Our Little Life by Grant Richards connected her writing life in Canada to the heart of literary London during years of profound reaction against monuments of older artistic, literary, and cultural orders. At the age of twenty-four Richards founded the publishing house that carried his name. Within a year he had signed George Bernard Shaw; within four years, he was the publisher of Housman and Bennett. He had a large catalogue of children's books, a chapbook library of poetry, and had pioneered the idea of the "World's Classic" personal library, cheap editions of the best of English literature.[71] Through his association with the Fountain Press, he also published reprints of the work of modernist writers like Ford, Woolf and Mansfield. His literary judgement, then, helped to school a generation of readers to the "finest" of English Literature. When he accepted Sister Woman for publication in 1918 with enthusiasm--"I say I like the book. I will go further and say that I like some of the stories enormously. I should be proud to have my name on a book that contained them"[72]--he also insisted on a clause in the contract by which Sime would give him first refusal on her next two books. One of the manuscripts he looked at was called first the "long novel", then the "long Canadian story"[73], "Miss McGee"[74], "A Brazen Prison"[75], "Penelope's Web"[76], and "This

Harsh World" before "Our Little Life" was settled on.[77] Richards took on the novel because he believed it "to be an extraordinary piece of work, one of the finest pieces of writing in its kind, and of characterisation, that have been produced in this generation."[78] Richards negotiated with the Frederick Stokes Company of New York for simultaneous publication, while retaining "the dramatic and moving picture rights."[79] Although Sime shortened the original manuscript by 22,000 words to 185,000 words (about 500 pages), both companies were worried about its length, and Sime was persuaded to shorten it to its final length of about 400 pages. Throughout the negotiations with Stokes, Richards insisted on a "growing admiration for [Sime's] art" and expressed concern that "she is so fine an artist that I do not like her work being pared owing to commercial considerations."[80]

The Grant Richards correspondence vacillates between high hopes for the novel and for its author--"If I may say so," he writes on April 17, 1920, "I am as convinced as ever I was that you have a really important future before you"--and concern with its slowness in "making its way"[81]. He indicates his frustration in a letter about the bookseller/agent in Canada who had been disappointed by the sales of Sister Woman, of which, "Mr. Gundy tells me that he still has copies. Here is a book that really gives you Canada, and a book that has aroused considerable discussion, and yet they cannot sell 250 copies! And here in England--we have not even paid our expenses. It is all very, very disappointing."[82] Just before the release of Our Little Life he writes optimistically that "the sooner Canadians can be made to understand that they have a writer of international importance living among them, the better."[83] Our Little Life fared better in terms of sales than its predecessor, in part because of the reputation Sime had gained through the first book, and in part because the New York edition was issued at the same time as the London one. It was, however, despite everything, not a big seller: as a consequence the engagement of Richards with Sime and her work did not last much longer. Letters of 1922 and later reveal tensions in the relationship as Sime's disappointment with slow sales seems to have surfaced in accusations about the competence of Richards' publishing and

marketing practices. In 1923 it appears that Sime threatened to move her work elsewhere; Richards replied that he was "not prepared to give up any rights for her work" while at the same time insisting that he was only taking a hard line "out of admiration."[84] At this time, too, Sime's professional relationship with the Frederick Stokes Company--never distinctly cordial--cooled when she submitted a manuscript entitled "A Lady Without Means" for their approval, knowing they had--through their liaison with Richards--rights to her next work. They rejected it immediately, responding directly to Sime in Montreal, upsetting her by their vehemence, and angering Richards by the breakdown of publishing protocol that ensured his company maintained control over the release of Sime's later fiction.

The number of reviews praising both Sister Woman and Our Little Life leave one puzzled as to the relatively small sales of both. In the case of Sister Woman it may have been that the work of an unknown writer coupled with a generic bias made it difficult to sell: in Richards' words, "It is a timid business, publishing short stories at any time, and it is especially so when the writer is new."[85] Certainly the stories from the collection that were published in the Canadian Bookman and the English Review received a good deal of attention.[86] In the case of Our Little Life, there is no denying that sales may have suffered because it is a dense and demanding novel, but to attribute the book's lukewarm sales, as Richards does, to an insensitive reading public seems unjust given the scarcity of books in Canadian stores. Sime complained to Richards about the trouble people were having finding copies of Our Little Life: it is possible that Richards' agreement with the Frederick Stokes Company to trade the movie rights of the novel for Canadian and first serial rights meant that neither company paid enough attention to the market here--the very place where one could expect a good deal of interest, despite (or because of) the post-World War One nationalist euphoria and its attendant gestures of solidarity with "The Empire" that the novel questions.

Despite continuing to write virtually until her death at age ninety in 1958, Georgina Sime was never to repeat the critical success of Our Little Life except, perhaps,

with her collaborative novel A Tale of Two Worlds[87] translated into German as Eine Frau zwischen zwei Welten. Amid depression, then the carnage of the Second World War and its attendant slowdowns and rationings of cultural extras, Sime's late works, dealing principally with her personal engagements with dreams and psychoanalysis, display much more of the strained exactitude of a preoccupation with craft than do the more exuberant works of her early years. Our Little Life marks the end of the early period of Sime's writing for more than simply the logistical reasons of health and geographical distance that I have outlined, for it is the final work in which Sime's interest in social change is paramount. In 1914 she writes in an essay in the New Statesman about how the democratic spirit has deserted Canada in the pressures of the early part of the war, noting that the war will make little material difference to those with money and a great deal to those without:

> This winter people with money in the bank will talk most likely of retrenchment and how can they best economise; but though they hold back a little here and there on shoes and sealing-wax, perhaps, there's lots of money left to them to spend on ships. If they knit socks instead of learning tango steps, take war-books for their fiction, and talk uniforms instead of gowns, yet in-between-whiles they will probably eat their dinners heartily enough. Canadian poor this winter, with jobs to hunt for and painfully keep hold of, will do their talking in the minor key. The war has rid us for the moment, it is true, of all those pieces of their minds we didn't want to hear, but sometimes I wonder if we are not profiting overmuch at their expense...[88]

As she grew older, however, the interest in equality Sime articulates in this excerpt began to disappear under the pressures of ill health and amid enclosure in a life of relative economic plenty. Reasonable returns on the stock market enabled her to have a comfortable life in Montreal and to travel as she wished and distanced her physically and

ideologically from the social injustice and women's everyday relations to such injustice that were the passionate focus of her early work. In these years of retreat from her early social ideals, she became engaged in exploring the parameters of the mind. Her reinvention of herself as she aged is but another of the problems that compounds a study such as this where biographical continuity has been at once assured by Nicholson's careful stewardship of her papers and simultaneously placed in doubt by his editing. I can see he has been busy in amongst the envelopes and pale blue pages of text, reaching out to a future biographer through his pencilled annotations providing obscure information to the reader: surnames of persons she has mentioned, names of books, a schema of her ideas. Through his help I have come to know Georgina Sime; through his help, I have also been cast into ponderous questioning because he has been busy in other ways too, bending offending pages over the corner of his desk or under his ruler, stealthily tweaking off those passages unfit for future eyes. Nicholson's intervention into Sime's personal papers marks the contingency of biography and the difficulties of encapsulating the writerly persona in an expository form. His intervention poses questions that cannot be answered: what was so troubling about those words that necessitated their removal from a pile of papers stored in a damp dining room and likely destined for the fire? Were they about Nicholson's relationship with Sime? About a romance that soured and fizzled and became something else before her removal to Canada? Were they about Walter, her doctor, her lover, the man for whom she chanced a lonely life in Canada, secretly sharing him with his wife for all those years? Whose name was he protecting? And by whose permission? Nicholson went to so much trouble, righting the envelopes, arranging the text, tying it all up with ribbon to lie in wait for someone he would never meet, that his work becomes not only a testament to a friendship, but also to a belief in the value of her work. His creation of telling lacunae, however, has meant that I have come to look to her public writings for a philosophical fleshing-out of her private life, reading them not as transparent autobiographical windows to her life and psyche, but rather as complex moments of engagement between her personal and professional worlds in the context of early twentieth-century Canada.

Notes

1. M.G. Vassanji, The Book of Secrets (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart date) 297.

2. A version of this chapter was published in K.J. Watt, "Introduction," Our Little Life, by J.G. Sime (1921; Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1994).

3. In 1913, Georgina Sime published a collection of sketches entitled Rainbow Lights (London: Duckworth, 1913) under the pseudonym A.de Silva. She clearly worked with Nicholson on this collection: I have not included it because I have had difficulty deciding how extensive that collaboration was.

4. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 1 April 1945.

5. J.G. Sime, Thomas Hardy of the Wessex Novels (Montreal: Carrier, 1928): 55-56.

6. Mary Nicholson recalled in conversation a telegram followed by a phone call her husband received from Sime upon the death of Chipman. She described Sime as desolate.

7. Georgina Sime and Frank Nicholson, Brave Spirits (Plymouth: privately printed, 1952).

8. Information on the life of James Sime is from Presented Press Cuttings of Reviews of J. Sime's Lessing, Special Collections, Edinburgh University Library, Edinburgh, Scotland.

9. J.G. Sime, "This Girl Was I" t.s., 49.

10. J.G. Sime, "Jane Welsh Carlyle as My Mother Saw Her," Chambers's Journal 359 (March 1954): 177.

11. Information on the early life of Georgina Sime's mother and her family is from Jessie Aitken Wilson, Memoir of George Wilson (Edinburgh, 1860) unless otherwise specified.

12. George Wilson, Religio Chemici: Essays ed. Jessie A. Wilson (London, Cambridge, Edinburgh, 1862).

13. Hugh Hannah, "Sir Daniel Wilson," The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club 17 (1930) 2.

14. Langton, H.H., Sir Daniel Wilson: A Memoir (Toronto: T. Nelson, 1929) 12.

15. Langton 13.

16. Langton 13-14.

17. Sime, "This Girl" 63.

18. Hughes, Thomas, Memoir of Daniel Macmillan (London: Macmillan, 1882): 58.

19. Jessie A. Wilson, Memoir 14.

20. Jessie A. Wilson, Memoir 297.

21. John Brown, Horae Subsecivae 2nd Ser. (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1861): 105.

22. Daniel Macmillan, letter to George Wilson, 13 February 1838, Add. Mss. 55089. Manuscripts Division, British Library , London.

23. One example is a poem entitled "To the Spirit of a Deceased Terrier" written on the death of his sister Mary's dog in 1849. The first three stanzas are as follows:

My little dog! I loved thee well,
Better than I to all would tell;
When thou wert dead, a shadow o'er my spirit fell.

The music of thy pattering feet
That came so gladly me to meet,
Will never more my senses greet.

All are at rest; thy wagging tail
Thy little limbs that did not fail
For many a mile o'er hill and dale.

The poem ends:

Dost thou will soul of shadowy cat
Fight? or with spectral spirit-rat;
Or slumber on celestial mat?

(Jessie Aitken Wilson, Memorial of George Wilson, 363)

24. Jessie Aitken Wilson, letter to Daniel Macmillan, 10 April 1856, Add Mss. 55253. Manuscripts Division, British Library, London.

25. Mrs. Harry Coghill, The Autobiography and Letters of Mrs. Margaret Oliphant Wilson Oliphant. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1899): 31.

26. Margaret Oliphant Papers, National Library of Scotland Add. Mss. 23199.

27. J.G. Sime, Brave Spirits 31.

28. Mrs. Harry Coghill 122.

29. Obituary. The Pioneer. 6 November 1879. Found as a clipping in the Margaret Oliphant Papers. National Library of Scotland Add. Mss. 23211 f71.

30. Clipping from the Times 18 April 1895. She changed her name from Janet Mary Wilson to Janet Mary Oliphant. Margaret Oliphant Papers, National Library of Scotland, Add. Mss. 23211 f74.

31. "The Report of the Marriage of Miss Margaret Oliphant Wilson to R.H. Valentine." Windsor and Eton Gazette. 29 July 1893: 2.

32. Mary Nicholson in conversation, Spring 1991.

33. Sime, "This Girl" 96.

34. Sime, "This Girl" 14.

35. Claire Tomalin, Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988) 21.

36. Sime, "This Girl" 200.

37. Sime, "This Girl" 268.

38.Sime, "This Girl" 291.

39. Sime, Brave Spirits 150.

40. J.G. Sime, Thomas Hardy of the Wessex Novels: An Essay and Biographical Note (Montreal: Louis Carrier, 1928) 56.

41. George Warrington Steevens, With Kitchener to Khartoum (London, Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1898).

42. Sime, Hardy 56.

43. Sime, Hardy 56.

44. Edinburgh University Calendar (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1900-1901 and 1901-1902).

45. Sime, Brave Spirits 110-111.

46. Information on this relationship was gathered during interviews and visits with Mary Nicholson in the spring of 1990.

47. "Dr. W.W. Chipman, Former President of RVH, dies." Montreal Star 4 April 1950: 201.

48. Mary Nicholson says she recalls the day that her husband received a telegram from Sime in Montreal telling him of Chipman's death. As her letters make clear, she never really recovered from his death, nor could she make peace with Canada without him: he died in 1949, and in 1950 she returned to England where she lived until her death eight years later.

49. Sandra Campbell, "Introduction," Sister Woman, by J.G. Sime (1919; Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1992).

50. Campbell xxxii.

51. Walter Chipman, "Sociological Aspects of Medicine," McGill News 11 (June 1930): 15-20. Cited in Campbell xxxii.

52. Sime, Hardy 58.

53. Georgina Sime , letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, [nd] 1925.

54. May Lamberton Becker, Golden Tales of Canada (1938; Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972) 114-115. Cited in Campbell xiv.

55. University of Edinburgh Journal 10 (1939-40): 23.

56. J.A. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1951).

57. D. Talbot-Rice, The University Portraits (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1957) 163.

58. The story of this New York adventure was reported to me by Mary Nicholson, in conversation, spring of 1990.

59. Frank C. Nicholson, Old German Love Songs: Translated from the Minnesingers of the 12th to 14th Centuries (London: Unwin, 1907).

60. University of Edinburgh Journal 10 (1939-40): 23.

61. L.W. Sharp, "Address Given at the Retiral of Frank Carr Nicholson as Librarian 29 April 1939." University of Edinburgh Library Special Collections.

62. Frank Carr Nicholson, letter to Grant Richards, 2[9] January, 1919. Grant Richards Archive, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

63. Frank Carr Nicholson, letter to Walter de la Mare, 5 July 1942, Edinburgh University Library Special Collections.

64. Mary Nicholson, letter to Edinburgh University Library, 11 May 1963, Edinburgh, Scotland. It was written on the occasion of her depositing his papers there.

65. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 14 April 1946.

66. Frank Carr Nicholson, letter to Walter de la Mare, 3 January 1953, Edinburgh University Library Special Collections.

67. Walter de la Mare, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 28 June 1953, Walter de la Mare Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

68. Sime, Rainbow Lights 47.

69. Sime, Rainbow Lights 44.

70. Campbell xv.

71. Publisher's note to the Index the Archives of Grant Richards 1897-1948. Compiled by Alison Ingram (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 1981) np.

72. Grant Richards, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 12 September 1919. Grant Richards Archive.

73. Grant Richards, letter to Georgina Sime, 7 August 1919. Grant Richards Archive.

74. Grant Richards, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 12 September 1919. Grant Richards Archive.

75. Grant Richards, letter to Georgina Sime, [18] November 1919. Grant Richards Archive.

76. Grant Richards, letter to Georgina Sime, 22 June 1920. Grant Richards Archive.

77. Grant Richards, letter to Georgina Sime, 1[] August 1920. Grant Richards Archive.

78. Grant Richards, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 12 September 1919, Grant Richards Archive.

79. Grant Richards, letter to M. Dominick (of the Frederick Stokes Publishing Company) 22 June 1920. Grant Richards Archive.

80. Grant Richards, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 12 September 1919, Grant Richards Archive.

81. Grant Richards, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 12 September 1919, Grant Richards Archive.

82. Grant Richards, letter to Georgina Sime, 22 June 1920, Grant Richards Archive.

83. Grant Richards, letter to Georgina Sime, 13 May 1921, Grant Richards Archive.

84. Grant Richards, letter to Georgina Sime, 24 May 1923, Grant Richards Archive.

85. Grant Richards, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 6 May 1919, Grant Richards Archive.

86. Grant Richards, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 3 May 1919, Grant Richards Archive.

87. J.G. Sime and Frank Carr Nicholson (London: Chapman and Hall, 1953).

88. J.G. Sime, "Warlike Canada," The New Statesman 19 December 1914: 266.

Chapter 1

"Bright Lines and Clear Taxonomies"[1]:
The University Magazine and the "Democracy of the Intellect"[2]

They did not recognize it as great beauty because they had always acquiesced in what they saw, not distinguishing beauty unless it presented itself in familiar, obvious, and inescapable form...

(Ethel Wilson The Innocent Traveller)[3]

Chapter 1

If Georgina Sime's life in Canada began with the grand physical gesture of her disembarkation at Montreal in 1907, her visible life as a serious Canadian writer did not begin until five years later with the publication of two of her essays, "The Incomplete Angels"[4]--an essay enumerating the differing relationships to culture between women of the "New World" and those of the old--and "The Intellectual Death"[5]--an essay on modern education that speaks to the situation of the modern woman--in The University Magazine, an influential journal edited at McGill University by Andrew Macphail under the auspices of an editorial board representing McGill, the University of Toronto, and Dalhousie College. At the time of these publications, Georgina Sime had been in Montreal off and on for almost five years, writing all the time and attempting to be heard in places that might eventually guarantee her the critical approval she desired as well as the leisure to write full-time. The appearance of two of her essays in The University Magazine in the same year signals an important moment of professional belonging, of affirmation of intellectual value; at the same time, however, this moment of profound visibility demanded the effacement of Sime's gender, marked the erection of her *invisibility* by obscuring her real identity under the pseudonym of "Jacob Salviris," a fictional male persona free to write weighty opinion pieces in a way that his real-life counterpart, Georgina, could not. This chapter, then, attempts to make meaning of Sime's compromised entry into the heart of the Canadian intellectual world of her time: it is about the kinds of choices available to Sime in relation to her aspirations for herself as a writer and to the gendered, guarded site of intellectual production advertised as a medium of freedom and open expression, an instrument of national criticism, called The University Magazine.

It is important in this discussion of the role of gender in the development of a "national consciousness" to understand the importance of The University Magazine. Not only was it scholarly and respected, secured on the reputations of three of Canada's oldest universities, it was tremendously well read: in 1912 it had an enviable paid subscription

list of 5300[6], and was alone of the journals of its time in paying its contributors well; in fact, the princely sum of about twenty-five dollars, "more than double the average weekly wage earned by adult males employed in manufacturing" in pre-war Montreal[7] was paid per contribution. It is perhaps no wonder, then, that a glance at its table of contents yields a veritable genealogy of Canadian artists and thinkers, including besides Sime, Stephen Leacock, the "English-speaking world's best-known humourist 1915-1925,"[8] John McCrae (McGill pathologist and author of the famous the World War I poem "In Flanders Fields")[9], Archibald MacMechan (Professor of English at Dalhousie, member of the Royal Society, and author of Head-Waters of Canadian Literature), E.W. Thomson (author, journalist, member of the Royal Society), Pelham Edgar (head of the Victoria College's English Department 1912-1938), Edmund Kemper Broadus (First head of the University of Alberta's English Department from 1908-1936), Duncan Campbell Scott (poet, short story writer, bureaucrat in the federal Department of Indian Affairs, and President of the Royal Society), Marjorie Pickthall (poet, writer of short fiction)[10], B.K. Sandwell (critic, teacher of economics at McGill, editor of the Montreal Financial Times, the Canadian Bookman, the official publication of the Canadian Authors Association, and Saturday Night, member of the Royal Society), Beckles Willson (journalist for the London Daily Mail, and later a prolific freelance writer), (Sir) William Peterson (Professor of Law and second Principal of McGill University), J.S. Woodsworth (Methodist minister, social worker, politician, architect of the CCF), James Mavor (Scottish political economist and Professor at the University of Toronto, member of the Royal Society), and Garnett Sedgewick (head of the University of British Columbia's English Department 1930-1948, member of the Royal Society).

This literary community, carefully nurtured by Andrew Macphail and secured on the pages of The University Magazine, served the two-fold purpose of marking the synchronous fashioning of a literary elite **and** of a coherent idea of nation. The University Magazine, with the figure of Macphail at its helm between 1907 and its demise in 1920, acted as a centrepiece in the establishment of a confident Canadian intellectual community.

A note "To Readers" that forms a frontispiece to the final volume indicates the journal's aim of the support and encouragement of Canadian arts:

> To "encourage Canadian literature" has been in every mouth. The only way to "encourage" writers is to read, and pay for, what they write....A thousand new subscribers would now yield seven hundred and fifty dollars, all of which would go to the writers, as the management is gratuitous. There must yet be that many persons of good will in Canada who would risk two dollars in so good a cause; and they would receive as compensation any entertainment they might derive from reading the magazine.[11]

The journal's professed centrality in the consideration of nation, its subsequent reputation of intellectual confidence, and its attempt to place within the grasp of individuals the ability to aid in the fostering of Canadian culture, means that it provides an unusually provocative site for an examination of the discursive struggle to write a nation into being as well as for the obverse: it allows us to examine those strategies and interests considered un-national, and given the power of the journal to domesticate its own agenda, perhaps even un-natural, specifically as they relate to gender and to the experience of Georgina Sime.

Sweeping opinions about the cultural underpinnings of nation such as I have articulated are drawn from theorists such as Homi Bhabha who opens his collection of essays entitled Nation and Narration with the observation that, "Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their origins in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation...might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west."[12] This idea of the nation as a cultural construction fielded and maintained in a range of writing and in the spaces of

humanism as much as--or perhaps more than--in the realm of legislation is echoed in the words of Benedict Anderson. "Nationalism," Anderson writes, "has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which--as well as against which--it came into being."[13] Understood in this institutional, systemic, manner, the work in the world of The University Magazine takes on new resonances: its work was structured around the expression of nationalism, even correct nationalism, its mandate was to express "an educated opinion upon questions immediately concerning Canada [,] and to treat freely in a literary way all matters which have to do with politics, industry, philosophy, science, and art." A list of overdetermined notions--education, freedom, literature--await us here and indeed must have confronted Sime as she struggled to belong to the community represented by the auspicious journal while at the same time attempting to hold on to the humanity and simplicity that she believed necessarily informed her finest work. The point is that intellectual work in the humanities was (and is) not free, democratic, and communal[14], but is rigidly defined, heirarchized to indicate networks of authorization and worthwhile strategies. Freedom, in this context, is gendered, for women wrote on a constellation of "safe" subjects, their work and their opinions confined within the pages of literature or within the realm of literary biography, never exceeding their sphere and venturing into the compromises of the real world or the complexities of fiscal policy or imperial relations, rarely challenging the opinions of the journal's editor or his auspicious circle. In the main, women tackled only safely feminine topics--"George Meredith's Women," an early essay by Sime[15], and "Mrs. Jameson in Canada" by Blanche Lucile Macdonald are examples of purely literary work that would not stray into the prickly realm of the political. Or, they wrote poetry. Marjorie Pickthall has poems appearing in virtually every number in the pre-war years. Her work (first published in book form in 1913 under the arrangement of Macphail), was romantic and absolutely antithetical in tone or subject to the articulations of the modern woman. Pickthall was safe, or in Carole Gerson's words, an appropriate persona for the canonizers "who sought to fulfill their retrogressive cultural agenda by constructing idealized representations of a young, naive, spiritualized, and desexualized

female poet who would save Canadian literature from the crudities of the modern era."[16] These women were participating in the project of The University Magazine, that is, they were being paid and applauded for the work they did; yet clearly, they were not intellectual equals, nor could they be, for to become an intellectual equal was to surrender claims to normal affiliations with their own sex. Their momentary belonging to the circle of the journal was not belonging, was not professional affiliation, but a much compromised sort of sexual freedom. This liberal notion of the freedom of the intellect, however, continues to pervade literary studies: as noted bibliographer, Richard Altick, writes: "Love of books and a consuming interest in the intellectual and aesthetic questions they pose make brothers of men with amazingly different backgrounds and tastes. In scholarship there is no prejudice born of national origin, creed, colour, or social class; we live in the truest democracy of all, the democracy of the intellect."[17] Intellectual freedom, articulated in combination with concepts of nation in the masthead of The University Magazine and later in Altick's formulation, is a potent, although shifting, idea that seems to hold out innumerable possibilities for women's expression, but it is one that frequently exacts a high cost. To be free, in relation to some of the "finest" thinking in Canada in Sime's era, was to opt in, to support a set of beliefs about the role and power of intellectuals in relation to the national project that was Canada. What such notions of freedom ignore is the profoundly important role of the idea of profession, articulated in terms of intellectual community and the material--and for women, personal or spiritual--demands of professional acculturation.

Sime's entry into the world of The University Magazine was at a moment and in a forum where literary, political and economic constituencies debated the shape that the Canadian nation might hold, with specific reference to the reconciliation of its ties with the family of empire and to the challenges of modernity that were seen to accompany the arrival of the twentieth century. This was a moment in which the primacy of the "proper" literary artifact would be debated and established as a vital part of the definition of the modern nation. It was also, in the critical realm at least, a moment of profound anxiety, a

moment when arbiters of the past attempted to hold their ground in the face of astonishing social and cultural changes. It was a sensitive time, for even as the emerging profession of the university critic attempted to secure a canon in the image of nation, it depended upon the legitimating power of recognizably great works to justify its own existence. Without a firm sense of nation, writers could not write "classic" texts; and without such classic texts, all that existed for critical ingestion was the "shifting and insecure material"[18] of a poorly defined national consciousness. "A foreign critic," Pelham Edgar writes, in a 1912 University Magazine article entitled " A Fresh View of Canadian Literature," "would tell our literary story in a manual of five pages. Brave brains and busy pens we have amongst us, but we scatter our intellectual energies and our aggregate of isolated efforts does not yet constitute a coherent body of literature, stamped with our national spirit."[19] Edgar's article is both a call for an indigenous, worthy, Canadian writing and an argument for its impossibility. While he acknowledges that "optimism" under the present cultural and social circumstances "would be unwise, [it would be] equally unwise...to depreciate unduly what our writers have, in vexing conditions, accomplished."[20] A national ideal is paramount to the development of great literature, for, according to Edgar, "all that is of enduring value has been nationally inspired." In Canada, however, he continues, "our uncertain and unsatisfactory political status has adversely affected our literature, but...every year of our growth contributes to the clarifying of our national consciousness. We are only a nation in the making, but that we will emerge from our years of tutelage and trial with rational ambitions and definite ideals, is the belief of every true Canadian."[21]

Without a common grounding of myth and tradition to foster creation, with only a "stubborn mass of unleavened life"[22] to work with, and the "refractory material" of "the struggle for responsible government"[23] to tie them together as a people, artists would have a difficult time in attaining the greatness necessary to national consolidation. The characterization of a Canadian literature of the early twentieth century, then, was as much a critical as a creative struggle--if writers wrote out of the experience of their locality, then it was up to the critics to make of these disparate elements a national statement (or a

statement of nationality) that might shore up notions of Canada and guarantee a future for criticism. It is clear that what Canadian intellectuals in the pages of The University Magazine (and outside it on the pages of anthologies and handbooks)[24] hankered after were not only the dulcet tones of patriotic poetry, but coherence and origin, a firm sense of a definitive Canadian intellectual community whose archive of "indigenous" writing could rival those of the sons of any other nation, for, Edgar writes, "comradeship in the republic of letters is of incalculable value as a spur to productivity."[25] What Canada needed, at this time, was "the fructifying contact of brain with living brain,"[26] and the stimulation of participation "in some momentous movement of ideas,"[27] "a giving to the age the badge of thought or symbol or belief by which future generations will recognize it and weigh its worth."[28] What Canada needed was a place where a literary community could find its own voice, and in the process become the voice of a nation.

While nominally run by a collective of academics, The University Magazine remained (between 1907 and his departure for the war in 1915) firmly under the thumb of Andrew Macphail, who, as Leacock noted, was "like all competent men" in that "he had no use for co-operation."[29] Indeed Sime herself gives us an indication of his stringent editorship in a letter to Nicholson after the war began: "As soon as Merry Andrew is off to the war...," she writes, "I shall send Modern Comedy and Modern Tragedy to the University Magazine. I think they will do there, and in his absence it may be possible to get a proof which resembles in some features the manuscript. I hope you approve of this. He will go with the Second contingent in December."[30] Macphail was "described shortly after his death in 1938 as 'the most eminent Canadian literary figure of his generation'"[31] and later as "a pivotal figure in the intellectual life of English Canada in the years prior to World War I" and "one of English Canada's best-known social critics in the first two decades of this century."[32] Physician, Chair of the History of Medicine at McGill and founder of the Canadian Medical Association Journal, Macphail was also the recipient of a knighthood in 1918, "membership in the Royal Society of Canada, an honourary doctorate from McGill University, the Quebec government prize for literature in 1928, and the

prestigious Lorne Pierce Medal of the Royal Society of Canada for outstanding contributions to literature in 1930."[33] Macphail saw his journal as vehicle to advance "correct thought", namely the definition of the imperial connection between Canada and England and the exposition of faults in contemporary thinking: he was what some would call a "heroic critic," one "obligated morally to rescue thinkers from the prisons of illogic, to stand up to illogic when no one else cares."[34]

It is significant that one of the faults in contemporary thinking that Macphail felt obliged to redress was the rationale for the changing place of women: it is ironic that his installation as a speaker for Canada's entry into modernity was predicated on a romantic anti-progressiveness manifest in his nostalgia for a traditional agrarian way of life, for a time before the simple life of the family, and the "natural" occupations of women, were swallowed up by the demands of industrial life and by the aspirations of new women. Self reliance, he believed, was the most deadly gift that a woman could possess;[35] it was an attribute dangerous not only to the individual, but also to the commonweal, as he points out forcefully in the following excerpt from his essay entitled "On Certain Aspects of Feminism." "At this moment," he writes in The University Magazine as an explanation for his denial of the suffrage cause, "the world is suffering from too much reformation. When a ship is labouring in a heavy sea, that is no time for increasing the top-hamper; nor does a man choose the occasion of a hurricane for repairing his house."[36] Nineteenth-century reforms had ended only in disaster, according to Macphail. "They emancipated women, and the women avenge themselves by brawling in public places. They opened every trade and every profession to women; yet women will persist in marrying and giving in marriage, and encumbering the earth with their progeny."[37] His opinions about the proper place of women rested on firm ideas about the naturalness of an order which placed the white male supreme above all else, as both creator and defender of civilization. In his editorial in the penultimate number of The University Magazine entitled "Women in Democracy," Macphail makes it clear that the changing aspirations and expectations of women are part of a large, dangerous democratic movement that will change the face of the "civilization"

he recognizes. The late war, he writes, was "fought not for democracy, but for our king and our institutions *as they are* (italics mine)."[38]

One of the institutions that failed in his mind to uphold the standards of civilisation, an ideal held in the stewardship of men for the protection of women, was the university. Macphail writes that

> The universities were the first to surrender [to the democratic impetus of the age]. They were created for the preservation of learning. They were endowed for that purpose. Each graduate who departs carries with him public or private charity to the amount of a thousand dollars....The universities scatter the precious seed upon arid minds. What learning do the students leave or bring back? What enrichment has any woman returned to the university which has squandered its treasure upon her? The universities of Canada are now, as they always were in Russia, the forcing beds of democracy....and the women members are a dissolving leaven.[39]

Indeed, Macphail's opinions on women were considered so objectionable that these "stridently anti-feminist, anti-female suffragist writings provoked the Montreal Local Council of women in 1914 to send a strongly worded protest to the editorial board of The University Magazine. The board took no action against Macphail, and at least one member, James Mavor of the University of Toronto, sent the protesters a sharp response."[40]

Macphail's work in The University Magazine was not an isolated instance of such rhetoric, but rather an example of pervasive and usual attitudes in learned communities, both in Canada and abroad. In chapter 12 of her study entitled Gender and Genius,[41] Christine Battersby focuses on the figure of Otto Weininger, a young Jewish intellectual who published a treatise on sexual difference called Sex and Character to great critical

acclaim in 1903. Considered "the most up-to-date answer to 'the woman problem,'"[42] it was influential, not because Weininger's hypotheses were revolutionary, but because his book packaged "in a popular form various ideas about women that had currency at the turn of the century."[43] In enumerating the work of some of his intellectual predecessors, he writes that "the idea is definitely insisted on that genius is linked with manhood, that it represents an ideal masculinity in the highest form....Woman, in short, has an unconscious life, man a conscious life, and the genius the most conscious life."[44] Weininger's necessary divorce of women from the realm of the conscious, the realm of the intellect, was buttressed in the Canadian scene by figures such as Stephen Leacock--at this point at the height of his writing career and described as "the most popular humourist in the English language from around 1911 to 1925."[45] In his essay entitled "The Woman Question," collected in his Essays and Studies, Leacock, like Weininger, divorces women from the twin realms of public and practical. Here he laments the dispossession of women from their rightful place at hearth and home and with a forced jocularity ponders the possibilities of the sex:

> Take it all in all a man has a certain chance to get along in life.
>
> A woman, on the other hand, has little or none. The world's work is open to her, but she cannot do it. She lacks the physical strength for laying bricks or digging coal. If put to work on a steel beam a hundred feet above the ground, she would fall off. For the pursuit of business her head is all wrong. Figures confuse her. She lacks sustained attention and in point of morals the average woman is, even for business, too crooked.[46]

"Practically all the world's work is open to women now, wide open," writes Leacock further on in the same essay, before underlining her destiny for failure:

> *The only trouble is that they can't do it.* There is nothing to prevent a

> woman from managing a bank, or organising a company, or running a department store, or floating a merger, or building a railway,--except the simple fact that she can't. Here and there an odd woman does such things, but she is only an exception that proves the rule."[47]

When taken in combination, the words of Edgar, Macphail, and Leacock offer a glimpse into the mind of a learned society, an intellectual community that mattered to Sime. It was a community predicated on consolidation, both of itself, and of a constellation of ideas to define it; its critical ideals demanded or shaped the work of art to notions of national stability, while its sexual ideals demanded the maintenance of traditional chivalric ideals of stewardship and protection against the antithetical ideals of women in modernity: independence, both sexual and economic, suffrage, and a litany of others. It was into this intellectual inferno, then, a place where women's contributions were treated with scorn, or designated exceptional, freakish, unwomanly, that Georgina Sime placed her two essays--"The Incomplete Angels" and "The Intellectual Death" in her *annus mirabilus* of 1912--and two shorter essays in subsequent years. In them we can see the working out of ideas about the state of women and social change that will surface in her later, more extended works: fruitful possibilities for social and intellectual intercourse between the sexes, the importance of education incorporating a variety of knowledges, the wholistic relationship between art and life, and finally, the belief that art can grow directly from the "unleavened" mass of life that was Canada. Her work, both in these essays and later, was informed with her ideas about responsibility: men and women could not expect to live happily in a world without some sort of responsibility to others, some sort of connection to people. Georgina Sime's writing in this forum was gracious, if necessarily oblique, but the bulk of her work, nevertheless contests much of what the journal seems to stand for.

It is these ideas about the connection between life and art that lie at the heart of her essay, "The Incomplete Angels," described in its first paragraph as a discourse "of the

womankind of two nations" (62), a comparison of English and Canadian women that confines itself to women of "the more or less well-to-do portions of the community" (62), a relatively small portion of the population but one that has a tremendous influence as model because "they exercise an influence out of all proportion to their mass and energy..."(62-63). Her interest is not in ranking British and Canadian women, but in quantifying the nature of their differences, observing and analyzing the space of contrast as it begins to look at women's relationship to culture--from the Canadian woman's seeming disdain for high art, to her interest in fabric art (in the form of fashion), to the culture of the modern monied woman's daily life--including her necessary participation in tea and bridge parties, and the frenzied sort of pace through which she seems to search vainly for a branch on which to light, a meaning for her life. "I very much wish, by the way" she writes,

> that some sage would enlighten us simple folks as to what it is that keeps these toilers so mortally busy of a morning. I have met plenty of them who have servants in abundance, no children to occupy their time, and husbands who are out all day long, and yet they invariably tell me that life is one breathless rush, that they are rarely able to arrive anywhere for luncheon, tea, or dinner at the appointed hour. I always long to ask them the question that Wordsworth put so insistently to the leech-gatherer: 'How is it that you live and what is it that you do?'" (68)

That art and life, and maybe the art of life, are inextricably bound is taken for granted in this essay, yet changing times and changing expectations for women, particularly in the new world, have left them bereft of direction by, for example, severing the traditional ties between wealthy women and the arts, by substituting frenzied society rituals for meditation on their world and for the production of meaning about their lives.

Broadly speaking, then, I should say that art among Canadian women is, to

> an even greater extent than among the English, out of touch with reality. I suppose any fine and simple standard of art must represent a fine and simple way of thinking: once that is attained, dress, decoration, and the like, being the outcome of a definite conception of life, will fall naturally and gracefully into their proper places. At present they are for the most part merely the outward manifestations of an inward tumult of nervous excitement. There is no artistic production, because no one really wants to produce anything beautiful. Man's days, and women's as well, are grown too hasty for the making of beauteous things or even for the joy in such as are already made. Art is taken vicariously, much as massage is substituted for outdoor exercise. But just as one cannot get the real good of a ten-mile walk without stirring from one's couch, so one cannot enjoy a work of art without taking some little pains to understand it. And the Canadian women's capacity for taking pains is decidedly finite (67).

Art for Canadian women was, to Sime's eye, merely a measure of one's social standing, another possession to fling at acquaintances; it was not, as she believed, a way of life, or a way of understanding one's life: "The Canadian woman," she writes, "can appraise anything in dollars and nothing at its true value. Like many short-sighted people, she sees with such exactness in a small circle that she is blind to all the outside wonders of the world; she notices clothes, jewels, furs, physical beauty; moods, feelings, thoughts, and the beauty of the spirit are for her non-existent. Her pleasure is in the things that can be touched and tasted and handled, and she has no reverence for any others" (68).

While Canadian women possessed an agreeable openness and optimism in relation to their English counterparts (who "possess that calm belief in the infallibility of [their] own tenets and the superiority of [their] own customs to all others" (72), according to Sime, they remained frivolous in the main, and deficient in a kind of education that would impart the responsibility and interest that Sime so prized. This "waste of so much

excellent material" (76) could not be blamed on women alone, however, but on shallow standards of beauty to which "the men of the New World" must be at least partly answerable because "women are apparently prized by them much as skye terriers in a show are prized, for their long hair and silky ears, or something just about as sensible. No expense is spared in trimming and adorning the creature's exterior, but perhaps a little attention to her inner embellishments would be more to the purpose" (71).

It is to this question of appropriate education as an antidote to the waste of the excellent material of a woman's mind that Sime turns in her second essay, "The Intellectual Death," a treatise on intellectual work and pedagogy that insists that the finest work comes not from the overworked brain devoted to drudgery, but from a happy, whole person. Students should be made to realize, she writes, "that intellectual excess is just as bad as any other sort of excess and just as disgusting; an inordinate craving for information does, indeed, generally lead to the most incurable disease of 'culture,' which might be defined as the grasping of ideas by main strength and holding onto them as outside burdens, the mental system being too feeble to assimilate them with itself" (358). Modern education has failed because of its turn away from the teaching of students to think towards an embrace of cleverness, the hallmark of which was the accumulation of fact; modern education, she writes, seems "to aim at supplying promiscuous information and inspiring a belief in the virtue of intellectual work for its own sake" (351). It produces a sort of barren cleverness in which the intellect is divorced from the spirit and made to perform isolated tasks. Sime's refusal of the tenets of modern education would seem by implication to hark back to an older time of some sort of pure learning; instead, her writing on education pushes for a fundamental realignment of the paradigms of the educational process in order to place emphasis on the development of the useful individual intellect, the urging on of the capacity for critical thinking and independent thought. In "The Intellectual Asset" she reminds the reader that:

> intellect all by itself... is not worth much to anyone; it is useful as a tool or

> pleasant as a plaything, and that is about all....But the other thing--the vivid informing intelligence that makes things round about germinate and grow and blossom--is a power worth having....Intellect in the real sense is captivating, but in order to be that, it must be co-ordinated with the rest of the creature, so body and mind and soul act together and not as separate units.[48]

Such a schema, that rests on the importance and inviolability of the self, would make a productive place for the useful education of women and would conquer the hateful social idleness that she so despised. In a proper system of education lay the promise for women of "grasping" and "realizing" their own possibilities, of overcoming the tendency for dissipation into frivolity, or worse, into a poorly understood and improperly motivated reformatory zeal.

And she had witnessed both first hand: for some years, she boarded with a Montreal family called the Blaycotts, the matriarch of which was a tried and true suffragist who never tired of debating "the women's place" or "women's rights." Indeed, a character in a sketch entitled "The After Eve", (included in her 1913 collection, Rainbow Lights) is likely modelled after this woman who writes countless papers on women's issues, and organizes endless committees for the betterment of her sex. "Don't you know what's pa-assing in front of you?"[49] she oozes to a woman of her acquaintance:

> My dear, you're in the thick of the Renaissance...that's what it is. The Women's Renaissance....Can't you hear...? Women...waking up...coming to life...growing all around...!....I don't want to see a woman made the way you are, creeping down a hole...slouching...with the Renaissance going ahead all around. *You* don't want to keep in an alley, my dear...slinking down...you...! You oughter be in the van of progress. I want to see you hoisted up. And I mean to see it too.[50]

It was the irony of the wealthy, idle woman demanding rights when she seemed to serve no useful purpose that irked Sime who believed in women's abilities but insisted that they be always turned toward a scheme of meaningful work--involving both the body and intellect--so different from the wasteful gossipy dalliance of high society. The wealthy radicals that Sime knew were so busy attending to progress that they neglected the people at home and neglected to attend to their own personal growth, remaining isolated in a social sphere of plenty. With these failures in feminism at heart, she began to formulate a system of ideas, (published finally in The Mistress of All Work), that brought the possibilities of participating in change into the grasp of the ordinary working woman by concentrating on a rethinking of the idea of home with a view to making it an empowering domain for women, a place in which (and from which) personal independence and agency in society could be fostered and realized. While her feminism concentrated on interior spaces--especially the home--it did not confine itself here. "The life of the earlier woman," she writes in The Mistresss of All Work, "*was* her house: the new woman's house is or will be a part of her life: there is the difference."[51] Her attempt to strengthen the self through a reconfiguration of the idea of the home is a useful one even if it seems to be fraught with contradictions, maybe **because** it is pulled taut between the warring ideals of "modern" and "traditional" women.

Georgina Sime's work in The University Magazine in this period was about women meeting the challenges of modernity. If it did not always seem to represent the expected line of radical suffrage ideology, tethered in Canadian women's history to pervasive myths of the social fragmentation of women's political culture that figures feminism as a public triumph over isolation with a fixed agenda that holds suffrage above all else, it nonetheless represented her fervent desire for women's equality--economic, moral, sexual, if not legislative. She lived a doubled life, both within and without the confines of the intellectual as it came to be defined implicitly and explicitly in The University Magazine. Clearly caught in a contradictory space between Macphail's gender theory and what seems like his genuine appreciation for her work, Sime inhabited an intellectual limbo that

demanded a tempering of her more strident ideas. Macphail said of her work in 1914: "Why, oh Why, don't you use the talents God has given you?....It is a perfect piece of folly that anyone with that power of expression--so clear, so simple, and so forcible--should not put it to definite daily use." He continued, "Don't you know...or do you?--that in certain ways there is no living writer to touch you?"[52] Yet beneath this obvious flattery lay a cautionary tale of the transgressions of the modern intellectual woman.

Under his editorial banner of "freedom", for example, Macphail published a reasoned article on women's suffrage, "Votes for Women" by Sonia Leathes. The article argued that suffrage "is indeed but a further, perhaps the last, chapter in the great history of the emancipation of the individual, black or white, rich or poor, male or female, from social and political disability imposed upon him or her on account of birth alone. This is the true meaning of democracy."[53] The essay is forthright in tone and works its way carefully through common objections to according the vote to women. In a gesture of unmistakable editorial containment, however, this article was immediately followed in the text of the journal by a caustic article by Macphail himself, entitled "On Certain Aspects of Feminism" in which he sums up the suffrage cause as one concocted by hysterics against the wishes of "normal" women. It is rife with smugness ("There is something pathetic in this appeal by emancipated women to men for comradeship"[54]), with condescension ("Men are nervous about the affairs of the world because they know how complicated those affairs really are, and they dread the result of inexperience, coupled with emotions which are uncontrolled by reality"[55]), and with a fear of women's access to knowledge that is couched in notions of decorum and appropriateness. Because innocence and reticence are a woman's greatest assets, "it is easy," Macphail writes, "to brutalize the mind of a child, especially the mind of a girl, and to destroy that lovely strangeness which is best defined by that other lovely word, modesty, whose spirit is innocence and thrives best in an atmosphere of neutral ignorance."[56] "Normal," "feminine" ignorance, in Macphail's formulation is vastly superior to "unnatural" worldly knowledge. Suffragists were, for example, "approaching the masculine type [and] deficient in the instinct for husband-

getting"[57]. He writes further that "they have so little in common with normal women that they are condemned to solitude or to the company of each other."[58] Their curiosity was a dangerous, unclean thing, for "it creates an itching, a desire, a craving...a lascivious uneasiness, a sensuality of mind which finds fulfilment in the very end which it was designed to postpone."[59] Macphail's opinions seem today to be so outrageous as to be harmless, yet in his own time, he was a tremendously powerful and respected figure in the academic and cultural world of Canada. Standing beside the work of Sonia Leathes, a woman who dared (and was allowed) to speak out, his essay works implicitly to remind the female intellectual of the foolishness of "inflammatory" opinions, while it locates the norm firmly in the perceived stability of the past.

Where, then did such opinions about the bounds of the sexual--and by implication the national and the intellectual--norm leave the woman writer, especially the presumably intellectual woman whose work was fortunate enough to be asked to grace the pages of Macphail's esteemed journal? Unlike the style of "Votes for Women," that seemed to so enrage Macphail and prompt him to publicly rebuke its author, Sime's work is far more deferential, even as it is cutting. Her attempt to "cate-log" the similarities and differences between old and new world women has been written with "good intentions" (63) and she hopes it will be seen merely as "an audacity and not a crime" (62). It is rife with qualifiers and minimizers and concludes with a wish that she could write about the realization of the possibilities inherent in the modern women, but, although she "would dearly like to expatiate upon this theme...it is far too wide and serious for me to append it here." Her second essay, described merely as a treatise on "my own little educational air-castles" interpreted "in my own fashion" (350), is a debunking of educational assumptions that is canny and learned. At times her targets include professionals like Macphail himself: "I should say, then, that it is a gratuitous piece of folly to learn anything that one does not really want to learn, just as it is a gratuitous insult to tell people instructive facts that they do not want to know" she writes before launching into a critique of erudition:

> I am sure that nobody who has ever suffered from the companionship of one bitten by the mania for imparting information will dispute the latter assertion. One need only listen to a circle of average "cultured" members of any of the learned professions--schoolmasters, university professors, and the like--when they are counting over their conversational small change in company and edifying themselves and their friends with what it pleases them to call "good talk;" one need only observe how they spend the time in passing about bad threepenny-bits to one another, each one pretending that the coins are fresh out of the mint and handing them back to his neighbour with all that gravity which smacks so unmistakably of unreality,--in order to confirm one's distrust of most of such doctors. And in their business hours they are generally engaged in doing the same thing in an even more portentous fashion; they make a parade of their erudition, surround it with mystery, represent it as something eminently precious, and labour to instill into their youthful hearers a quite erroneous conception of life and learning (357).

Even as it condemns academic games as "the passing about of bad threepenny-bits to one another" (317), Sime's essay on education drinks deeply of the learning of the English tradition, demonstrating its own erudition by citing easily and frequently the words of the "masters" of the literary past--Arnold, Carlyle, Zola, Eliot, Tennyson, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Butler, Herbert, Moliere, Shaw, Ibsen, Ruskin--for legitimation. Yet its retractions are much more fervid, its qualifications stronger than in the earlier paper. When Sime questions the merit of stockpiling "promiscuous" information that seems to serve no useful end, for example, she writes,

> Now I do not dispute that information is occasionally serviceable, and intellectual work occasionally desirable, but I wish to protest against any theory that regards either the one or the other as intrinsically good; and in

> this preliminary skirmish I shall, from a safe distance, fling a pebble or two at that powerful and much honoured giant Work-for-Work's-Sake. I am no David, and my little missiles will prove very harmless even if they should happen to hit their mark so the Philistines need not feel at all alarmed. (351)

Here Sime has played the game--in a coy, deferential, perhaps arguably feminine style--by putting her dissenting opinions forward in some strength and then withdrawing them to the degree necessary to preserve her ability to speak, a privilege that seems to rest on the perceived harmlessness of her opinions. Her writing voice is tremendously difficult to pin down: always lucid, it dips and sways between the impersonal heights of academic writing and a unique viscerality. This endlessly doubled and doubling style of writing that asserts, retracts, mollifies, and then presses on to its own ends sidesteps the combatative binarisms of much of Macphail's own writing and suggests other models for academic writing. I do not mean that the systemic pressures and personal aspirations that impelled Sime to write as she did in The University Magazine are wholly admirable, but I am suggesting that within a codified and systematized intellectual misogyny, Sime did write and was heard, even on the sensitive topics of women's roles and education. Repeatedly then, Sime was made to feel both the magnitude of her achievements as woman writer, but also their pettiness, for try as she might, she was prohibited by virtue of her sex from living up to the ideal of the Canadian intellectual or literary genius.

Notes

1. Patricia Williams, The Alchemy of Race and Rights (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991) 8.

2. Richard D. Altick, The Art of Literary Research 3rd ed., revised by John J. Fenstermaker (New York: Norton, 1981) 232.

3. Ethel Wilson, The Innocent Traveller (1949; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990) 96.

4. J.G. Sime (Jacob Salviris), "The Incomplete Angels," The University Magazine 11.1 (February 1912) 62-76. All references to this article in this chapter will be cited by page number.

5. J.G. Sime (Jacob Salviris), "The Intellectual Death," The University Magazine 11.3 (October 1912) 350-376. All references to this article in this chapter will be cited by page number.

6. S.E.D. Shortt, The Search for an Ideal: Six Canadian intellectuals and their convictions in an age of transition, 1890-1930 (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976) 17. In a note "To Readers" in Vol. 19.1 (1920) the highest circulation is pegged at 4500.

7. Ian Ross Robertson, "The Historical Leacock," Stephen Leacock: A Reappraisal, ed., David Staines (Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1986).

8. The Canadian Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, 1192.

9. After McCrae was killed in France in 1918, it was Macphail who arranged for the publication of, and wrote the introduction to, McCrae's collected poems, In Flanders Fields and Other Poems: With an essay in character by Sir Andrew Macphail (London: Hodder and Stoughton; Toronto: William Briggs, 1919).

10. Her first (and reputedly her finest) collection of poems, The Drift of Pinions, was made possible by Andrew Macphail under the auspices of The University Magazine (Montreal: University Magazine; London: John Lane, 1913).

11. "Note to Readers," The University Magazine 19.1 (1920) np.

12. Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction: narrating the nation," Nation and Narration, ed., Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) 1.

13. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (London: Verso/New Left, 1983) 19, cited in Bhabha 1.

14. See James J. Sosnoski, "A Mindless Man-Driven Theory Machine: intellectuality, sexuality, and the institution of criticism," Feminisms: an anthology of literary theory and criticism, eds., Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1991) 40-57.

15. J.G. Sime, "George Meredith's Women," The University Magazine 9.3 (Oct. 1910) 410-431.

16. Carole Gerson, "The Canon between the Wars," Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value, ed., Robert Lecker (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991) 46-56.

17. Altick 232.

18. Pelham Edgar, "A Fresh View of Canadian Literature," The University Magazine 11.3 (Oct. 1912) 483.

19. Edgar 479.

20. Edgar 479.

21. Edgar 480.

22. Edgar 485.

23. Edgar 484.

24. The shaping of a body of Canadian literature was done to a great extent in this period on the pages of handbooks and guides: Archibald MacMurchy's Handbook of Canadian Literature (Toronto: Briggs, 1906) was a teaching guide with relevant biography and interpretations of major Canadian works; Archibald MacMechan's Headwaters of Canadian Literature (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1924) is dedicated to Sir Andrew Macphail under the banner "*ad maiorem patriae gloriam.*" It is focused on poetry and identifies prose as a late development; Lorne Pierce's An Outline of Canadian Literature (French and English) (Toronto: Ryerson, 1927) is positioned as vying for a point of origin when states that it (like MacMechan) is the first attempt of its kind; V.B. Rhodenizer's A Handbook of Canadian Literature (Ottawa: Graphic, 1930) was also influential. See Carole Gerson, "The Canon Between the Wars: Field Notes of a Feminist Literary Archaeologist," Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value, ed., Robert Lecker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) 46-56, for more information on this period.

25. Edgar 480.

26. Edgar 482.

27. Edgar 482.

28. Edgar 483.

29. Ian Ross Robertson, "Andrew Macphail: A Holistic Approach," Canadian Literature 107 (Winter 1985) 179-86.

30. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 2 November 1914.

31. S.E.D. Shortt, "Essayist, Editor, and Physician: the Career of Sir Andrew Macphail, 1904-1938," Canadian Literature 96 (Spring 1983) 49-58, citing the words of J.A. Stevenson, "Sir Andrew Macphail," Canadian Defense Quarterly 16 (1939): 210.

32. Ian Ross Robertson, "Introduction," The Master's Wife, Sir Andrew Macphail (1939; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) ix.

33. Shortt 49.

34. Sosnoski 51.

35. Andrew Macphail, Essays in Fallacy (London: Longmans, Green, 1910) 29.

36. Andrew Macphail, "On Certain Aspects of Feminism," The University Magazine 13.1 (February 1914) 82.

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38. Andrew Macphail, "Women in Democracy," The University Magazine 19.1 (Feb. 1920) 15.

39. Macphail, "Women in Democracy" 10-11.

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41. Christine Battersby, Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1981).

42. Battersby 113.

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44. Otto Weininger, Sex and Character, trans. from 6th German ed., (1903; London: Heinemann; New York: Putnam, 1906) 113. Cited in Battersby 114.

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46. Stephen Leacock, Essays and Literary Studies (New York: John Lane; London: John Lane/The Bodley Head; Toronto: S.B. Gundy, 1916) 142.

47. Leacock 152.

48. J.G. Sime (Jacob Salviris), "The Intellectual Asset," The University Magazine 15.2 (April 1916) 218-221.

49. J.G.Sime, (A. de Silva), Rainbow Lights (London: Duckworth, 1913) 200.

50. Sime, Rainbow 208-209.

51. J.G. Sime, The Mistress of All Work (London: Methuen, 1916) 6.

52. Georgina Sime, transcript of conversation in letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 18 March 1914.

53. Sonia Leathes, "Votes for Women," The University Magazine 13.1 (February 1914) 68.

54. Macphail, "Aspects" 83.

55. Macphail, "Aspects" 82.

56. Macphail, "Aspects" 90.

57. Macphail, "Aspects" 84.

58. Macphail, "Aspects" 3.

59. Macphail, "Aspects" 89.

Chapter Two

"Passions and Feelings and Tendernesses of Their Own": Five Unpublished Plays and the Persistence of the Personal

"I can't write when my mind and heart are all torn about..."[1]

(Georgina Sime)

"And who picks up the pieces every time two fools collide?"

(Kenny Rogers and Dottie West)

Chapter 2

In 1928 when she was asked to enumerate the writing successes of her life for a biographical note appended to her Thomas Hardy of the Wessex Novels, Georgina Sime ranked her dramatic work among her more famous writings and along with her quasi-political administrative positions in association with literary groups like PEN and the Canadian Authors Association. Unpublished and likely unproduced, the five play manuscripts, carefully preserved amongst her other papers, offer testament to her continued experimentation in writing projects in the years before she settled on fiction as her favoured genre as they outline some of the conflicts that characterized her personal life, a place where the cloak usually considered to hold public and private spheres apart slipped, or was cast aside, revealing the complexities of her most intimate spaces. These are, I believe, deeply personal documents that nevertheless indicate possibilities for the expression of vital feminist issues because, according to Sime, women's art needed such a vital connection with reality, with the exigencies of women's lives: "The practical, constructive instinct of woman leads her to regard art, not so much a thing of beauty, as a useful vehicle for some definite purpose. She demands from her favourite authors that intellectual knowledge and artistic perfection shall not be ends in and of themselves, but that they shall be a means to enable woman to cope more successfully with the real facts of life."[2] These documents demonstrate too that art was being made in Canada wholly outside of the consolidative yearnings of nation and the sexual/intellectual behaviour they demanded. The plays are, then, as important for *how* they speak, demonstrating the impressionistic, unpolished style that Sime praises in the work of others, as for *what they speak of*, their content undeniably radical in the face of the wall of "normal" morality that surrounded the most powerful critical communities of her time.

"Love's Revenges", "Gas and Ether", "A Kiss", "Life", and "The Natural Cluster"[3] deal, each in its own way, with the rights of women in the charged political and sexual

climate of early twentieth-century Canada and focus primarily on the workplace as the register of the shifts and changes in society at large. The ironically titled "Life" sketches a husband's reaction to the news that his young wife is terminally ill; "The Natural Cluster" documents an hour or two in the day of a beauty shop owner; "Gas and Ether," set in an operating room, captures the emotional moments before a young woman proceeds with an abortion; and, "A Kiss" shows a working woman fighting to gain the respect she deserves from her amorous employer. The longest of the five plays is "Love's Revenges. It chronicles the relationship between a man and his lover/secretary and documents the protagonist's conflicting needs both for personal independence and for the stability of a commitment as it traces the arc of her life from young adulthood to disillusioned middle age. These plays differ markedly from the works being produced at such places as the quintessential Canadian theatrical proving ground of the period, the Hart House Theatre, associated with the University of Toronto. In their excavation of "the problem of sex"[4] and the "desire of the modern woman for economic independence,"[5] Sime's plays have a good deal in common with suffragette plays produced in London beginning in 1907, work that drew from the immediacy of Victorian drawing-room theatre and anticipated the Workers' Theatre of the 1920's, and emphasized enlightened change through education[6]; however, in their insistence on extending by implication the range of work dealing with women's rights past the simple legislative act of gaining suffrage into an interest in the implications of, and negotiations with, power in the daily lives of ordinary women, Sime's plays mimic the kinds of debates going on in the sphere of women's activism on both sides of the Atlantic. These plays demonstrate the subtle interweaving of power into the most mundane situations and into relationships--from the economic bond between employer and employee, to sexual relationships, to ways that routine measures of authority--medical and marital, for example--impinge on the lives of ordinary women in various ways. In "Life," for example, despair settles over a household with the news that the young mother at its head is dying. It is significant and perhaps a little surprising, however, that the main character in this domestic drama never appears in the "pleasant," "conventional" drawing room in which her fate is discussed in hushed tones by her husband, her doctor, and a

Specialist, a man "Nature made...with good hands and swift eye" and whom "Science taught...to use them" (L4). This coterie of men discussing the affairs of women is unusual in Sime's work which is characterized throughout her career by the depiction of women vocalizing their everyday concerns about their work and their world, their fears about lack of money and loneliness, their hopes and plans for independence and an equal life. Loosely autobiographical, these plays deal with a milieu that was Sime's and put forth the difficult ethical and moral decisions she must have spent a tremendous amount of time working through in her own life.

While I have not assumed that Sime's drama represents factually the events of her life, I have noted, for example, the startling contiguities between Sime's real extra-marital affair that spanned almost half a century and the years-long affair depicted in "Love's Revenges." I look to this body of work for an indication of the issues relevant to her life, from the loneliness that informs her letters, to the nostalgia for children that haunts all of her work in the figure of the pragmatic charwoman, Mrs. Smith, for example, who reveals in "Love's Revenges" that she has no children, at least "not livin'...I 'as two dead an' four slips, Gawd 'elp me, en' that's the lot" (LR iii 3), to the figure of the kind and barren spinster, Katie McGee in Our Little Life, who finds that her repeated choices to live up to strict notions of feminine and familial duty leave her without meaningful male companionship throughout her life. Of pressing interest in both Sime's letters and her creative work is the issue of women's independence, something she would have repeatedly negotiated throughout her long relationship with Chipman, and it is in "Love's Revenges" that the tremendous costs of women's independence and emancipation are weighed against notions of freedom and the gendered restrictions of conventional morality.

We meet Mildred Fairfield, the protagonist in this play, on a magical night in "Pre-War Paris" (LR prologue) as she walks with her lover, Diamond Doubleday, all the while discussing the perfection of their relationship: "And we'll be happy," she says to him, "We won't ever forget this. I don't want to marry you. It doesn't matter a bit that you're

married. I wouldn't marry you anyway. This is enough" (LR prologue). Their liaison, which will last for many years, is infused with optimism at this early stage, and blessed, according to Mildred. "Yes, it's enough. [she says] (with an indefinite evanescent kind of pointing to the beauty of the setting sun) He's there. God's there. He's looking at us, Di: and approving. And we're one, aren't we? (in a low voice, as if to herself) I've come home" (LR prologue). Yet the home that Mildred has found in her relationship with Diamond is one that she lives in uneasily, one that pulls her in many directions and leaves her struggling to put her feelings of loss and longing into words. Yet words repeatedly prove their own inefficiency in communication, as Mildred demonstrates when she attempts to articulate her needs without being accused of what Diamond Doubleday calls "getting started."

In the following passage, Diamond is angry with Mildred's constant "howling" (which she would characterize as merely the verbalizing of her thoughts) and wonders "what in the devil's the matter with" her (LR 3) because he "can't for the life of [him] see what it is [she has] to complain of" (LR 3). But when Mildred attempts to outline her position, he does not understand:

> **Mildred Fairfield**: (resuming) Don't you see. Women want to be independent and have everyone know they're independent. And then they want of their own free wills to share their independent lives with someone else.
>
> Diamond Doubleday laughs an unpleasant laugh.
>
> **Diamond Doubleday**: A woman's logic.
>
> **Mildred Fairfield**: (no plaintiveness now) There you go! It is logical. No, I'm not contradicting myself. We want to have things of our own to

give...but we don't want to sit up on the peak of a mountain all alone with an independent life to keep us company.

She looks round the flat.

Mildred Fairfield: (with heat) There's times I just hate this flat (LR3).

What Diamond terms "woman's logic" is Mildred's inability to articulate the nuances of her emotions in the face of his refusal to listen, and to listen carefully; thus while talking and listening occur often between these lovers, possibilities for real communication are frequently lost--for example, Mildred is genuinely touched and flattered by his gift of a bracelet, so she thanks him for it, only to be told. "You're just like all the rest, aren't you? It's presents you all want" (LR 11). Once again, he has misread her: she appreciates the gift, not because of its monetary value, but because it is a concrete indication that he cares about her. Sime shows Mildred choking back words and thoughts in order to be "good" and to be the sort of woman Diamond wants, all the while attempting to convince herself of her happiness. The lovers' constant miscommunication allows Mildred the chance to speak again, to retreat and to rethink her position, and so allows a point of rupture in the ancient plot of the secret adulterous relationship: Mildred's life is not exotic and erotic, but is--perhaps like Sime's--ordinary, dull, and often very lonely. In a sad moment of truth, Mildred admits her limitations, for "it is difficult to <u>be</u> amusing--when nothing happens to you" (LR 34). Years of waiting for, and thinking about, Diamond Doubleday in secret have acted on Mildred's world, shrinking it to the cramped compass of an office and a small apartment and enclosing her choice for freedom and individuality in a cloak of superficiality and a knowledge that she has settled for less than she wanted and called it happiness:

Diamond Doubleday: The fact is I don't believe I'm cut out for a domestic character.

He stops to consider.

Diamond Doubleday: If I had to do it over again I wouldn't marry anyone.

Mildred Fairfield: (wistfully) Not me?

He shakes his head.

Mildred Fairfield: (still wistfully) Because I'm disagreeable?

Diamond Doubleday: No.

He pauses

Diamond Doubleday: I'm as fond of you, my dear, as I can be of anyone. But I don't want a home. I bores me.

He is silent.

Mildred Fairfield: (after a moment) Yes, I know the way you feel. That's the way I feel...with one part of me. But then, there's the other part.

She stops.

Mildred Fairfield: (anxiously) Di, isn't there the least scrap of you that wants a home?

He shakes his head.

Mildred Fairfield: (anxiously) There isn't a single scrap? Every inch of you thinks it the best--right--way for you to be in one house and leave me in another...and come and see me there?

He nods.

Mildred Fairfield: (expostulating) But...

She stops.

Mildred Fairfield: But, don't you see you get everything that way and I get...

She pauses: and then she crosses over to where he sits and puts her arm around his neck and bends down and kisses him.

Diamond Doubleday: (reaching up to take her hand) What don't you get, Mildred?

Mildred Fairfield: (after a moment--her cheek pressed against his) I get everything.

Their relationship continues for many years, the passions drawing them together eventually stifled by an unending secrecy and continuing restrictions: Mildred becomes "sick of life" (LR III 1) and "sick of this city--this little city" (LR IV 3). Diamond is going away on a business trip and she laments being left behind once again: "I want to hear the beat of a great place in my ears again..." she says. "Doesn't it seem silly that I mayn't come away with you? (she stops) Why, if this were Europe I could come a bit of the way and you could stay off a night...and nobody would know. (she stops) Why is it so different over here? (impatient) Oh, you haven't begun to live over here. You don't know what living means." (LR IV 3) She continues:

Mildred Fairfield: (keeping hold of his hand) When I hold your hand like this--so warm--and so...so handsome. I want more.
Diamond Doubleday: Well, you have more.
Mildred Fairfield: Yes, I know. But it isn't enough.
Diamond Doubleday: Would it ever be enough?
Mildred Fairfield: Ah, that's what I don't know. Perhaps love is a greedy thing. Perhaps it seizes--and grabs--and takes possession, and is never satisfied. (LR IV 3)

Mildred's loneliness and desperation, made more acute, she believes, by the provincial moral codes of Canada, are such that she resolves to end her life. She is, however, unable to go through with her plan and is reduced to living out the painful limbo that is her relationship. Time passes; a soft resignation takes the place of passion in her work. "Di," she muses,

I've been so happy. You've made me so happy. Once. That week--that

first week. Oh, you don't know how happy I was. It was heaven. It didn't come off, of course. It didn't turn out after what--what I expected. But it doesn't matter. We've lived through that. And now we've come to--to, well, something else. And I'm so fond of you, just as fond as ever--but differently. Better... (LR VI 5)

Mildred's repeated attempts to rationalize the choices she has made, to reconcile her expectations of her relationship with the reality that is her life seem pitiful at times, and always painful. The life she has lived for many years is not the unending bliss promised by feminist ideologies of independence, but is at times constricting, is becoming more economically difficult as she ages, and is often very lonely. In the final act, she entertains a young woman--in many ways a younger version of herself--who is beginning a relationship with a married man and looking for approval from her older friend. The young woman insists on the mutual commitment holding between herself and her lover; Mildred attempts to dampen her enthusiasm, unable now to break the vow of secrecy she has upheld for so many years, and thus unable to caution the young woman convincingly about the perils that accompany the pleasures that lie ahead:

Mildred Fairfield: ...You see, my dear, if you do do it--and you will, of course, don't--don't <u>expect</u> too much.

She pauses.

I know it's useless my speaking. It isn't any good my saying anything to you--but I can't help it.

She stops a moment.

What I mean is, you think now...

She stops.

Well, it seems a brutal thing to say. But if he leaves you--or tires of you. Or you bore him...

The Friend: (interrupting) But he <u>loves</u> me. We <u>love</u> one another. You

don't understand.

Mildred Fairfield: Yes, I know. I understand all right.

She pauses and sighs.

Well, my dear--if anything happens...can you support yourself? (LR VI 2-3)

This injunction to "look after yourself" by practising birth control or by ensuring a solid, if possible independent, economic footing is a recurring message to many of Sime's characters who travel the paths that Sime must have seen and travelled in her own life. The compact play, "Gas and Ether," for example, is set in the "Ante-Room leading to an Operating Theatre" (GE 1) as a nervous young woman is prepared for an unidentified operation. She is married, or so it seems, for she touches a gold ring on her finger as she attempts to overcome her fear of what is to come. She is prepared, assured of her own safety as well, ironically, as the safety of her possessions, and the surgeon enters. In a moment we realize that not only is this "ungracious" (GE 7) man her lover and the father of the child within her, but he is about to perform an abortion. Clearly worried about his reputation, and with little thought to her dilemma or her feelings, he repeatedly refuses her requests to speak, to discuss her situation and her unwillingness to get rid of the baby, "such a little thing...and you and I have made it," she says to him (GE 8). "You can't speak to me just now," he remarks in hushed tones so as not to alert the rest of his medical team who have been hurriedly banished to a respectful distance, "You've no right to want to. It's unreasonable. It's out of order. It's unheard of. You had plenty of time before to tell me all you wanted to. (more kindly) There, you're right enough. Pull yourself together, Stella. (again he turns to go) I'll call them back" (GE 7). When Stella continues to talk through both sides of "her problem," he explodes with anger; predictably, she capitulates:

Surgeon: (pulling his arm away from her) God, to think you'd round on me this way! I wouldn't have believed it of you, Stella.

Patient: (meekly) I'm not rounding on you, Paddy.

Surgeon: Looks damned like it. (his voice takes on a threatening tone) Listen here. Make up your mind for God's sake once for all. (his impatience rises to a gust) I thought you had made your mind up--and here...

(He turns from her, takes a hurried step or two away, makes a motion with his hand as if he would sweep her and all concerning her--anywhere: down into any handy Lower Region).

Patient: (reaching after him--trying to clutch at his sleeve again) Don't be angry with me, Paddy. I know I shouldn't.

Surgeon: (furious) Well, of course you shouldn't. To choose this time! Fool...

Patient: (unconsciously raising her voice--not far from tears) I know. But don't be angry with me.

Surgeon: (glancing around apprehensively) Ssh, for God's sake, Stella.

Patient: (nearer tears than ever) I can't help worrying. I'd love the baby, Paddy. Don't be hard on me...I didn't sleep...

The plays repeatedly refuse or query the institutionalized, the "natural" way of thinking, doing, or acting, making their audience aware of multiple avenues of human behaviour that lie outside the narrow parameters of the norm. This norm seemed to reside in a narrow compass in Canada where the theatrical scene was booming, but not through the

dramatic challenges to moral hypocrisy. The Canadian playwright Merill Denison, for example, produced a "body of dramatic work superior to any previously written in English Canada"[11] in the early twenties. Published together in a collection entitled The Unheroic North: Four Canadian Plays[12], three of these plays--Brothers in Arms, The Weather Breeder, and From Their Own Place--are "amusing satires on the eccentricities and mores of backwoods people"[13] that were produced in Toronto between 1921 and 1924. Marsh Hay, the fourth, much darker, and sexually explicit play, was not produced until 1974.

Denison is described as the "first Canadian playwright of any stature whatever"[14] because his "little plays offer a vivid contrast with the sort of thing which preceded them." [15] This "sort of thing"--imported plays, closet drama and melodrama--had a ready appeal to diverse audiences across the country. Denison's rejection of tradition and his renegotiation of northern stereotypes made it clear that change was in the air, but while he concentrated on capturing an elemental Canadian struggle with an indifferent landscape, other playwrights of the period opted to focus their attention elsewhere. "Autumn Blooming," a play first performed in 1924 by the Arts and Letters Club Players, was written by Fred Jacob and included in his 1925 collection of plays entitled One Third of a Bill[16]. In this play, the unseasonably late blossoming of an apple tree is a metaphor for the awakening of a woman pressured to sell the family home by her three avaricious and insensitive children. Sell it she does, but instead of dividing up her money and retiring to the flat they have prepared for her, she decides to go on a world tour, taking her money with her. This is a thoroughly flat play, but is one that shows an awakening consciousness of the issues of women. A later play, entitled "Which," and written by Frances Fenwick Williams[17] takes this interest in women's issues one step further. It is a light one-act play that was awarded honourable mention at the 1926 competition of the Montreal Branch of the Canadian Author's Association. "Which" opens in Enid Parr's dressing room as she banters with her fiance, Geoffrey Hazard, who presses her to define herself, to tell him "what sort of girl I'm marrying" (69). In due course, he falls asleep in his chair. Immediately, the stage is transformed by the appearance of seven beings bathed in a pale

light. The Pagan, The Philosopher, The Puritan, The Nice Girl, The Cave-Woman, The Domestic Serf, and The Humanitarian--all facets of a single woman--have come together to decide which one of them will marry Geoffrey Hazard. They enter into an argument in which The Philosopher tells The Serf she is certain to bore Hazard because "[a] man needs a congenial companion, someone whose character and mind he can respect..."(72). The Serf replies that "a man wants a docile, obedient echo, not an intellectual prig" (72) and states that "[a] man wants a wife whom he can depend upon for flattery and subservience, some one who won't resent or cross him, no matter what he does..."(73). Finally, the spirits reach an impasse in their discussion and decide to wake Geoffrey and tell him that "Enid Parr does not exist -- that is, as an entity. Enid Parr is a house inhabited by seven warring spirits. You must choose to-night which you will have for life-long tenant" (75). Predictably, Hazard chooses them all. "Which" is an interesting play that puts into motion many of the questions about appropriate women's roles in society that Sime wrestled with in her plays. Yet, despite its concern for issues touching on women, it remains a long way from Sime's incisive and direct explanations--in each of the five plays--of women's specific difficulties with new and different forms of power in the world.

Sime's plays are social drama; yet they are not interested in maintaining stereotypes of the emancipated woman. Again and again they return to the relationship between women's independence and her economic control, of the pride--indeed the necessity--of financial independence. The greying Mildred Fairfield counsels a woman friend, about to embark on liaison with a married man, never to lose her ability to support herself. Madge Bagehot in "A Kiss" is fully conscious of her worth as an employee, and of the importance of her job as a typist and she struggles to defend them both against the sexual advances of her employer. Part of her struggle is to make him understand her position, something he has never been made to do before. After her rejection of Talmadge, Bagehot is determined to explain herself in order that no misunderstanding will occur: "Don't force me to be disagreeable, for if you do you'll be disagreeable Monday. Don't you see that if you make me snub you now you'll make me pay for it after--and then I'll have to quit and

look for another job" (AK 3). She tells him that "things aren't easy for us, and it's a shame of you to make them more difficult" (AK 10) before launching into a more particular explanation of the sort of life she leads:

> It's like this. We don't get much money, most of us. It's hard work to live. We've got to look well at our work, and that means washing out your blouses yourself on Sunday for you can't afford to put them out. And--oh well, when you come in at night you're too tired to cook much...and you have a cup of tea, and altogether you don't give yourself much of a chance. Do you see what I mean? You're sort of underfed you know, and you worry and haven't time for things... and you want to be liked...and that's a temptation...
>
> She stops (AK 10).

Bagehot's education of her employer to her "commercial view of life" is done with honesty, and with much plain speaking. She tells him that "I like you very well as a job. But I don't want you as a lover" (AK 11) and refuses to allow him to leave until they have come to understand each other "by hook or by crook some way" (AK 4). She sets him thinking and forces him to see past the typewriter to the human figure beyond. "A Kiss," however, does not end in the serious strain of a feminist victory against oppression; instead, it ends with the establishment of a playful, but professional, relationship out of what could have been a disastrous episode. Madge Bagehot fights and cajoles her way out of her position as angry-woman-wronged into an instructive position as strong, able, fair person intent on teaching her boss the ramifications of his actions. Through such management, she is able to take her opinions on women and sexual harassment out into productive relationships with a social community. Mr. Talmadge defensively dismisses his actions: "Aren't you making a great fuss," he says, "over a very simple matter" (AK 8). Madge bristles and replies, "Ah, there's the mean part of it. I hoped you weren't going to

be like that. I'd hoped all sorts of things from you. And there you're just like the others, throwing the blame on me--pretending you didn't mean anything and I'm to blame. Making out there was nothing in it..." (AK 8). His attempt to kiss her and his anger, first at her negative response, and finally at her subsequent wish to set things straight between them, she explains to him, is consistent with the kind of power politics to which women are repeatedly subjected in the workplace of Sime's era, but they are also made possible by the continued refusal of both sexes to take the time to understand the other. It comes as a revelation to Talmadge, then, that women could be more than merely passive recipients of unsolicited sexual contact: "And do you suppose we feel nothing?" Madge asks. "And do you suppose there aren't days when we're in the mood--when we want to play--when a touch--or a caress--or just a look in the eyes isn't enough..." (AK 9). Madge Bagehot's discussion with her employer about sexual harassment underscores the sheer documentary interest of Sime's work by reminding us, for example, how little things have changed on the feminist agenda: roughly eighty years after this play was written, the issues it provokes are hauntingly familiar. Women are still arguing for reproductive rights, for respect in the workplace, for economic equality, for respect and support for the challenges of single parenthood.

Of continuing interest in discussions about sexual power is Sime's complicated attitude to motherhood: a nostalgia for lost children or for lost chances to produce children runs throughout her work; yet in her work motherhood is not the necessary domain of every woman, figured as the ultimate fulfilment of life, as contemporary reproductive ideologies would have it. The price of Mildred Fairfield's secret liaison with her lover--in many ways like Sime's own--has been the loss of the stability of home and family, something that Diamond Doubleday is able to partake of or to refuse at his leisure. As the years pass, and their relationship becomes structured around their respective other lives, she repeatedly evaluates the cost of her independence in terms of her loneliness and her inability (or unwillingness) to produce a child in that situation, to defy her lover and to be forced to go it alone. The Patient in "Gas and Ether" is clearly unwilling to give up the

child she is carrying; she is also, however, unable to stand up against her powerful lover's objections. Sime cautions, however, that motherhood does not entail merely the simple act of bringing a child into the world, for she writes in "The Daughter of Woman," an unpublished essay, that "it is not the having the child that makes the mother, any more than it is the marrying a man that makes the wife..."[18] It is both a right and a privilege, an act that should neither be taken for granted, nor entertained lightly. At the same time, it need not necessarily be policed by the legalities of marriage. Motherhood, according to Sime, demands only that women be willing to "pay the proper price"[19]--that is to give freely of themselves.

> So long as public opinion is what it is at present, women can hardly help feeling that they are unfairly dealt with in the matter of the right to motherhood. The point that ought, if possible, to be impressed upon them is that a happy and healthy child is indeed a woman's crowning gift, but that unless she feels that the child <u>is</u> likely to be healthy and happy she must refrain from grasping at it. She really has only a right to it if she feels that she herself has more--physically, mentally, and morally--than she requires for herself; for creation of any kind--the creation of a work of art or a child--ought to spring from that overflowing impulse to <u>give</u>, in which all difficulties seem as nothing compared with the overmastering desire to get rid of your abounding energy and bestow it on some other being. But provided that she <u>has</u> such an overplus of vitality, and provided also that she has definitely attained maturity...and has found another human creature with the same overplus and the same readiness to give, it really is a secondary consideration whether she gets the child by marrying or whether she dispenses with the legal ceremony. The old-fashioned woman would no doubt stand aghast at the lack of the ceremony, but her working-sister of today, and perhaps still more of to-morrow, may not care specially about it one way or the other, provided only she can secure the wherewithal to

bring up her Right when once he has been embodied.[20]

But if Sime writes of motherhood frequently, and acknowledges in an early essay that "the maternal instinct in woman is, broadly speaking, the counterpart of the artistic instinct in man,"[21] she also writes repeatedly of the breadth of this maternity, an attitude and an interest that does not relate merely to children, but also informs her relationships to the world around her, demanding that she live her art, not simply do it.

This body of dramatic work which was so important to Georgina Sime, talks about, or at least talks out of, her personal life as it registers changes in her professional life, especially the feeling of her way through adaptations in genre, voice, and form and the experimentation with the sounds and cadences of Canadian speech, edging into the dialogic style--and by this I mean a style dependent on dialogue--that characterizes her fiction and allows her to interweave her subtle social commentary with compelling human stories. In these plays we feel her negotiations with genre as she displays both her occasional clumsiness with dramatic form as well as her facility with vernacular that runs through all of her fiction: Miss Halliwell, with her heavy "w"'s represents a Canadian commonwoman who acts as verbal foil to the other women who patronize her shop and tell the stories of their lives. Mrs. Smith, the Cockney charlady who condones her husband's infidelity by admitting that "it's been a lot easier sinst Smith took a fancy outside. 'E goes to 'er and it gives you time to breathe" (NC 6) is defined by her accent and her commonsensical approach to life. Sime's unease in the conventions of the dramatic genre leads her to exceed, for example, the binding nature of scene directions that demand merely the setting of the scene and never incorporate any action: in the preliminary remarks to "Life," she carefully sets the stage with words and then casts her mind into the future in a manner more reminiscent of a short story than of the scene directions to a one-act play. For dramatic purposes, and for the reinforcement of the irony in the title, it is necessary that the son of the dying woman be present everywhere in the room. His boxes and his clothes are strewn about, but his past activities and future

possibilities remain potent only on the page and within the confines of the reader's response: they cannot be transferred to the stage, nor can they be performed in a manner that will do their nuances justice. What follows are Sime's remarks on the boy:

> In winter-time he will come in at dusk all covered with the snow he has been rolling in--like the puppy that he is: and his grey knotted snow-clothes will be stripped off him, and he will be 'dressed for the drawing room,' and then he will come and sprawl on the rug before the open fire--and make a mess. And his mother will drink her cup of tea and look down on him intent on fitting in his bricks or his Railway Depot or his Garage, and she will ask herself "Was **ever** such a boy as mine?" And echo will answer--quite loudly and decidedly "No!" (L 13)

Here Sime's work moves into fictodrama, an amalgamation of the fictional possibilities of words on a page with the strong verbal possibilities inherent in the dramatic form. Like the necessary preamble to "Life," the climax to "The Natural Cluster," occurs largely in the scene directions. At the end of a long day, Miss Halliwell makes her tea, butters her roll generously, and sits down with her nightly newspaper:

> And as she sits there you can see that...no gen'lman-friend however gen'lmanly, no love-life however tender, no minnut however passionate could tempt her from her commercial round: for she is a Business Woman born and bred--the twentieth century working ant. She wrests from life her bite and sup--no more than that--and finds therein a philosophical contentment which suffices her. Love, kisses, children, the rush of life in springtime, the spiritual beauty of the Fall--for her all these are meaningless. But at the close of a long day's work she knows contentment, asks no more (NC 51).

Miss Halliwell's contentment in her choice of career, and indeed in her life as a whole, is central to the dramatic success of "The Natural Cluster"; yet without any verbalization, it is likely that the import of this final passage would be lost.

This set of plays, which repeatedly rework in various ways the main philosophical issues of Sime's own life--the difficulty of sustaining a relationship outside the norm of marriage, the necessity of independence, both financial and spiritual, the protocols of power in the workplace and in relationships between friends, lovers, and others--demonstrate also the degree to which her professional and private worlds are fused. This set of plays articulates the possibilities of creating art out of unheroic materials, out of troubling materials taken from the world, for mere beauty in literary production is not enough: art demands reality as well, Sime writes in an article on the playwright J.M. Synge published in The University Magazine. Despite her overall appreciation for his art, Sime dislikes Synge's excessive finish, his attention to beauty and to polish in a literary work which she believes undermines some of the deeper aspirations of worthwhile art. "The perception of beauty," she writes, "is not enough for the great artist: what he must have is rather the perception of growth, redeeming things ugly and sordid and miserable and making them instinct with life as each one of them is touched with that vital spark."[22] She admits that his characters are

> like a lovely piece of mosaic in which if we stop to think about it, we can recall the different colours, but it requires a certain effort to do so. Because, I suppose, they are there in his plays, not as human beings with passions and feelings and tendernesses of their own, but rather as perfectly fitting men and women who go to produce Synge's exquisite mosaic of humanity. It is lovely; there is no denying it; but reality is not so perfectly fitted as that, even in art.[23]

It is clearly not the representation of an exquisite mosaic of humanity that Sime was

attempting either in this body of dramatic work or in her later fiction, rife with the pressing problems of women in modernity and with the licit and illicit joys of life. Perhaps "Love's Revenges," "Gas and Ether," "The Kiss," "Life," and "The Natural Cluster" were never meant to be performed or read; perhaps, then, they were merely a middle ground on the way to speaking of her times as well as a way into a speech of her own. If Georgina Sime's work in The University Magazine marks a compromised passage into an intellectual world she eventually turned her back on, these plays mark a return to the self, to the articulation of the deeply personal spaces of her own life as she created art out of, and fitted to, women's lives, along the way negotiating a personal politics that demanded sanity, responsibility, freedom, and power to grow from the interstices of the individual life, not, as many of her feminist compeers would have it, in the spaces of the streets and in crowded meeting halls.

Notes

1. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 1 January 1926.

2. J.G. Sime (Jacob Salviris), "George Meredith's Women," The University Magazine 9.3 (Oct. 1910) 413.

3. Each of these is an undated typescript. I have found no indication they were published or produced. They will be cited in this chapter by page number and title: LR (Love's Revenges), GE (Gas and Ether), AK (A Kiss), L (Life), NC (The Natural Cluster).

4. "A Montreal Woman on Women," The Bookman April 1920: 57.

5. "A Montreal Woman on Women" 58.

6. For more information on the political theatre of the suffragettes, see Dale Spender and Carole Hayman, ed., How the Vote Was Won and Other Suffragette Plays (London: Methuen, 1985).

7. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1987) 32.

8. Benson and Conolly 24.

9. "Review," Manitoba Free Press, 1 May 1907, quoted in Benson and Conolly 25.

10. "Review," Manitoba Free Press, 1 May 1907, quoted in Benson and Conolly 25.

11. Benson and Conolly 46.

12. Merrill Denison, Unheroic North (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1923).

13. Benson and Conolly 47.

14. Michael Tait, "Drama and Theatre 1920-1960," Literary History of Canada ,ed Carl Klinck, 2nd ed, (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976) 144.

15. Tait 145.

16. Fred Jacob, One-Third of A Bill: Five Short Canadian Plays (Toronto: Macmillan, 1925).

17. Frances Fenwick Williams, "Which," One-Act Plays, (Montreal: Canadian Author's Association, [1928]) 68-78. References to this play will be cited by page

number.

18. J.G. Sime, "The Daughter of Woman" ts., 24.

19. Sime, "Daughter" 26.

20. Sime, "Daughter" 26.

21. Sime, "Daughter" 21.

22. J.G. Sime (Jacob Salviris), "J.M. Synge," The University Magazine 14.3 (Oct. 1915) 401.

23. J.G. Sime, (Jacob Salviris), "J.M. Synge" 401.

Chapter 3

Living the Manifesto:

The Mistress of All Work and the Spaces of Domesticity

SITE CONSIDERATIONS

so much time spent looking at the light
trying to decide which windows to place where

gauging the degree of sunlight each room must have
a different calculation for each season

watching the neighbours
bless the earth before they build

looking for the perfect ground cover
to shore up the shifting bank

wondering how long it will take
until this feels like home

what stories we will tell
to make it ours

(Judith Krause "Site Considerations") [1]

Chapter 3

Heroism, Georgina Sime writes in a letter of November 28, 1914 "is based upon the power of definite daily usefulness, and the certainty that daily usefulness--work--is one of the best things life has to give us...."[2] Her concern with the offerings of life, with the necessity of doing useful work, is most overtly and lengthily presented in her domestic manifesto, The Mistress of All Work, published in 1916. This is a document in which she valorizes and refigures women's work in the home to free women from the rounds of daily, weekly, and monthly drudgery that mark the passage of their lives. It is a document, too, that thematizes Sime's ideal of the power of work: not only is it motivated by her personal need to be useful in the world, to practice the craft of writing in a manner that appealed to a large--and not necessarily "cultured"--audience, it is a proponent of the same ideals of usefulness. While it is aimed at simplifying and enriching the lives of working women, its message, I believe, is doubled along the following lines: The Mistress of All Work would capture a certain *ideological* audience, monied women for whom its practical suggestions would be of little use because of the social organization of their homes (complete with nannies and domestic help), but for whom its theories of simplicity and suggestions for time management and the repudiation of social obligation might assist in understanding or allaying what Sime considered their oppression by domestic ennui and hence add meaning to their lives; it would also capture a *practical* audience consisting not only of the Empire's first generation of women professionals--office and clerical workers--but also those women drawn to manual work in wartime. In short, its audience consisted of modern, urban working women who by choice or economic necessity found themselves working outside the home while having to cope with the demands of domesticity as well. Work in this context is composed not only of the endless social obligations that were the occupation of the fatuous monied women Sime alludes to but also the work done by their poorer sisters in the name of economic survival. While The Mistress of All Work was written in Canada and out of the archive of Sime's experiences of Canada and Canadian

woman, it was published by Methuen in London and draws a great deal from traditions of English life and expectations of home. Following the line of William Morris, and the philosophies of the Arts and Crafts movement, Sime repeatedly argues that domesticity is an art, for in keeping the home well with a minimum of effort, a woman "will have the pleasure of creating something, no matter how slight or transient; she will know what it is to feel the brain working healthily while the hands are busy; she will find true education in every nook and cranny of her tiny domain; in a word, she will lose herself in it somewhere or other and so find unawares what most of us seek so unavailingly."[3] Satisfaction, personal happiness, and the thrill of accomplishment are found neither in physical nor intellectual drudgery, but in the service of a human kind of art: "It is only from the definitely useful things," Sime writes, "those things that minister to the human part of us--the eating and drinking and taking care of the body--that you get that sense of equable and unalloyed satisfaction. And the woman who has lived her life without directly ministering with her own hands to definite human needs, even though they should only be her own, has missed woman's deepest joy in life" (139-40).

Sime's domestic geography figures the home--be it bachelor apartment or many-roomed mansion--as a place of opportunity that functions in a radically different way than some of her contemporaries whose work positions women not as evolving, learning subjects, but as sentinels of the doorjamb demonstrating personal and sexual power in and through their relationship to assumptions about national or cultural power. In an article entitled "Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home,"[4] for example, Rosemary Marangoly George examines the work of another domestic manifesto--specifically Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner's The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook: Giving the Duties of Mistress and Servants, the General Management of the House, and Practical Recipes for Cooking in all its Branches, "revised and reprinted more than a dozen times between 1888 and 1917"[5]--in the context of its work in the "foreign" spaces of India. In this distant outpost of Empire, where the private was refigured as public, the hitherto unregarded labour of women was revalued as she was recast by virtue of distance from an invisible

homeworker into an active, visible, national figure.[6] In her role as defender of the Empire and bringer of the light of English civilization to the darkness of the world through the microcosm of her home, then, the Englishwoman had to assume a militaristic stance, to manage her empire with authority, as Marangoly George explains: "With her home and her compound as her domain, the Englishwoman's challenge, her duty even, is to keep this strange and unmanageable territory under control. Her triumph is to replicate the empire on a domestic scale--a benevolent, much supervised terrain where discipline and punishment is meted out with an unwavering hand."[7]

Sime's home, in contrast, was the place where, in many respects, control was relinquished in order that what might be called truth or fitness might emerge: her home was the place where all things were possible. Writings of the domestic science movement that correspond temporally with domestic guidebooks on India articulate what seem like startling similarities to Sime's work on the home; however, their attempts to make the home appealing by reinventing the work done there in the light of a modern preoccupation with science only thinly disguises the fact that the home is throughout conceived as the woman's place--to stay, the only fit avenue, the only "natural" place, for her energies. A recent article by Barbara Riley on the domestic science movement in British Columbia just after the turn of the century begins with a 1903 excerpt from Victoria's Daily Colonist that laments the link between notions of work and the oppressive nature of the home. The key to recuperating the home (and a happy generation of workers within it), in this conception, was to represent it first in terms of romantic notions of art, and second in terms of the modernity and stability of science: "very many young women of the present day," according to this article, "fail to recognize homemaking as an art, and...regard it only in the light of drudgery of housework. This we believe to be largely the result of a lack of scientific knowledge on the subject, and for the remedy of which we look largely to the study of the subject in a scientific manner by our girls in the public schools."[8] Extolling home-work as an art with a scientific rationale, this writing, geared for a school-age audience and designed to be fielded in an institutional setting seeks, like Sime's, to revalue

women's work; however, its preoccupation with science and its introduction in schools argued for a standardization of domestic activities as it marked the devaluing of the passage of information through informal networks, like family or community. Such potential homogeneity did not suit Sime, who repeatedly and forcefully argues in The Mistress of All Work for the home to be a place of experimentation, a repository of change, a place where women could learn, or re-learn, how to be individuals away from the shaping and moulding influences of tradition, expectation, and morality.

These writings, one on domestic science and the other on the management of the home in foreign spheres, are predicated on notions of distance: a woman's relationship to her home and household in India can only be understood in terms of an inviolable cultural distance; her relationship in Canada to her home can be understood through the now-enabling and attractive discourse of science. Such theories of women's relationships to home leave women as pawns to ideology by replacing discourses of enablement with each other while reinforcing the status quo by leaving women as managers of an internal sphere, their separation from the world complete. Sime, on the other hand, repudiates this essentialized identification of women with the home even as she advocates a definition or redefinition of the self *through* the medium of the home and the work done therein. Within the peace of her own space, a woman is able to find her own path to a productive, whole, and happy relationship with the world around her. Social change, Sime believed, would come only from such humble beginnings: let woman, she writes, "have the courage to begin at home, and perhaps the good habit will manage by slow degrees to make a little headway--and a little heartway--abroad" (134). In this schema the individual is paramount and she must be given, or give herself, space and room to grow outside of institutional or social pressures; thus while the domestic science movement located its audience in pubescent girls and in the school system, Sime's audience was older women learning in, and about, the less structured milieu of the home.

Indeed, the impetus for social change through useful work that structures and

informs The Mistress of All Work is an extension of Sime's other community-based work, specifically lecturing on women and literature, first to groups of young working women for which she was not paid, and later to larger, more diverse audiences for which she was paid handsomely. Lecturing for Sime was a natural talent (although she spent a good deal of time, energy and worry in preparation for this work and bombarded Nicholson with a veritable barrage of question on the issues that preoccupied her for the moment). It began when she was asked to give a paper at "a Girl's [sic] Club"[9] ("girl" in this instance coming from "girl friday," literally meaning "a girl Friday," a female equivalent to Robinson Crusoe's slave or helpmeet, Friday--for many years a term designating a person who performs all manner of clerical tasks). This group met three times a week in the hall of a church. Just beginning, and suffering acutely from lack of funds, these "professional women"[10] stretched their money as far as possible, having a preliminary tea when they could afford it and doing without when they could not. According to Sime, these women:

> [were] not the kind that is able to afford a three-roomed flat, or any flat at all, but of those many who live in boarding-houses, paying with difficulty for a "bed-sitting-room": who work by day at the typewriter in an office, or behind the counter in a shop, or (a few) of those most unlucky of all who spend their days teaching the children of other women in school-rooms ill-adapted for the purpose. Domestic servants and manual workers of any kind are not condescended to--there is a strict line of demarcation observed, and they are, one and all, terribly afraid of over-stepping unawares the social line which so entirely divides them from working sisters of a lower grade! These are professional women of however humble a degree. There are many of them English and Scotch and horribly lonely in Montreal: and there is a fair sprink[ling] of the doughtier Canadian girl with her good suit for Sunday and her "perfectly good beau," as a girl put it to me the other day: distinguishing him in this way from the good but useless beau who walks with you but has no marriageable

> intentions. I rather liked the phrase, I admit: and as she said "it is a shame to have a perfectly good beau go off to the war...why couldn't it have been one of the other ones!"[11]

Reaching these young women working in business or in education was important to Sime; however, in mulling over the invitation to speak, she wondered what she would talk about and worried aloud to Nicholson if she could "get down to their level" and "speak a language which they would be able to understand"[12] knowing all the while that if she could not reach this group because of intellectual arrogance, it would be much to her own disgrace.

The Mistress of All Work is also a document profoundly marked by its time, penned as it was in the midst of the cataclysms of war and the sudden demographic shift that took hundreds of thousands of women out of the home for the first time and into the world of paid employment. Against what Sime considered the waste of human life and potential at the fighting front, it is a document that again and again affirms the importance of the fulfilment of the individual life, especially for women restructuring their lives at home. Sime situates her work carefully on the cusp of this social and demographic shift: in the opening pages of The Mistress of All Work she takes pains to separate her work not only from the genre of the Victorian conduct book that worked to tie successive generations of women ever more firmly to the domestic ideal, but also from notions of modernity that worked in different ways to tie women to the new hitching posts of "profession" and "home" configured differently from their predecessors (and couched in language of progress and freedom), but nevertheless sapping the strength of working women and obscuring the vision of their wealthy counterparts to such an extent that they had no energy left for themselves or for the task of reimagining their place in society. To rethink one's place, however, is only a beginning; it requires a practical complement, for while "woman" of her era, Sime believed, "refuses, and will go on refusing, to believe that her existence is circumscribed by broom and duster" (5-6), she has neither the skills nor

the leisure to divine practical ways to end her incarceration by such demanding household objects. Sime's summation of women's inability to cope with the demands of work in wartime gives an indication of her growing frustration with the uselessness of Canadian women, a state she had in earlier writing laid at the feet of faulty education and at the gendered nature of social obligation:

> I think the war has so far brought out woman's weakness and her strength too. In a certain way, it has aroused that dormant heroism which slumbers, somewhere, in all of us: and the women have parted with their men with an extraordinary courage. They have also been willing to go to the front in large numbers, and a few of them, I am sure, are doing fine work there. But the war--this call for definite action at home as well as abroad--has also brought into prominence the incapacity of woman. Her intentions are of the best, but her powers are so limited that she has little chance of carrying her intentions into effect. In England, in France, and most of all in Belgium the women have a chance of being in the very forefront of the trouble, and of finding out what they are really worth....[O]ut here where we are far removed from actual danger there is no outlet for the women but to sew and knit and pack off the finished article. It may perhaps be because there is no call for heroism, but there certainly is little of the heroic spirit about. They are busy enough, no doubt, but rather fatuously busy. They take their knitting everywhere with them, and do a row or so whilst they chat at tea-time or after-dinner; but they do not seem to grasp that if they wish to work for the men, they must work. That no ten minutes here and half an hour there is going to be of any great service, especially in the hands of a beginner. A beginner must learn her trade, work at it, give herself to it: and it is in this knitting of socks and mufflers and mittens and comforters that women have shown me more clearly than ever their absolute present incapacity for improvement. It is so evident from the way that they

> manipulate their tools that they have not the first idea of going to work: that the idea of how to learn anything has not as yet had a chance to penetrate their skulls. There is something rather pathetic about it--the spirit really is so willing, and the flesh is so uncertain which way to turn to be least in the way.[13]

Here Sime stresses women's essential willingness even as she stresses their seeming inability and indicates her own proximity to the feminist project she envisions and writes about in The Mistress of All Work. She was one such woman who had "not the first idea" of how to work efficiently, so her foray into the domestic arena in the form of the theorizing of domesticity is part of her personal exploration of the ideals of simplicity--in art and in life--and indicative of a deep humanism. "Manual labour," she writes in a letter to Nicholson dated March 18, 1914,

> is, after all, the great bond between one human being and another. That you can do things for the support--the daily upkeep--of human life--is a link between you and another human being stronger than any link founded on mere reason or point of intellectual agreement. If two men can use their hands in working the land, if two women have skill in preparing food--there is a definite human source of agreement deeper, and further-reaching than any other can be. You don't need to talk about it specially. It is there, and you feel it. Something based on physical needs, something that is rooted far back in the daily needs of the race--a basis of mutual trust and agreement on which to ground all the natural beauty of real art.

This "back to basics" philosophy extolling an intimate link between the gestures of art and the ministrations of life becomes abundantly clear: "In my mind," she continues in her letter, "there are no two ways about it--you ought to do your art exactly in the same way as you make your bread, or your pudding, or your omelette, or your stew." In order

to educate women to simplicity and new ideals of comfort as she educates herself, Sime aims her work at the practicalities of daily life, and includes information on taking care of different parts of the house in an expeditious manner: "Walls", "Floors", "Sitting-Room and Bedroom", "Bath-Room and Kitchen" form the chapter titles to Sime's new domestic geography, while others, like "By Way of Initiation" and "Cooking" deal with beginnings like getting started and teaching oneself about nutrition and basic cooking. That she spends a couple of pages in explanation and encouragement on the subject of proper and thorough sweeping is telling for an audience of our era because it indicates the absolute unfamiliarity of many women of Sime's era with the banalities of household care. She cautions inexperienced women from attempting too much at once, for "house-work...though easy enough in detail, is not so easy *en masse*; and the only way by which she can render it so, is to master each detail singly. Let her do it slowly, and over and over again slowly, till her hands have learned the way of it. Let her keep in mind always the steady picture of what it *ought* to be, and work towards that" (43). Sime offers encouragement for failure in tasks and for weariness of limb but reminds her reader that housekeeping, like other skills, is an acquired art that takes some time to master.

Her experiment both of living the art and writing of it is one that she discussed in detail in letters to Nicholson, suggesting to him that "I do think your idea as to the H/B/ [handbook] quite excellent."[14] Her habitation of the domain of the ordinary, the sphere of daily chores, however, seems decidedly new and somewhat tenuous at this point, as she writes to Nicholson that as a general reader, he would be subject to her relative domestic inexperience. Her plan for the book was that a "'philosophical' explanation at the start will clear the way for the brooms and dusters, and so the practical will be illustrated in two ways," but she worried aloud about the efficacy of this plan:

> The only drawback I see to it is that you will have, I fear, to rely on me entirely for your practical information, and I am conscious of being more likely to lead you in the ditch than anywhere else. However, if you will

> take chances, we can go ahead: and I, at least, can tell you what I find the most practical course in my own case, and if it doesn't appeal to your common-sense you have my full permission to "chuck" it.[15]

Sime is aware of her carefully cultivated inexperience, is determined that she shall reverse in her own life the harmful effects of her own gendered idleness, and is possessed of a dogged conviction as to the merit of her return to simplicity:

> I am conscious of how far short I fall of the truly native-born worker when such a one comes across my path. The kindly amusement with which she watches my plans and little schemes is more damping than the most eloquent discourse could possibly be. Also the professional way in which she takes broom, saucepan, or washing-cloth in hand makes me acutely conscious that I do all these things en amateur--and never so long as this life-round lasts can cease from doing so. However, the fact that I return to my *moutons*, and do things my own way, just as soon as her back is turned, proves, I suppose, that I think there <u>is</u> something in my way of doing them and that I am on my way to a goal which she, for all her smiles and kindly amusement, has never had in front of her.[16]

This goal, for Sime, was the return to the self through the divesting of the superfluous, especially as it related to art. "There is nothing like practical every day work," she continues, "to teach you what life really is, and to show you once and for all what it most certainly isn't. It is odd that the simple use of the hands should do so much for you, but so it certainly is. You can't exactly say how or why it comes about, but once you are fairly started on the <u>useful</u> road, things fall away from you one by one--I really can't explain it any other way: but what remains sticks for life."

<u>The Mistress of All Work</u> is both a complex statement of Sime's political

affiliations and cultural roots and a document that grows out of the intricacies of her own life. Raised as she was in the height of what she calls "mid-Victorianism," Sime had lived with changes in decorating tastes that, according to American historian Lizabeth Cohen, introduced an unparalleled density of items into interiors, situating the home as "a setting for the gradual adaptation to a technological and commercial world,"[17] that signalled "the accommodation to industrial life"[18] of its inhabitants. Stereotypical Victorian clutter was enabled as much by technological "modernity" as by a societal aesthetic. A typical parlour, then,

> overflowed with store-bought mass produced objects, carefully arranged by family members: wall-to-wall carpeting enclosed by papered and bordered walls and ceilings; upholstered furniture topped with antimacassars; shawl-draped centre tables displaying carefully arranged souvenir albums and alabaster sculptures; shelves and small stands overloaded with bric-a-brac and purchased mementos. Technology made much of this decor possible; carpeting, wallpaper, and textiles were ever cheaper and more elaborate, and the invention of the spiral spring encouraged the mass distribution of upholstered furniture. Artificial covering of surfaces and structural frames thus replaced the painted walls and floors and the hard wood furniture of an earlier era.[19]

Living with Victorian tastes in decor allowed Sime to understand the human stakes of such tastes, the ins and outs of what she designates as the "first stage" of housekeeping, the wholesale devotion of women's energies and identities to the running of the home, including a labourious attention to detail, which although beautiful in effect, demanded a "wasteful expenditure of time and effort" (4): "Think, for instance," Sime writes in the early pages of her treatise, "of the old-fashioned tea-table with its shining, meticulously polished silver, its lustrous damask, its china rubbed to impeccable brightness, its delicate home-made viands, and all the rest of it--it certainly does make a pretty picture. So

finished, so perfect in its own way, achieved by such willing labour of construction!" (4). Early in the new century, however, Sime identifies what she calls the second stage of housekeeping, a time in which women no longer had the inclination to spare for such displays of ostentation. This stage of "Women's Revolt" (4) involved a marked diversion of women from their conventional domestic roles: on one hand, Sime saw the emergence of a "hasty, unlovely Bohemianism" (4) of the overworked and underpaid professional women; on the other, she saw the opposite in the form of the idle wealthy woman, described as an "ostentatious, over-elaborate" (4) "cat's-paw of the modern commercial market" (5), a figure whose withdrawal from the realities of life and the necessity of caring for herself and others was returning her to the position of a rarefied romantic figure, "a soulless form of specialized art" (5), dangerously distanced from her potential and "rapidly losing health and vigour and womanliness and all capacity for useful, joyous life" (5).

In order to free women from an outmoded domestic aesthetics that demanded too much of them, Sime repeatedly advocates simplicity, both in the realms of interior design and in lifestyle. This was not, however, an ascetic withdrawal from the good things in life, but rather was a way for women to create time in which important things--like the development of the self--could be savoured. The question for the modern woman as Sime posed it, was no longer "What more can I possibly find to do in my house" (6) but how can I use my head and hands together to "make my house look best with least labour and time expended upon it?" (6). Time management was a pragmatic problem, especially for the tired professional woman who "wants comfort with the least possible expenditure of her energies" (36); the solution was to make her home "expressive of her personality with comparatively small trouble" (36) following William Morris's "golden rule...containing the whole secret of furnishing: 'Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful'"(36). Victorian clutter, or stuffiness, would have to go, and along with it old notions of cleanliness "secured by everlasting polishing and scrubbing and dusting and washing, into which there went shreds of human flesh and drops of human blood" (7). "The New Housekeeper," Sime notes, must rethink her way of inhabiting

space inside the home in order to gain the strength and confidence necessary to negotiate a new place outside the home: to this end, she "drops the old elaboration--the obvious elaboration of ornament and upholstery--and elaborates on cleanliness and the rejection of everything that does not appeal alike to the unconscious simplicity of the first stage and the matured sense of fitness of the last" (64).

While Sime's notion of simplicity in decoration was designed to free up women's time for the pursuit of other activities, it was also designed to free up space--mental space--in which women's independent thought could be nurtured. Walls, for example, should be covered with only enough pictures as one could comfortably digest aesthetically. They should be important objects, an expression of one's personality rather than a reflection of the cultural aesthetic of the day or of a need to package the self as a sophisticated high art aficionado for social reasons. "Do not, she writes, "set up a multifarious collection of reproductions from the Old Masters with the idea that you will thereby improve either your mind or your mansion" (54). Such colonization of the personal aesthetic by notions of appropriate art inevitably results in personal decline, for if constantly amidst such artistic imposition,

> one of two things is pretty sure to happen: you will either cease to notice them at all after the first day or two, for they will be at too great a mental distance from you for you to be able to get them into focus, as it were, or else--and this is an even more deplorable alternative--you will by the assiduous contemplation of what is beyond your horizon come eventually to join the ranks of the Cultured. From such a beginning you will go on to thinking always more and more that you admire what you don't honestly admire and that you like what really bores you, until at last you will lose all capacity of enjoyment and all sense of what is beautiful and what is not (55).

If temporarily bare walls were the result of this retreat from the drive of a cultural imperative that equated the hanging of "high" art (even in cheap reproductions) with the moral and social elevation of the occupant of the home, then so much the better. For the home, the domain of the artistic and the useful, the place where "art and common-sense shake hands at last" (12) was, Sime believed, the natural expression of a woman's personality, and therefore of her relationship to a changing world: "We are in a transition period just now, and women especially are changing and finding themselves in a new way; and if their homes have not something of this aspect of transformation, this suggestion of possible growth about them, they will not suit their owners" (58). "I do not feel," she writes,

> that a house should look as if it had always been exactly as it is and always would remain so, come what might. I would have the fixed things--the floors and walls--firm and solid, and the few really necessary articles of furniture equally strong and durable, for they will always be needed, and if they are thoroughly suitable for use at one time, they will be no less suitable for beauty at another. But the plastic part of the house--the part that reflects its inmate--may have a transitory look to it appropriately enough: it suggests, or may suggest, that the human creature is growing and means to give herself room for all her possible capacity for growth" (59).

Sime's injunction to rethink normative and stifling aesthetic codes is necessarily tied in with a rethinking of the idea of work itself. Her suggestion that women's "normal and proper vocation in life" (14) lies, for the most part, in the intelligent management of the domestic space seems impossibly reactionary to modern feminist eyes and seems to situate Sime firmly in the realm of maternal feminists, women who saw in an idealized feminine form selflessly devoted to the care of husband and family possibilities for a tempering of what seemed to be an anarchic modernity through a return to the safety of home and

hearth. While the goals of maternal feminism--eradication of some kinds of poverty, a stopping of traffic in drugs, prohibition--were admirable in many ways, they remained firmly under the purview of a now crumbling imperial order in which the happy home was seen as a microcosm of the British Empire, displaying and nurturing its organizing ideals of citizenship and good government that they might later be refined and realized first in school systems and later in various levels of government. However, despite its aims of cleansing and bettering society through women's work both in the home and out in the streets, maternal feminism continued to position women and their work as subsidiary to the real work of government, handled by men carefully raised to their duty.[20] In addition, their politicization of women's work located the ideal of modern womanhood in the maternal woman--in the biology of reproduction--and relegated all others unable or unwilling to fulfil this "natural" role to the sidelines. In contrast, Sime's writing of a feminist domestic aesthetic outlined in The Mistress of All Work excludes no-one from the possibilities of having a hand in change. Single women and "the woman who has been tossed into the labour-market to find her footing there as best she can" (15) are as much Sime's audience as the women devoted to, and enthralled by, the prospect of home and family. Children are important in this schema, as in her educational one outlined in her essays, but not merely as passive recipients of the future, as moulders of the Dominion for whom women must sacrifice themselves--but as human beings neither more nor less important than any other.

Such demographic egalitarianism is indicative of Sime's overall interest in equality that comes out particularly in her discussion of the need to rethink attitudes to work. The fact that most women regard work "not as a source of strength and comfort but as a hard uncongenial grind, to be got through simply because it has to be done and there is no one else to do it" (15) is, according to Sime, "the natural offshoot of the Romantic ideal which presupposed that man was to do all the unpleasant jobs and that woman was to sit at home upon a cushion and regale herself on strawberries and cream. If a woman takes that as her starting-point, of course it is discouraging to her to find that she has, in her own fashion,

to work every bit as hard as a man: the very fact of having to work at all seems to her an anachronism, and that she should be expected to do anything labourious and disagreeable--that is intolerable!" (15). In an essay of the period, called "The Daughter of Woman," possibly one--or a series--of her lectures, Sime elaborates on the historical connection between women's modern shortcomings and ancient romantic ideals by writing that "where chivalry really went wrong was in lifting women of the good solid earth and setting her upon a man-made pedestal."[21] "There," she adds, "we have the first fatal division between beauty and usefulness, the definite split between the two, that has attained such enormous dimensions since. Surely," she continues, "woman was meant by God for every-day use, and any beauty that He gave her was given to adorn the workaday week and not to be set aside for the day of rest alone."[22] Later in the same essay Sime elaborates on these historical antecedents by arguing that they stem, in part, from a too-radical bifurcation of the sexes; indeed, she believed that in order to have a humane society, people must come to understand--and work with--the deep similarites as well as the fundamental differences between the sexes:

> Man's romantic ideal of woman was beautiful but it was one-sided: it will have to be balanced by woman's romantic ideal of man--the perception that she can help him just as effectively as he her. The recognition that man and woman are equally strong and free and yet, in the midst of that strength and freedom, equally weak and in want of each other's aid will have to be the foundation of the New chivalry: and the long intermediate period of struggle and unrest, through which we are now passing and shall still have to pass, will be amply justified and rewarded if it ultimately leads to that. It is a necessary result of what has gone before and a necessary preparation for what is to come. The Old Chivalry sheltered or unduly idealised woman; man's desire to help, genuine at first, gradually became officious and finally tyrannical; he forgot that she had a personality of her own and just as we often behave cruelly and unwarrantably to children, with the very

best of intentions, so he put her into an intolerable position by an excess of kindness. Under such treatment she gradually lost her old healthy, serviceable qualities and tended to become unhappy and useless, and before she can return to the virtues of the earlier stage and begin to exercise them again, not in the old instinctive fashion but consciously and with a heightened power of enjoyment, she will inevitably have to pass through a period of stress and discord.[23]

The New Chivalry she envisions as an antidote to the failings in the Romantic Ideal will demand some hard work:

> The abandonment of the old chivalrous ideal is bound to be felt as painful by most of us, and we can hardly be blamed if we fail to realise that it will be given back to us a thousand-fold if we only have the patience to wait. For it will not really die; only the time has come for it to exfoliate into something new, that will be even fairer than it was. Man is still falsely chivalrous; that is to say, he is still apt to cling conventionally to the now obsolete ideal of woman, simply because he has not thought about it....The ordinary run of men have clung to the romantic view of women for the wrong reasons; they want her to keep her place whether she is willing to stay there or not. But the New Chivalry will be ready to give her a free field and let her see what she can make of it: it will gladly suffer her to do anything she may have a mind to, whether it be work similar to man's or not.[24]

Her revivification of art through a sort of cleansing simplicity grew out of an increasing disenchantment with the complexities and cadences of the high art in whose embrace she had been raised and through whose tutelage and example she had been educated. In the long passage that follows, excerpted from a letter to Nicholson, Sime

describes her journey through the culture of excess, home to a place where she might begin again, and in so doing, fashion an art of her own:

> I have had a sort of fear sometimes this winter that I was reverting to barbarism pure and simple, that art in all its many forms of beauty was truly not for me, and that I was growing into a commonplace, inartistic, old woman. Operas ceased to have any interest for me, theatres ceased to draw me out of an evening, books even lost their attraction so that I was hardly able to finish many that I began. But for the last month or so the mist has begun to clear--the Meistersinger, I fancy, gave the veil a big rent down the middle. It is just as Morris says--as you begin to love art <u>really</u> so at that moment do you begin to dislike and despise all the dreary introspective nonsense of which the sham art--with all its power and beauty--is composed. How can you love art that is founded on complexity and sham emotion? It may be beautifully done, and as long as life lasts one will, I suppose, recognize even mistaken beauty, but in spite of the beauty, as Ellen says, there <u>is</u> something loathsome about it: and one turns away from all such effort and comes back to the making of a loaf of bread or the concoction of a pudding with a sense of deep and definite relief. I do not think, you know, that I am really a housekeeping woman. I doubt if I should ever have chosen for myself the task of housework, or even cooking. I should really have preferred to use my hands in some other craft--in the making of some definite beautiful thing if I had been allowed to develop in the easiest way: but as things are, stupid and incapable as I am in household tasks, not even loving them naturally and as a birthright as many women do--even so, I find rest to my soul in working about my little house that I find in looking, listening to no form of definite specialized art.

Georgina Sime's theories of work and life in relation to the home rest, finally, on the

primacy of the individual: one cannot function well and usefully in society--as a wife, mother, worker--without having a strong sense of self. To engage oneself in work around the house--as she has done--is understood to be not merely the effect of a change in lifestyle, but a process through which women can learn about the self in relation to the world, can undo traditional excesses, can learn what is necessary to them in order to function effectively in all their relationships--social, artistic, sexual, economic.

The Mistress of All Work positions the individual as both the initiator and the cement of change--the body through which all things must pass and be assimilated. In her insistence on simplicity and the positing of the home as refuge, she draws much from William Morris, as I have mentioned, as well as from John Ruskin, who wrote in 1864: "This is the true nature of home--it is the place of peace; the shelter, not only from injury, but from all terror, doubt and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently-minded, unloved, or hostle society of the outer world is allowed by either husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be home."[25] Her work parallels that of Gustav Stickley in the United States who draws a similar line between household interiors and personal usefulness. In a 1903 edition of his Craftsman Magazine, for example, he declares that "luxurious surroundings...suggest and induce idleness. Complex forms and costly materials have an influence upon life which tells a sad story in history. On the other hand, chasteness and restraint in form, simple, but artistic materials are equally expressive of the character of the people who use them."[26] While Sime's theories of simplicity are aimed at getting the goodness out of life and are consistent throughout her discussions of food and clothing reform, and reform of the physical spaces of the home, they are not allied--like the American Arts and Crafts Movement that advocated "American homes for exclusively American needs."[27]--with overtly nationalistic, or tacitly xenophobic ends. If Sime sees the fundamental drive of modern life to be the homogenization of the individual in its repudiation of a range of different knowledges, she attempts in her domestic manifesto to address these blindnesses by reminding women of their potential for new relationships to

the earth, to themselves, and to other people through a process of simplicity. In all her advice, she aims not at singularity or a kind of noticeable asceticism, but inner change that will become manifest in the outer self in its own time and in an appropriate, perhaps natural, manner. In discussing clothes, she writes that "any woman who can wear [her house-clothes] *rightly*, as they may be worn, will be able to wear other and finer raiment suitably too" (132); that is, the vitality she derives from the home will be carried by her to other spheres, for

> Housekeeping and cooking--to the woman who voluntarily comes back to them--give a sense of power, of being able to do something really useful; and such a sense will lend her poise and a lack of self-consciousness that will enable her to carry the Fairy-Godmother's gown, when the appropriate time comes, with a better grace than most of our drawing-room ladies can command (133).

A woman's health, happiness, and her potential for adapting to a new world are intimately connected to her embrace of the possibly peaceful and enabling spaces of her home, whether her apartment be merely a stopping-place on the way to home and family, or whether it be her life-long abode. "True simplicity," Sime writes, "is surely not an end, but a means: it is a means whereby you secure for yourself more time to live. It ministers to life, supplies with the minimum of effort the meat and raiment upon which life rests, and leaves you with the rest of the time for leisure to grow" (128).

Notes

1. Judith Krause, "Site Considerations," Half the Sky (Regina: Coteau, 1994) 3.

2. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 28 November 1914.

3. J.G. Sime, The Mistress of All Work (London: Methuen, 1916) 138. Subsequent references to this text in this chapter will be cited by page number.

4. Rosemary Marangoly George, "Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home," Cultural Critique 25-27 (Winter 1993-94) 95-127.

5. Marangoly George 106.

6. Marangoly George 99.

7. Marangoly George 108.

8. Barbara Riley, "Six Saucepans to One: Domestic Science vs. the Home in British Columbia, 1900-1930," British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women, eds. Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1992) 119.

9. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 28 November 1914.

10. This use of professional means merely "one following an occupation": it had not taken on the more elite connotations it carries today.

11. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 28 November 1914.

12. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 28 November 1914.

13. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 28 November 1914.

14. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 18 March 1914.

15. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 18 March 1914.

16. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 18 March 1914.

17. Lizabeth A. Cohen, "Embellishing a Life of Labour: An Interpretation of the Material Culture of American Working-Class Homes, 1885-1915," American Material Culture: The Shape of Things Around Us, ed. Edith Mayo (Bowling Green State University Popular Press: Bowling Green OH, 1984) 159-160.

18. Cohen 160.

19. Cohen 160.

20. See Mariana Valverde, The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

21. J.G. Sime, "The Daughter of Woman" ts., 3.

22. Sime, "Daughter" 3.

23. Sime, "Daughter" 4.

24. Sime, "Daughter" 5-6.

25. John Ruskin, "Of Queen's Gardens," Sesame and Lilies (London, 1864; New York: Metropolitan Publishing Co.,1871). Cited in Cohen 159.

26. Gustav Stickley, The Craftsman Magazine (July 1903). Cited in Cohen 161.

27. Cohen 161.

Chapter 4

Articulating the Unspeakable:

Canada Chaps, Sister Woman, and the Representation of Invisibility

Nothing is of value compared with beautiful life and the loss of it and waste of it.

(Georgina Sime, 1914)[1]

Chapter 4

Georgina Sime's two collections of thematically linked short stories, Canada Chaps (1917)[2] and Sister Woman[3] (1919), represent a generic shift into a medium suited, she believed, to the representation of modernity and the city: "If," Sime writes, "one can feel in the older French settlements the presence of 'art' integrated in the life round about one and waiting for its interpreter, one feels in the cities, I think, the potentialities of quite another kind of art--disjointed, disconnected art that finds its expression in thumb-nail sketches, short stories, one-act scrappy plays, and the like."[4] If the short story, then, represents possibilities for capturing the "rapid tempo of transformation," of New World cities, described as "fluid, restless, like a kaleidoscope to which someone is perpetually giving a shake,"[5] it also represents possibilities of articulating the unspeakable; specifically in Canada Chaps a version of wartime experience outside of the rhetorically sanctioned and nationally approved writings of the popular press and the jingoism of popular fiction; and in Sister Woman the urban experiences of immigrant women. Home front and urban front in the Canada of her time were sites of invisibility, of silence, in which Sime explores stylistic and verbal possibilities for speaking and communicating, particularly between the sexes and in relationships of power.

Of the two collections, the parameters of possible speech are more overtly presented in Sister Woman, framed as it is by prologue and reflexive epilogue: twenty-eight stories are told in the body of the text in answer to a question posed in the prologue by an anonymous male speaker who addresses the author with the injunction to "be articulate" (7) about what women want. The woman writer counters with the statement that it is not easy to be articulate, but through talk, women are learning to be so: the stories that follow, in different voices and different situations, form the answer to this challenge. At novel's end, however, the task of the woman writer is far from complete, for she confesses in the epilogue that she has "not even started yet....I've got reams and reams

to say....what we women want is simple--but the world isn't simple" (292). Sime makes it clear here that women know what they want, but lack the vocabulary to articulate the nuances of their dreams and demands: they lack the spaces to speak of their lives. She writes not of model pioneers, of strong and independent bush dwellers making history, but of urban women caught in a network of conflicting ideologies, none of which can be easily separated from the national or imperial project. Such women are free to have sexual relations but are stigmatized by unwanted pregnancy; they are free to work and to remain financially independent, but are paid one quarter the wages of men with families to support; they are free to remain single, but their choice to opt out of the ideology of family can leave them frustrated and lonely, while their choice against motherhood puts them outside the realm of women's "normal" responsibility both to the home and to the nation.

The difficulties of speaking meaningfully that are the focus of Sister Woman were explored two years earlier in the context of war in Canada Chaps, Sime's most public contribution to the war effort that came in the form of fifteen short stories commissioned by John Lane to complement other collections representing the experience of the allied nations in response to the Great War: Kitchener Chaps, Joffre Chaps, and Russian Chaps.[6] The dust jacket that accompanies my version, preserved carefully in Nicholson's dining room hutch, features a painting of two bluff, manly looking Canadian soldiers standing a quarter turn from the eye of the painter, the first with walking stick in one hand and gloves in the other, his left leg bent and resting confidently on a few brush strokes of *terra firma*: boots, puttees, regulation soldier's khaki serge complete the picture of Canada's "chap," a half-smile playing on his lips. His comrade rests on the same few tufts of grass and is framed by the white openness of the page and the glaring red of the modern-looking letters of the book title above and Sime's name below. He stands even more confidently, arms akimbo, facing the painter in kilt, sporran, and regimental jacket. His beret perches jauntily on his head; a cigarette is jammed in his mouth; a smirk sits on his face; a riding crop hangs clenched in his right hand. The attitude these Canadian tommies[7] project is one of confident, even comic, indifference, emotions that figure neither in the text this

jacket purports to represent nor in Georgina Sime's own personal wartime philosophy.

In November 1914, the war scarcely having begun and the First Canadian Contingent gone merely a matter of weeks, Sime writes to Nicholson of her difficulties in understanding abstract concepts like "Patriotism" when they demand such high personal sacrifices and routinely expect the turning of one's back on the more mundane "national" duties of home and family:

> I have just heard this morning that Mr. Hobbs [sic], the architect, is off to the front. He has been moving heaven and earth to get a commission and he has got the cabled news of his--shall we say success? I felt awfully sorry for his poor little wife. She is heart-broken, and I do feel that a man with a young wife (and a delicate one too) and two tiny children, and no money, has no business to serve his King and Country. I find, Sage, that I have very little patriotism. I would sacrifice nothing that I cared about for my country, I fear: and I cannot feel it right for men to leave duties they have undertaken for this less personal duty of serving your country. I said to the poor little thing that I was quite of her way of thinking, and that I advised her to keep out of the way of all patriots for they would only incense and hurt her and she was thankful to find one thoroughly unpatriotic soul. She won't find many, for in theory they are all madly patriotic. It only means as a rule, I think, that they haven't anything to sacrifice and so can be patriotic by proxy as it were, or that their feelings are so luke-warm that they don't care much about anything. I am sorry but I can feel no other way. It is most unpopular, I know, and if I had been a Roman Matron I should have had a bad time of it, I am afraid. But I feel as if we ought to have got on a bit since the Romans, and should not be asked by now to pluck out an eye that has not offended or cut off an innocent right hand. And I wish to God all women felt the same way, and felt it as I do. I should like to write a

most unpopular little "piece" about it, if I only could! But I don't think I can.[8]

And unpopular it likely would have been. Despite the fact that until 1915 men who wanted to enlist needed the written permission of their wives or mothers, 33,000 men heeded Minister of Militia Sam Hughes' call for 25,000 men to train at the fledgling Valcartier camp. Canada's First Contingent sailed on October 3; Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry was well ahead: armed, organized and on the way to France by the 28 of August, barely three weeks after war was declared. Flags waved, women cheered, and Canada's place on the stage of world politics began to be assured, its image (man)handled adroitly by media dynamos whose express purpose was to keep Canada's committed and heroic participation in war in plain view that she might represent herself fully at the table of empire.[9] Such representations of war obscure the complexities and nuances of the home front under the all-encompassing images of battlefield heroism. It is true, for example, that a tremendous number of people hurried to join up upon declaration of war, but these were by and large recent immigrants from Britain anxious to hasten home. There were, in addition, large numbers of penniless, unemployed men who saw in the war a chance for adventure as well as a chance for square meals and a regular pay cheque of $1.10 per day. Early contingents, then, thrown together hastily, poorly attired, poorly armed[10], poorly drilled, and depending on what commanders considered their innate--colonial--fighting ability for survival, did not dazzle. Mackenzie King writes in his diary of the rag-tag nature of the companies he spied leaving Ottawa for Valcartier:

"With the first sight of the regiment," he remarks, "I felt an emotion which made me desire to applaud the bravery of the men." Then he had a closer look. "Soon, I saw that the men going to the front were *not* those in the scarlet or in green, but with two or three exceptions only, a lot of men who looked as though they were unemployed and who had taken the work as an

act of despair. They were poor in physique and badly drilled." Nor for that matter, were many of the volunteers native sons. "I should think 80% East Londoners or old country failures," King estimated. "It was a humiliating spectacle, nothing Canadian about them. What was most humiliating was not the sight of these poor fellows, they were brave enough, but the circumstances that the regular volunteers were the ones who stayed behind. They returned to the armouries, playing their bands and presenting a fine appearance, having left the others at the station to go to the front."[11]

It is due to the work of Canada's Press Corps, beginning with Max Aitken in his unpaid position as "Eyewitness" to Canadian troops at the Front and head of the Canadian War Records Office that Canadian troops began to stand out as making a distinct and important contribution to the war effort. In Tapestry of War, Sandra Gwyn notes that Aitken was tremendously powerful because the war began with virtually no correspondents, with a determination by Kitchener (and his Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill) that the war be fought in what Churchill described as a "fog," and with journalists ensconced in London out of the way of firing and at a safe distance for criticism.[12] The first correspondents were not accredited until seven months after the outbreak of war, some months after Aitken had filed his first reports on the distinctiveness of Canadian actions at the Front.[13]

The war was, according to Canadian correspondents, a situation that refused to be captured by narrative, an elusive place that refused to submit easily to the shaping influence of the writer. In this model of heroic journalism, those who sally forth to the Front and return triumphant with story, or military artifact, are rare indeed. Consider this excerpt from Beckles Willson's tremendously popular In the Ypres Salient: The Story of a Fortnight's Canadian Fighting June 2-6, 1916[14], in which Willson is situated "With the British Army in the Field." His evocative description of the geographical location conjures up a landscape fit for heroes: "From the summit of the Scherpenburg," his book opens,

"the eye sweeps over a low-lying, gently undulating tract of country chequered by field and copse and traversed by roads. On the extreme left the crumbling towers of the city of Ypres upstand white in the morning sunlight. Far on the right the spires and chimneys of Menin loom on the distant horizon." His sweeping gaze is progressively narrowed until it rests on the effects of the war itself, but never on its devastating human toll: "Between these two points in the range of vision a broad swathe of naked red earth, torn and fretted and pitted with 'craters,' marks the eastern and southern boundary line of the bloodiest battlefield of the War--the Ypres Salient."[15] It is a journalistic position in which proximity to action, not description of action, means all. Such a position allows the old orders of military rhetoric--Heroism, Patriotism, Valour, Duty--to flourish amidst shocking evidence of bloody human futility. The players in Willson's drama of war, for example, "drawn from all classes--ranchers, farmers, miners, merchants and clerks from Winnipeg, Calgary, and Vancouver"[16] face an enemy that "came forward gaily, light-heartedly, as victors after a victory"[17] and devastated their lines. The response to this onrush of "advancing hordes", according to Willson, was nothing short of heroic:

> It was then the most wonderful thing of the day happened. Out of the earth there leapt a handful of wild-eyed soldiers, two officers amongst them, pale, muddied and reeking with sweat, who, running forward with upraised rifles and pistols, bade defiance to the oncoming foe. On they ran, and having discharged their weapons, flung them in the very faces of the Huns. Death was inevitable for these--the only surviving occupants of the British front line--and it was better to die thus, breathing defiance to a cowardly enemy, than be shot in a ditch and spitted through with a Hun bayonet. Thus they perished.[18]

What is striking about these documentary prose passages is the little information they actually impart: impressions and emotional triggers to notions of masculine heroism matter here. What is striking too, when documentary passages are placed against passages

of fiction, is their similarity. In Ralph Connor's popular novel, The Sky Pilot in No-Man's Land, documentary detail and rhetoric of empire are interspersed with the plot of an adventure narrative:

> The news from the front was ominous. Belgium was a smoking waste. Her skies were black with the burning of her towns, villages and homesteads, her soil red with the blood of her old men, her women and children. The French armies, driven back in rout from the Belgian frontier, were being pounded to death by the German hordes. Fortresses hitherto considered impregnable were tumbling like ninepins before the terrible smashing of Austrian and German sixteen-inch guns. Already von Kluck with his four hundred thousand of conquering warriors was at the gates of Paris.
>
> Most ominous of all, the British army, that gallant, little sacrificial army, of a scant seventy-five thousand men, holding like a bulldog to the flank of von Bulow's mighty army...was slowing down the German advance, but was itself being slowly ground into the bloody dust of the northern and eastern roads of Northern and Eastern France.
>
> Black days these were for the men of British blood. Was the world to see something new in war? Were German mines to overcome men of the race of Nelson, and Wellington and Colin Campbell?
>
> At home, hundreds of thousands were battering at the recruiting offices. In the Dominions of the Empire overseas it was the same. In Canada a hundred thousand men were demanding a place in the first Canadian contingent of thirty-five thousand, now almost ready to sail.[19]

But where do expectations of virility and heroism leave women writers in relation to war? How to write of war when one repudiates the lofty prose necessary for versions of heroism and is unable to glean facts from the fog of bureaucratic silence. And how to describe many women's doubled, ambivalent responses to war? On one hand, popular propaganda pressured women to release the men near to them to worlds they could not be expected to share or to understand: old rhetoric of empire and a new rhetoric of national pride asked women in the name of biology and duty to allow their husbands and sons to participate, but as it asked women to release the men they loved and depended on for all sorts of reasons, it also demanded that they be content to exist in the separate sphere of the home front, its structuring assumptions entirely distinct and absolutely separate from the fighting front. That the fighting front existed to protect this home-place, both ideologically and materially, remains one of the paradoxes of war-time thinking: the place many believed they were fighting for was an unchanging place of male power and privilege, tended and nurtured by women fulfilled in their roles on the periphery. What these fighters could not know is that in their absence women would make significant steps outside the conventions of the home that they would be loathe to give up, as Sandra M. Gilbert reports: "at least one feminist noted the accuracy of a cartoon in Punch depicting two women who 'did not think the war would last long--it was too good to last.'"[20]

How then to write about a war that represented for women both tremendous social possibility and tremendous personal hardship and family tragedy? How to write about a war that trivialized the individuals fighting and dying by dehumanizing the fathers, sons, brothers, friends under the "Honour Roll" statistics of casualties and fatalities even as it represented a euphoric moment of freedom, a moment temporarily outside the rubric of ritualized gender scripts, a moment in which women were allowed to throw off conventional behaviour, to think, to act, to do, to be agents in the world. In a letter to Nicholson written in the fall of 1914, Sime outlines these ambivalences as she sees them lived around her. Unlike others she cannot sanction the war or thrill at the rhetorical possibilities of a world conflict because she senses its gravity, feels its tragic dimensions

even before they are extensively documented. It is clear that Sime disapproves of those who would make a circus of this serious situation and discerns in Canadian women, as she has done before, an inclination to the frivolous, a national leaning to the unheroic: she has been struck, she writes, with the "lack of feeling" that women displayed as they saw their men depart with Canada's First Contingent:

> It is one thing to see your man away with heroic fortitude, the feeling that you give all when it is demanded of you for a great cause (worthy or unworthy--yet great) and quite another to see your man off with not only a cheerful deportment but a cheerful heart too: and to celebrate his departure by going on just as usual, eating and drinking and making merry though to-morrow he may die....I fear indeed that the general attitude of the Canadian women has alienated me a good deal from them. This is no time to be merry I do feel: and if, as unluckily it is with us here, your usefulness has to be somewhat circumscribed, there is yet the power to feel with those who suffer, and work for those who, rightly or wrongly, are giving their all. The heroic side of woman is terribly in abeyance on this side of the Atlantic.[21]

For Sime, it was somewhere in the writing, somewhere in the process (as distinct, perhaps, from the product) of her pen that her own "daily usefulness" and the possibilities for personal heroism lay because in writing rested the possibilities of representing the profound worldly and sexual ambivalences she observed in life. The figure of Bertha Martin, for example, the protagonist of "Munitions!," one of the stories in Sister Woman, encapsulates both regret for the effects of the war and euphoria at the personal freedoms it has made possible. She is a young munitions worker on her way to work at the job she has held for five weeks, since giving up her position as domestic help:

> She sat squeezed up in a corner, just holding on to her seat and no

more, and all round her were women and girls also working at munitions--loud, noisy, for ever talking--extraordinarily happy. They sat there filling the car with their two compact rows, pressed together, almost in one another's laps, joking, chewing tobacco--flinging the chewed stuff about.

It wasn't in the least that they were what is technically known as "bad women." Oh no--no! If you thought that, you would mistake them utterly. They were decent women, good, self-respecting girls, for the most part "straight girls"--with a black sheep here and there, to be sure, but where aren't there black sheep here and there? And the reason they made a row and shrieked with laughter and cracked an unseemly jest or two was simply that they were turned loose. They had spent their lives caged, most of them, in shop or house, and now they were drunk with the open air and the greater freedom and the sudden liberty to do as they liked and damn whoever stopped them (35).

Writing for Sime was a way of ordering her thoughts and tying them to the world around her and to the people that mattered the most. In early November she writes in a letter to Nicholson of the purifying effect that the war has had on her thought even as she comes to a different understanding of the "mess" of the modern world.

All the unnecessary things of life seem to have fallen away from one in a wonderful way--art and beauty seem far-off and unreal for the moment: and the reallest thing in all the world for the moment is pity, human sympathy, the desire to help in however small a way. Why it came and how it came are...things of small moment, it seems to me: the thing is that it is there, and that all the unreal things of life have ceased to be for the moment: and the one or two real things in life--the things worth having--stand out as, in my time at least, they have never had a chance to do before.

> Perhaps I am quite wrong in feeling like this, and most probably I don't succeed in even making myself intelligible: but what I mean, or something like it, is that quite suddenly the very simple things of life have taken their place: love, courage, unselfishness--those stand in the forefront with pity and sorrow beside them; and fight with the terrible things--hate and the desire for power: and everything else in the world has taken its place too--and we know that nothing is of value compared with beautiful life and the loss of it and waste of it. I say it all so confusedly that you will hardly understand even what I am driving at; but I say it confusedly because I think it confusedly, and that is what I want to get straight. I do not of course mean that the virtues or vices are more on one side than the other--it is just that the awful terror of the thing is lifting people into the third stage, it seems to me, out of sheer forgetfulness of self: and that life and death, through all the waste of it, are asserting their values at last....I feel more than ever that I have no idea what is going on around me; and I certainly feel most strongly that it is a very wrong going-on. But when I realise only a piecelet of the net-work of power that enmeshes us all I feel--hopeless. How can we ever shake ourselves free of it? And what a mess it all is![22]

Sime's objections to the insanity of the war rested as firmly in her belief in the power of the individual as in her belief in his or her essential humanity, especially in the face of institutional pressures. I cannot help thinking, too, that her fundamental horror grew from her intimate understanding of both powers at war: the "civilization" of the English and French and the "barbarity" of the Germans. The cultures she was schooled in and the languages she spoke were now contested territories, enemy grounds, that invoked military skirmishes even on the relatively distant soil of Canada. After riots and much deliberation, the Ontario city of Berlin was renamed Kitchener, its central statue of the Kaiser dispatched to the bottom of the lake. It is no wonder, then, that part of Sime's

objections to the war lay in its sheer illogicality: "Everything is toppling about our ears," she writes to Nicholson on November 2, 1914, "or that is the way one feels, and out of the horrible melee only one or two elemental things appear--courage--not more on one side than the other--kindness and self-forgetfulness pretty equally balanced with cruelty and egoism of the most horrible kind."

In using her writing as a way of coming to terms with lived ambivalences, Sime reverses common war-time thinking in which the uncertain, the radically ambivalent needed to be suppressed in favour of a straight line to an explainable truth. Because of the acknowledged power of the word to shape reality, the importance of the figure of the writer to the war effort was recognized early, writes Peter Buitenhuis in his study of allied war propaganda entitled The Great War of Words: British, American, and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933. On September 2, barely a month after the allied declaration of war, "a secret meeting of Britain's most famous authors"[23] was convened in London. Led by C.F.G. Masterman, chief of Britain's propaganda bureau, the twenty-five writers who met to pledge their allegiance to the allied cause and to offer their considerable literary talents as assistance included Poet Laureate Robert Bridges, Sir James Barrie, Arnold Bennett, G.K. Chesterton, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, John Galsworthy, Thomas Hardy, Sir Gilbert Parker, George Trevelyan, and H.G. Wells. Rudyard Kipling was unable to attend but nevertheless pledged his support. This group of writers is significant for my purposes particularly for its demographic solidity, its conspicuous age, not only in relation to the youth which would be expected to fight and die for the national and imperial ideals it promulgated, but also for its age in relation to the generation of writers dubbed "modernist" whose radical writings and contrary life-performances were upsetting the late Victorian and Edwardian apple-carts before war was declared and consistently, and insistently, questioning its shaping principles in writing and sometimes in the form of conspicuous absence from the fighting front. Together these two groups of writers--the old guard and the modernists--would be seen to mark and to maintain a "collective narrative of significance"[24] that made meaning of the war by

invoking a series of disjunctions--between pre and post-war, between home and front, between men and women, between youth and age--that remain in place today. "A brief sketch of that collective narrative of significance would go something like this," Samuel Hynes writes in his preface to A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture:

> A generation of innocent young men, their heads full of high abstraction like Honour, Glory, and England went off to war to make the world safe for democracy. They were slaughtered in stupid battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not the Germans, but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values of the old society that had sent them to war, and in so doing separated their own generation from the past and from their own cultural inheritance.[25]

Even as it was being fought, the war, Hynes argues, was understood to be a force of radical change, not only in society and culture, but, more importantly, in the way that societies imagined themselves and their relation to immediate history. The war not only "added a new scale of violence and destruction to what was possible,"[26] it changed reality by changing possible modes of appreciation of that reality. "The change was so vast and abrupt," writes Hynes, that it made "the years after the war seem discontinuous from the years before, and that discontinuity became part of English imaginations. Man and women after the war looked back at their own pasts as one might look across a great chasm to a remote, peaceable place on the other side."[27]

If World War I, then, was conceptualized as a chasm, an abyss, a gap in history[28], Sime attempts in Canada Chaps to make of this period a fullness, a time of humanity, of individual crises and acts of kindness among the generalized and systematized cruelty of national conflict. Sime resists the homogenizing tendencies not only of the imperial

propaganda machine but also of the Canadian nationalist one, both of which insisted on a faceless "Canadian" who would forge on unthinkingly, even as she stages the difficulties of bridging the chasms of (mis)understanding with words. Canada Chaps depicts a range of situations predicated on loss as well as on the dilemmas of seeking connection to live through such loss: from a single mother's dying moments, filled with the realization that her husband's preventable death in the war means that her son will be orphaned, his life handed over to someone she will never know; to the death in a trench raid of two of Canada's finest; to the kindness of Londoner prostitutes to Belgian nuns passing through on their way to Canada as refugees; to the fatigue and bewilderment of a shell-shocked soldier mustering up the courage to once again engage with life and with people by returning to his wife and to a child he has never met; to the impossibility of a soldier ever conveying to those at home the scope of his experiences at war. The collection resists the simplicity of explanations and labels on all fronts: what is a good soldier? A good Canadian? she strives to ask. What, then, is a good man? A manly man? What is the appropriate woman's contribution to war? What is appropriate writing about the war? What constitutes its reality? And what constitutes truth for women? Sime insists at all points on the humanity of people and on the power of institutions to affect people's lives in deeply important ways. She rejects the capital-letter words through which the war was defined, rationalized, and brought home to Canada and Canadians: Duty, Honour, Valour and Courage are dispensed with in favour of the nuance and contradiction of individual acts.

While Canadian war coverage and much popular fiction repeatedly emphasize the power of the word to sum up, to explain, Sime's writing frequently points to the inadequacy of speech, indeed the inadequacy of writing, in achieving its objectives of clear, honest communication. In her authorial persona's conversation with a "typical" Canadian about his experience in France, his bravado and detailed explanations of training deteriorate into "a welter of sensations" (23) that underline the geographical and psychic distances between home front and fighting front. As he saw more of the war, the narrator

notes, "he spoke a great deal less of what he felt himself. Sometimes he said it was exciting, or called a new experience interesting, but what he chiefly talked of, as the time went on, was how his men felt; how they feared; whether they were uncomfortable; what he could do for them; whether he was doing all he could for them" (24-25). Words, conventional plots, romantic explanations seem to simplify, to demean the experiences he cannot relate. What he provides for this listener is not facts: "It was no narrative of things he liked to talk about and linger over: it was brief, terse, scraps here and there, confused, sometimes a picture, but far more often just a welter of sensations, sentences half begun and broken off again, hints--and silence. He told me rather of the way War struck him than of War itself" (23).

This inadequacy of speech to encapsulate experience is reiterated again and again in this collection, notably in the chintz world of "The Girl He Left Behind Him" in which a woman's timid bids for reassurance solicit lies from the well-intentioned soldier she has been commissioned to cheer up. This story outlines painfully the chasm between women and men, between those who have been "there" and those who have not, the distances between their experiences filled ironically with the cheerfulness of the war ditty after which the story is named. The setting is a London house run by a ladies' aid organization that billets convalescing soldiers and those on leave. Amidst the ubiquitous chintz and constrained by many rules, men come to relax from duty while the women volunteers fulfil their duty by helping:

> There were lots of men to come and make a home of it, lots and lots, in khaki every one of them, of course. Men on their way to somewhere, with fighting and warfare on their lips. Men back from fighting somewhere, talking of cigarettes and how they loved them at the Front, and silent as to all the rest. Men walking straight and strong; men limping, halt and lame. Men with clear eyes to look on God's good world; men with their eyes closed to outward beauty for the rest of life, and all the seeing in their faces

turned to wistful listening.

They came and went (98).

The silence that the soldiers use to cover the things they would rather not think of, let alone articulate, is filled, in conversation with a fearful listener, by easy lies, with the expected propaganda. After insistent questioning about the nature of a trench, the soldier insists, "A trench is great, you take my word" (106). The young woman continues to probe: "Some da'amp, I guess?" she asks, searching for an answer about discomfort that she would rather not hear.

"And so's a bath," he said. Then falling back on his main argument, "You take my word, a trench is great," he said.

She made an effort to get deeper down in him. The eyes that looked into his quite unconsciously grew larger.

"They say there's ra'ats!"

There was a quiver in her voice.

"Ra'ats? Sure there is ra'ats," he said.
"Oh!" she said.

"Believe me, miss, there's times in Fra'ance," he said, "a ra'at is comp'ny."

She shuddered.

He sucked his pipe (106-107).

If this story begins to suggest the difficulties a Canadian soldier might encounter in transit, it is in the final story in the collection, "Home," that Sime deals directly with the difference and dislocation encountering the returning soldier. Fit for little but lying in his steamer chair on the deck of the ship that is taking him to Canada, he finds the place that he has dreamed of for so long now fills him with little but tiredness: for the wife he has ached to see for so many months he feels no anticipation, only dread for his obvious difference and estrangement from the familiar. What irks the passengers on board ship who gradually cease to speak to him is his apparent health and his obvious reticence in sharing his experiences. According to them, "he didn't seem to have much the matter with him. He had his eyes left to him, and his ears, and his speech; he had brought himself back intact as to arms and legs. It seemed as if he should have been ready to talk, and to listen, and to satisfy all sorts of intelligent curiosity" (257-258).

This soldier's fatigue and his inability to speak of the socially liminal spaces that constitute his wartime experience to curious passers-by who consider it their right as compatriots to *know*, is amplified in a myriad of ways in the stories of Sister Woman, a collection that could be described as a short story sequence or as novel loosely tied by the framing devices of prologue and epilogue, as both a novel about process and a novel-in-process: individually, the stories are but pieces of this palimpsestic text that gains its resonance through addition upon addition of tales of experience. Sister Woman is at once realist and sentimental, a profoundly political text that stages a pause, a moment of speaking and listening in which the complex negotiations of immigrant women to adapt and embrace new personal, social and economic roles can be heard in the interstices of the scripted nationality of Canada. In Orpheus in Quebec, Sime suggests the complexities of national self-definition as well as its richness when she writes that immigrant groups "have all put something substantial and distinctive into the pot in which the 'new' nation is being mixed and cooked and solidified" before drawing a domestic analogy between cooking and nation-building: "For the process of forming a new nation is not unlike that which a new dish is evolved by a skilful cook. Out of different blends of a few materials

everywhere available the cook will produce new, unrecognizable dishes, and out of a fresh blend of the different kinds of people that are available--not a very large variety--the World-Cook produces from time to time a new nation. Such a new nation is being produced in Canada, and naturally it is in the cities that the process can be best observed."[29]

But Sister Woman is not just a novel about the possibilities of representing the interstices of nationality and their purchase in crowded urban situations, it is also a novel about birth, abortion, low wages, affairs, injustice, marriage, middle age, youth--about the unspeakable aspects of women's lives in Canada in a specific historical moment. If in wartime the unspeakable was located in a feminized emotional realm and in concepts like fear, discomfort, and futility, in nation-time, in this time of consolidation, it was located in difference, especially in the moral and sexual realm. In this period, "[o]rder mattered most of all, and literature that confirmed the presence of system and the existence of order, through the declaration of religion, or the assertion of society's endurance, or the discovery of natural law, was deemed intrinsically better than that which bruited change."[30] Thus, a nameless woman who "wasn't a bad girl" (138) is one of the many stories gathered up to stand within the frame of the woman writer's beginning attempt at articulation:

> There were times in the night when she would wake up terrified. She would be there in the dark in the attic room that was reserved for the maid, and she would huddle herself together and lie quaking. She was terrified. What would she do! She would lie awhile and think the same things over and over again and strain her eyes into the darkness, and then she would turn so as to try to go to sleep again, and in turning she would feel how heavy and unwieldy she was becoming...and she would be terrified again. (141)

This housemaid's pregnancy "seemed a lot to have to pay for a minute or two of warmth

and contentment....It seemed to her sometimes ...that she had bartered away all she had to give for just nothing at all" (139). Her story of lonely fortitude reworks conceptions of morality to profoundly ambivalent ends: far from repudiating this "immoral" and "fallen" woman, we come to understand her terror and isolation. The personal ramifications of, and individual sacrifices to, conventional morality are further explored in stories such as "Alone," in which the housekeeper, Hetty Grayson, has had a many-years-long affair with her boss, but because of her class and their enduring secrecy, she is relegated to the kitchen after his death; she defies convention, however, and goes to her dead lover lying in state: "When, at last, she could lie down beside him, she reached up and took his hand in hers, and she laid her warm face close to his--and waited." (21) In "Motherhood," Marion Drysdale, with a fake wedding ring and the pseudonym of Mrs. Middleton to hide her transgression, has given birth and now must choose between her lover and the infant she has borne. In "Munitions!," Bertha Martin's escape from the drudgery of domestic labour into the discomforts of manual labour outlines the simultaneous freedoms and difficulties of her life: "Hard work. Long hours. Discomfort. Strain. That was about the sum of it, of all that she had gained...but then, the sense of freedom! The joy of being done with cap and apron. The feeling that you could draw your breath--speak as you liked--wear overalls like men--curse if you wanted to." (43)

Sime chronicles the lives of working women in urban Canada with shocking candour as well as with an appreciation of the individuality of each woman whose story she apparently transcribes. Hers is a deceptive sort of fiction: almost completely absent of men, it begins to feel at times like a sociological treatise, insisting as it does on story upon story of women's voices, women's impressions of the lives they lead, of the hopes and plans they had and still have, and always of the richness and difficulty of being a woman in the world of Sime's Canada. If men are absented, even erased, from the dialogue constituting the individual stories, they are, nevertheless, everywhere in the text: as husbands, as fathers, as lovers, as people whose varied and variable responses to the women they encounter structure, in their turn, the women's range of choices, their way of

getting on in the world. It is in the shadow of their relationships with men that some of Sime's speakers ask the toughest questions about life, about their power and value as women, and about the price of their happiness. The newly-"freed" woman in "Divorce" remembers that "her life had only begun when she entered into the failure of her married life" (283), a relationship that "had been one long agony of failure, each day bringing with it some new item of disaster to add to the interminable list" (283). A year after striking out on her own, she has had to come to terms with her loneliness, with the unending round of work that now structures her life, and also with the legacy of her husband who, through the years, "had taken away her illusions" and "hacked at life till she could only see the mess he had made" (285). Yet this husband who over time had disabused her of her beliefs in honour and trustfulness and had made her see "a base world--a world full of cries and miseries and injustices [where] once she had seen it shining in the sunlight and exquisitely pure and beautiful" (286) was also the person who put her in touch with her body and allowed her to feel the naturalness of her sexual self. She is repeatedly and inexplicably confronted with her sexual longing for him even as she realizes "how mean and how petty and how low-down he had been" (287). The profound ambivalence of her feelings is touching: for her to enter another marriage is unlikely, but equally unlikely is the prospect of this moral woman fulfilling her sexual desires without the authoritative sanction of the church or state.

Always intertwined with the ever-present relationships to men and their personal ramifications are a matrix of pressing economic relationships that obviate or forestall life-choices for these women who tell their stories. Altabelle, a young woman working in a "cut-rate" drug store survives on a salary of five dollars a week, doing a job for which her male counterparts are paid twenty-five.

> She is due at the drug store at eight-thirty in the morning, and there she stays till six-thirty P.M., with a short space of time off for her dinner--or her lunch, as Altabelle prefers that it should be called. Three evenings a week she is back at the store by seven-thirty P.M. and comes away again at

> eleven. On Saturdays she has to stay till midnight, and on alternate Sundays she is "on duty" all day long. It is the species of store that has printed on its window: "All Night and All Day Service." When that is the legend, someone has to be there to make it come true (117).

Institutional promises such as this have a significant impact on the lives of Sime's speaking sisters. Altabelle's life is simple and, given her commitments at the store and her poor renumeration (justified because she has no family to support), is monotonous, held to routine by the exigencies of her empty wallet:

> Altabelle "rooms." She lives all alone in a garret, for which she pays two dollars and fifty cents a week. She hasn't "kitchen privileges," but there is a gas-ring in the corner over which she cooks her breakfasts (I mean she makes a cup of tea before she gets out of bed and takes gulps at it and hasty bites at a piece of bread and butter while she is waving her hair); and when she gets home at night she makes another cup of tea and eats another piece of bread and butter--with possibly a second-grade quality of egg or a third-rate grade of kipper....The midday meal Altabelle always takes "out," because there isn't time to get home to the gas-ring. It is more of a problem than a meal. If you deduct two dollars and fifty-cents for your room (light extra) and fourteen meals of tea and bread and butter with seven accompanying second-grade eggs or third-rate kippers, and then add on to that your car-fares for the times you sleep in and start late, and the clothes you would love to buy and do buy sometimes, though you know you can't afford it--well, you will find that there isn't much over (120).

Altabelle's economic hardship is assuaged by the end of the story when she is engaged to Mr. Johnston, a disabled veteran and her immediate boss at the store. They rent an apartment with two rooms "an' kitchenette and ba-athroom awf ut. It's an elegant apa-

artment an' it's on the down-town section too" (135). Their lives look promising: he has always treated her with a respect rarely accorded to the shop girls who are her peers, she will continue to work (although in a different department) in order to supplement his salary of twenty dollars a week, and her "elegant slimness" and "dainty, charming, tempting, delicious" (116) prettiness and almost "regylation figger" (135) have earned for her a chance to work in the model section where her pay would more than double.

She is young and beautiful and retains a vivacity and an openness to expectations for women of her time, attributes that allow her to marry. But what happens to women who have none of her charms, or to those who cannot or will not marry, to those who cannot or will not engage in relationships outside of marriage? Jess Rivers in "The Cocktail" is one such woman, a person who for "more than a quarter of a century...had sold things, waited on customers, done her best to get a living" (149) for which she had seen her pay rise from three dollars, to five, and finally to the seven dollar maximum. As she waits to sip her cocktail, her one indulgence that structures her week, maybe even her life, she ponders her fate: "It seemed to her that there was but one thing she had left unsold--herself. All those years men's eyes had wandered past her in search of something prettier, more attractive, more alive--and she had let them pass. In consequence she had not risen, as those who manage love can do--nor had she fallen like the loving ones" (149). Her reticence to engage with life in the expected or acceptable manner was going to have economic consequences that she dared not think about, but dared not ignore, for "she was thirty-nine years old. Thirty-nine! Forty means--one doesn't think what forty means to one who is a sales-girl. Old!...And people don't want old women selling in their stores--one knows that well" (149). She had lived all her life by the code of work and old-fashioned morals: she "was a straight girl--straight as a die" (148) largely because "she hadn't much temptation to be otherwise" (149), for "her blood flowed slowly. She had no strong desire of any kind. She merely asked to be allowed to get along--to work away--to earn enough that she might eat and drink and clothe herself; no more than that. It's easy to be straight when you are bloodless" (148). Never having sampled many of the pleasures of life, Jess

Rivers relies on the imaginative (and alcoholic, no doubt) release of the single, powerful, glass that "takes away the sting of life" (152). It is a ritualized assertion of the importance of the self--something beautiful and frivolous and decadent--that keeps her going, that keeps her on the straight and narrow, a path that will lead her neither into passion nor danger. The beauty of the world is distilled in this glass, both a treat and a necessity, described as "a sort of Mecca, to which she made her weekly pilgrimage" (146).

> This was the moment. For this Saturday night Jess lived all week long. The cocktail! The brewing, the sitting over it and looking at it, the gloating and the longing--the sip! The taste! The feeling! To be happy--just happy--isn't that the best thing that there is? If you can't get it any other way, can't you catch happiness for a second with a cocktail?
>
> How can you lay by money? Seven dollars a week means a scrape to live. Your room, your car-fare, the decent clothes you have to have on pain of losing your job, your food! Oh, seven dollars means a scrape to live, an everlasting, never-ceasing scrape. Jess Rivers thought of the dinners in the store. She thought inconsequently of the great, bare, ugly dining-room the workers had, she saw the tables with their oil-cloth nailed to them, she saw the plentiful, coarse food carved at the centre table. So unappetising all of that, so--so *ugly*! (150-51)

In Sister Woman and Canada Chaps Georgina Sime explores the possibilities of speaking of the parameters of the norm and of communicating the desperate individual consequences of stepping outside of the sanctioned range of expected experience. She was not always praised for her unsettling work; indeed a review of Canada Chaps takes her to task for her focus on the voices and silences of women's lives, suggesting that "the publisher would have been better to have the stories written by a man."[31] Yet in her "gentle scan" of the invisible spaces of Canadian life, as the epigraph to Sister Woman by

Robert Burns suggests, Sime leaves aside such certainties of judgement and condemnation in favour of the positing of a space where seemingly uninterrupted, unchecked speech is possible, where women can exist without fear of, in Burns' words, "The Rigid Righteous [who] is a fool,/ The Rigid Wise anither."[32]

Notes

1. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 2 November 1914.

2. J.G. Sime, Canada Chaps (London, New York: John Lane/Bodley Head, 1917). References to this text in this chapter will be cited by page number.

3. J.G. Sime, Sister Woman (London: Grant Richards, 1919) Reprinted with an introduction by Sandra Campbell (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1992). References to this text in this chapter will be cited by page number.

4. J.G. Sime, Orpheus in Quebec (London: PEN Books/Allen and Unwin, 1942) 34.

5. Sime, Orpheus 37-38.

6. Neil A. Lyons (Albert Michael Neil) Kitchener Chaps (London, New York: John Lane/Bodley Head, 1915); Pierre Mille trans. Berengere Drillien Joffre Chaps and Some Others (London, New York: John Lane/Bodley Head, 1915); Marjorie Colt Lethbridge Russian Chaps (London, New York: John Lane, 1916). It appears that each edition was accompanied by cover art by Helen Madeleine McKie.

7. Short for Thomas Atkins (1893), the sample name used on regimental forms to explain how to fill them out. This persona was fleshed out in fiction and poetry by writers like Rudyard Kipling and came to represent the ordinary soldier.

8. Georgina Sime, scrap of letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, in envelope with letter of 2 November 1914.

9. Eventually Lord Beaverbrook, Max Aitken insisted that in order for Canada to receive her dues as a contributing member of Empire, the exploits of her valiant sons must always and necessarily be kept at the forefront: his medium was the popular press, his goal to control or to channel issues of representation to appropriately national ends. Thus we have all heard of Ypres, the Somme, and the bloody battles at Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele. We know that it was Canadian soldiers who pioneered the trench raid, that it was Canadian soldiers who liberated Mons in the final days, even moments of the war. We know that Canada signed the Treaty of Versailles herself in 1919, independent of the mothering hand of Britain.

10. The notorious incident of the Ross Rifle would be a case in point here: built in Canada just after the turn of the century, 1000 units were delivered to the Royal Northwest Mounted Police in 1905 but these were plagued by problems. A new version was introduced and adopted by the Canadian Armed Forces in 1911, amid the objections of Britain who urged Canada to adopt the Lee Enfield and thus ensure

Empire-wide standardization in weaponry. It was found to be too heavy and cumbersome for use in the trenches in World War I and its tendency to jam under repeated firings meant that many soldiers were forced to drop their weapons under attack and to pick up and use those of their wounded allies. The Ross Rifle was withdrawn from the Canadian military in 1916 and Canadian troops rearmed with the British-made Lee Enfield. (Canadian Encyclopedia Vol. 3, 1888).

11. Sandra Gwyn, Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1992) 62.

12. Gwyn 257.

13. Aitken was given his position by an Order-In-Council of January 6, 1915. The first civilian correspondents were accredited on June 15, 1915 (Gwyn 257-259).

14. Beckles Willson, In the Ypres Salient (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1916) 15.

15. Willson 15.

16. Willson 16.

17. Willson 26.

18. Willson 26.

19. Ralph Connor, The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1919) 96-97.

20. Sandra M. Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987) 204.

21. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 28 November 1914

22. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 2 November 1914.

23. Peter Buitenhuis, The Great War of Words: British, American, and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 191-1933 (Vancouver: U British Columbia P, 1987) xv.

24. Samuel Hynes, A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture (New York: Collier/Macmillan, 1990) xii.

25. Hynes xii.

26. Hynes xi.

27. Hynes xi.

28. Hynes xiii.

29. Sime, Orpheus 37.

30. W.H. New, Dreams of Speech and Violence: The Art of the Short Story in Canada and New Zealand (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1987) 50.

31. Peter Donovan ("Tom Folio"), review of Canada Chaps, Saturday Night, 7 April 1917, 9. Cited in Campbell page xv.

32. The epigraph to Sister Woman is taken from Burn's poem "Address to the Unco Guid [unbelievably good], or the Rigidly Righteous." He suggests people demonstrate tolerance, for though others "may gang a kennin [wee bit] wrang,/ To step aside is human."Alexander W. Allison et al, ed., Norton Anthology of Poetry (New York: Norton, 1975) 568-69.

Chapter 5

Publishing Across the Ocean:

Our Little Life and the Writing of Nation

To *get into* Canada....[one must exercise] that double vision, that power of seeing not only what confronts us but also what lies at the back of it, which art demands.

(Georgina Sime, Orpheus in Quebec)[1]

Chapter 5[2]

In her turn away from short stories to the genre of the novel in Our Little Life (1921), Georgina Sime continued to work towards her ideals of artistic simplicity and the representation of ordinary reality--ordinary women's reality--she had sought in other works. She remained interested, too, in the material conditions of women's lives, specifically the ways that discourses of duty, family, and sexual morality come to rest in the sphere of the individual, to affect women's lives in lasting ways. In her shaping of her art out of essentially unheroic materials, in her placing of a woman versed in the art of life in the most individually repressive milieu she had attempted to render to this point, it is possible that Sime was also interested in the logical extension of her own ideas on artistry, on value, on self-expression, and on the possibilities for individual strength in tragic circumstances. In portraying Katie McGee as a woman without facility of verbal expression, but with a tremendous capacity for understanding and for action nevertheless, Sime suggests a reading strategy of the interstices, of the spaces between words, a refusal merely to read great sweeps of history and the deeds done therein, but to attend to apparently mundane moments of connection, of lives lived in interiors, of the routines by which meaning is created out of life: such strategies that demand observation offer opportunities for understanding and for valuing the lives of poor urban women, often immigrants, whose social contributions remained invisible to ideals of nation.

Our Little Life was perhaps Georgina Sime's greatest critical success, in the British literary scene, but in retrospect, its success was qualified in Canada by the shaping of *a* Canadian literature. Desmond Pacey incorporates this novel into his genealogy of fiction in Canada between 1940 and 1960 as the first Canadian "novel to deal fully and accurately with the contemporary life of a Canadian city,"[3] citing as its strengths its "drab urban realism" combined with an "immigrant theme"[4] that would come to be important to later Canadian writing. His objections to the novel rest primarily on two premises: first, that

serious writing demands a serious tone, not Sime's apparent sentimentality manifest in a narrative tone of "patient wistfulness which eventually becomes cloying"[5]; and second, that true Canadian realism between the wars was found, was grown perhaps, on the bleak and forbidding landscapes of the prairies, "where there was a distinctive pattern of life which could be clearly differentiated from that of Europe and even from that of the United States, and where the conditions of pioneer life were so forbidding that it was impossible to idyllicize them."[6] Of the two objections, it is likely that the comment on Sime's sentimentality would have been the most critically damning, for as Suzanne Clark suggests, "the word does not mean just an emotional fakery. It marks the limits of critical discourse as if they were natural. As an epithet, *sentimental* condenses the way gender still operates as a political unconscious within criticism to trigger shame, embarrassment, and disgust."[7] The sentimental was an immature form, something to be grown out of in order to be taken seriously. The concepts Pacey mobilizes for definition of fine Canadian fiction of the period--represented in the work of Stead, Ostenso, and Grove that marked the turning away from (historical) romance to the more nationally appropriate genre of realism--are notions of maturity and recognizable, quantifiable difference, of distinctly Canadian art, distinctiveness whose creation was possible only in the crucible of an empty Canadian land, a geography that required the proving of men in its proving up. Our Little Life challenges such notions about literatures appropriate to the maturation and consolidation of the nation by presenting, in the lives of Katie McGee and Robert Fulton and the other inhabitants of Penelope's Buildings, a seamy, unromantic version of Canada and then refusing to let this version stand as an isolated instance of a sort of picturesque poverty not often found in Canada. Nowhere are glimpses of a stereotypical Canada of wide open spaces found in this novel, centred as it is on the relationship between an aging spinster and an English teacher ill-fitted to the demands of Canadian life and living in a block of houses-cum-apartments left decrepit in the wake of the movement of fashionable residents to suburbia: "From the front windows of the Buildings there was dinginess to look upon; from the back windows there was an uninterrupted view of other back windows across a triangular court. And from both ends of Drayton place, unceasing,

unresting, night and day, came the everlasting hum of the electric car-line. Noise, grime, squalor; by this great trinity of words did Penelope's Buildings justify its existence" (xi). Despite the "trinity" that characterizes Penelope's Buildings, Sime repeatedly allies its inhabitants with the rest of humanity, insisting that their capacity to hope, plan and work was "much like the rest of the world" (x) and reiterates this connection, not through inalienable political or national boundaries, but through the rituals of ordinary life: "Breakfast, dinner, tea--*that* is the great Empire on which the sun never sets: meals are the true preoccupation of the lives of almost all of us, and the Penelopians were no exception to the rule" (ix-x).

One cannot help wondering if the routines of life represented in this novel, poles away from the heroic ties to seasons and to the cycles of earth in the esteemed, mature prairie realism Pacey articulates in his critical discourse of distinctiveness was not merely not *different* enough, not unique enough to stand as representative of Canadian experience, but was also not *wholesome* enough for inclusion in a genealogy of nationality. Some of Sime's interior scenes that demonstrate connection between people in the community of the Buildings would be downright uncomfortable for critics (like those who objected to the disgusting displays of sexual candour in the plays discussed earlier) attentive to issues of cleanliness and morality. When Mrs. Morphy, the local drinker, gets cancer, she rails against her impending death, forgotten by her daughter who has married well and who has the means to be of great help if not for the stigma of her ties to such a family. She relies on unbroken family ties in the unquestioning kindness of her other daughter, a nondescript, slovenly mother of many children, to comfort and to care for her:

> She didn't look on death as a great adventure. She didn't have any high-flown notions about it one way or the other. She simply...didn't want to die. She had lived in filth and poverty and a great deal of ignorance and discomfort and desperate pain for a long time past; and yet she clung to life. She clung desperately to it. She didn't want to die....

> So Nonnie Finn took her mother home to her own slatternly kindly place, chock-full of children as it was: and, without a thought of any other way, she added the nursing of a desperate malady to all the rest of the things she had to do. Danny came home drunk and knocked her about as usual. The last baby wept and the babe to come made her sick in the morning and weary at night. Mrs. Morphy died slowly to the tune of children coming and children come: and all the time she was dying, she *wanted* to live (264).

The drinkers and failures and profligates and procreators who live in the Buildings are far from being shining examples of exemplary lives, but they are Katie's community, the extended family to which she dedicates her life. For Sime, this seedy urban jungle was a site rife with story, with possibilites for fiction, even fine fiction. In Orpheus in Quebec she acknowledges that "this is a very imperfect world and is likely to remain so;" however, she insists on the possibilities for art amidst such imperfection, for "we can also joyfully recognize the fact that from almost any conception of life very beautiful things may come to birth. If we think of art as the fine flowering of life...what a wealth and variety of blossoms are given us to admire and to love!"[8]

Our Little Life was reviewed extensively in Britain, the United States, and Canada in such diverse places as the Toronto Star Weekly, the London Advertiser (Ontario), the Montreal Gazette, the New York Herald, the Boston Transcript, the New York Evening Post, the Daily Mail (London), and the Birmingham Post. Comments about it range from a tepid, uncommitted response to outright adulation. Hamilton Fyfe, of the Daily Mail remarked that if in Sister Woman Sime had "put some of the qualities of true literature," here, in Our Little Life, "they are poured forth in a flood....Katie McGee's portrait I shall never forget. It is drawn with insight, sympathy, delightful humor, penetrating vision into the nature of woman, above all, with a divine pity and tenderness which extends to all living creatures and to life itself."[9] The Birmingham Post is equally enthusiastic in its

summation of this novel as "a great book:"

> We say it with deliberation and emphasis. In her richness and depth of social reference Miss Sime reminds one of the Victorian classics; yet she possesses too, the crispness and economy of the sound technician of today...and upon the composition of her background, which is, as it were, a sky of stable yet delicate grey, keep darting, opalescently, wonderful tints of artistry and wit. Miss Sime is passionately, humorously interested in life: her creative art reproduces for us that interest in every line she writes. Katie McGee is a great character in fiction.[10]

A 1921 Grant Richards catalogue cites the words of "the enthusiastic American publisher who...described it, on reading the manuscript, as 'a bit of sheer inspired genius,' adding: 'The author sees life quite marvellously....I have not in twenty years read anything more vividly, more insistently alive than Katie McGee. She ought to be an abiding, perennial joy among our best memories in fiction.'"[11] Repeatedly it is to McGee's "uniquely lovable character" [12] that reviewers turn when commenting on the novel, for she is a woman "redeemed by a hundred tender, naughty, human touches from the usual impossible slum angel of stories of this sort."[13] Yet, while many reviewers admired the characterization of Katie achieved in large part through Sime's attention to every detail of her "plain" life, such detail--rooted in an attempt to render an "ordinary" woman's reality--was found tedious by others. In an important review in the Times Literary Supplement on June 9, 1921, Our Little Life was reviewed favourably beside a review that panned D.H. Lawrence's Women in Love, now a "classic" text. These reviews are less important for their normative evaluations of the two novels (their designation of Lawrence's book as "flaccid" and a "dull, disappointing piece of work" and Sime's book as occasionally "monotonous", for example) than for expectations about Canadian literature and assumptions about fit subjects for the novel. In a patronizing tone, the reviewer grants Sime a certain "fluency in describing trivial things, such as the brewing of tea or the

preparation of a meal, which must endear her to thousands who make tea and prepare meals in very much the same way." He points out, however, a certain disappointment (which he admits might be peculiar to an English reader) in the drabness of the version of Canadian life Sime portrays: "Her admiration for Canada is obvious, but life as pictured by her in the poorer quarters of the city...is not at all attractive." This reviewer settles on the very thing that Sime had intended him to--the immigrant woman's experience of Canada--then judges this aspect of the novel disappointing because it does not serve up Canada as a place of opportunity, a place of golden wheat. He clearly expects from a Canadian novel appropriately Canadian subjects, for he articulates his disappointment along these lines: "Miss Sime has ideas about Canadian patriotism and the growing self-consciousness of a young nation, but she does not make them very clear."[14] Sime's interest in securing Canada as a promising site for fiction while at the same time fielding a reading of Canada that had never been done before put her at a curious impasse with regard to such readers with specific ideas about the roles suitable for "colonial" fiction.

Sime's move into the extended fictional form of the novel as a means of representing ordinary reality did not substantially alter her fundamental beliefs about literary style, particularly her unease with the artificial. In a doubly-barbed letter to Nicholson, she laments the decadent states of women and of literature, abhorring what she had described earlier as the polished and coiffed, "ostentatious, over-elaborate, super-subtle perfection of the idle women of the wealthy classes."[15] She resents such women because of their oppressive links to old standards of conventionality, their ties to the tradition of being a lady. She carries this dislike of decadence beyond her musings on gender and into the domain of literature in the following passage disparaging a best-selling novel entitled The Red Lantern[16], focussing on the need for fiction to get at the root of things, for style to be pared of excesses:

> [The author] has taken a lot of pains--too much: it doesn't seem to me that you could say "The waning moon, just ready to slink below the horizon like

> a scarlet thing of shame, flung its last rays lurid and defiant into the hovel," without a good deal of trouble: but it [sic] perhaps trouble thrown away. Does the moon slink? Is it ever scarlet? And why should it be lurid and defiant? If Miss Wherry had only put these simple questions to herself, what a lot of trouble she would have saved herself and many other people. You only have to read that far to see that she hadn't really any intention of saying anything at all.[17]

Sime believed that the reason the contemporary novel was so "utterly useless and unreal"[18] was its refusal to embrace and to represent change, instead maintaining an anachronistic relation to the past by "depicting a past state of things as if it were existing today."[19] Sime chooses as her example of obsession with past states common literary treatments of women, explaining that while the novel almost inevitably deals with gender on some level, it often fails to impart any idea of women's reality. "Either," she writes in the same letter to Nicholson,

> the romantic idea of woman is portrayed--and as real as it once was it isn't real now. Or the decadent French view is taken--also far from real. Or it is regarded exclusively from the man's point of view. Or is treated drearily and introspectively. Every view is taken but the plain, clean, simple, honest view of the uncommercial man and woman; and these, thank God, you can safely club them together, for it is only together they make a whole.

It is to this ideal of the "plain, clean, simple," in terms of content and style--that Georgina Sime aims in Our Little Life. Here she allies herself theoretically if not stylistically with a host of modernist writers who sought to attain through their writing a renegotiation of the relationship between literature and the world it depicted, creating not just a slice of life (or the "local colour" that has been considered so much a feature of the Canadian literary scene), but a representation of its reality, its variety, its absurdity, its stubborn inability to

measure up to the heights of the individual vision. It was a reality she sought specifically to locate in the Canada of her experience.

Our Little Life, then, is at its simplest a powerful historical document, indicating at once Sime's individual interests and aspirations in and for fiction at this point in her career, and also her response to prevailing social and intellectual currents of thought. Chronicling the lives of the urban poor, the social relations between and among immigrant groups, and the struggles of a single "professional" woman to do more than survive on the pittance she earns, it is a novel that makes a central place for women's experiences, subtly challenging much of what Canadian fiction is about while at the same time drawing attention to how the "modern" novel must be read. Katie McGee, a middle-aged (but by the book's standards) rapidly aging woman, is clearly past the prime of her life but reconciled--almost--to its unrelenting plainness. Regimented by daily trips to the better part of town to sew for rich women, hers is certainly a little life, circumscribed by the oppressive atmosphere of Penelope's Buildings and set against the immediate backdrop of the Railway Yards with the spire of St. Patrick's Catholic church beyond, the landscape as much a symbol of repression and decay as it is of refuge. McGee's accommodation to the greyness of her life and the sordidness of her surroundings has come at the expense of her humanity, at the expense of her emotions: "She had forgotten--almost--what it meant to be riotously happy. She had forgotten--almost--the fresh days of her youth and the hope that had filled her heart then. She had grown accustomed to leaving Penelope's Buildings at eight o'clock or a little sooner and to coming back there at seven o'clock or a little later. She regarded the buildings as 'home'. She was glad to get back there" (17). When she meets and falls in love with her neighbour, Robert Fulton, her passion for life is fuelled. Suddenly things matter that mattered very little before, and she rails at the everyday injustice of her life, hoping to better herself that she might better the man she has come to love.

Their growing relationship is framed--even contained--by the stagnation of

Penelope's Buildings, the apartment block at the end of the line, next door to the railway yards and caught in the static grip of the law, "the one thing the mind of man has as yet been able to devise that can go on moving forever without getting anywhere" (ix). Until a legal suit over the building's ownership is resolved, no rents can change, no improvements can be made, nothing can happen except decay, for "in the midst of the clamor of the flats falling from one another brick by brick, in the midst of the down-at-heelness and general dilapidation, the Law, in its most magniloquent and majestic manner--went on talking. Penelope's Buildings were doomed" (ix). Curiously, however, the legal stasis of the apartment block makes possible a range of human changes that affect the lives of all its inhabitants, few as much as Katie: as original tenants move out, their rooms are let under the table to varying classes of people who mark the downward spiral of morality that Katie believes the building to represent, and to which she later realizes laughingly she has accommodated herself--without compromising her personal standards. One night early in their friendship she confronts a tired Robert, on his way to her place for his daily meal and session of reading, with the tearful news that drug dealers have taken the room opposite her door. Horrified at the implied laxity of morals this occupation suggests, she moans that she would much rather have "coiners" (counterfeiters) near--men who make their way in her eyes through a cleaner brand of criminality. Almost a year later, however, when Katie has come to recognize the humanity of all her neighbours through their common suffering in the epidemic of influenza that kills so many around her, she nurses, comforts, stands death watch, and lays out even the "tarts" who live near her door.

Our Little Life spans the events of a single year, and traces the growing affection of this lonely seamstress for Robert Fulton, the disgruntled English immigrant resigned to earning his way, not by his profession of teaching, but by selling butter and cheese behind the counter of a butcher shop. Katie McGee is uneducated save for an education in actualities; Fulton is different--his intimacy with books shields him from direct confrontation with life. Despite his theoretical interest in the "lower classes" for example, he shrinks almost visibly from contact with them and is ill at ease with and repelled by

Katie's friends:

> It is one thing to try to write sympathetically of the manual worker and quite another to sit beside him at supper. Robert loathed the *smell* of Dan, the smell of manual labor imperfectly washed off, mingled with the smell of drink, ancient and modern, which he constantly exhaled: he also loathed the way he ate and drank--it made him sick to see Dan draw his hand across his mouth and wipe his knife off with his tongue....Never before had it been borne in upon him with the same pitiless clarity what a slatternly, down-at-heel, shabby, degraded place he lived in. (221)

A private, reserved, almost prudish man, Fulton "was a creature not made at any time for the acute kind of happiness"(3), nor, it appears, for any deep human interchange. Despite his "superior" breeding and "fine" education, Robert is largely ineffectual, and relies on Katie to nurture him and to support his life's only passion--a treatise (informally called the Canada Book) on the role of the immigrant in the building of Canada. Fulton's sociological efforts in creating the Canada Book, however, consist of recording his own long-stored and even bitter observations about a country that he believes has treated him poorly. His relationship with his subject is so single-minded that he is blind to other kinds of truths that may surround him. While he wants to be as one with "the worker", he cannot: "He felt--rightly or wrongly--that in [the Canada Book] he was drawing nearer to the worker than he had ever been able to draw before....and yet he was uneasily conscious of being driven away from him by both the fastidiousness of his senses and by the convolutions of his brain" (250).

Robert's inability to capture the Canadian experience adequately is partly a function of his inflexible parameters of vision and understanding and partly a function of an inadequacy of form. As he sits "pouring forth his ideas, his theories of the New World in which he was such an unwilling citizen"(365) in the isolation of McGee's shabby room,

life, Canadian life, carries on nearby:

> there, outside, where one could almost reach it with an outstretched hand, was the real thing. The citizen who was going to mold Canada. The thing that was going to make the country--what it was and is and shall be. The children laughed and shouted and sometimes wept...but whatever they did, they did what a thousand Canada Books and a hundred thousand Roberts could never do: they created life. They founded the country of which Robert Fulton had so much to say. And he was so engrossed in what he had to say, he was so absorbed in the pages in his hand, that he never even heard the noise they made. (365)

His "objective," impersonal diction hides Robert's occasional flashes of perception and alienates the very people he describes in his work. "What are the things that count?" (363) Robert muses as he looks across the table to his faithful auditor. "Are they grammar? Diction? Style?" (363) he wonders. "The mere weighing of words, so many to the pound?--the placing of thoughts in an ordered mosaic of letters? Or is it the dipping down into life that counts?" (363). In this world where words cloak the pain of rebuff with a lie, where words fail to reach their intended target, it is *actions* that count: Katie hands on Robert's manuscript--a cherished piece of her life, giving it a chance at new life in the hands of another woman; the kisses of her sister and the putting of the kettle on the stove seal Katie's return to the circle of her family; and, when she is at her most despairing, it is the simple gesture of a tired man giving Katie his seat on the street car that makes her resolve to live "conscious of the humanity that united" (395) her to the unscrubbed workers nearby. Katie's understanding of the Canada Book occurs in an ironized space of articulation that frequently lies not in that which is written, but in the gaps, the silences, the misapprehensions that Robert incorporates into his work. Katie's inability to enter into the nuances of his argument does not prevent her from feeling its truths and shortcomings and from conveying them in an oblique way to Robert.

Unfettered by intellectual aloofness, Katie represents, in many ways, Georgina Sime's ideal of womanhood: active, independent, tender, efficient and engaged with events around her, Katie is a womanly woman whose vitality opposes the passivity and fastidiousness of the young Robert, to whom "sexual passion seemed...a purely horrible thing, a wholly detestable thing, an unclean beastly thing" (325). Theirs is no ordinary love affair, conducted as it is almost without Robert's knowledge and with but the most casual of caresses to mark its progress. Despite its one-sidedness, however, it is the great love of Katie's life and a relationship that reverses romantic norms in all sorts of ways. Katie is an older woman, decidedly unattractive but for her large, expressive eyes, her thick hair, her fine hand. Her physical body, "a mass of contradictions from one end of it to the other" (21), registers not only the ups and downs of her personal and economic life, but also her relationship to the discourses of her time. Past childbearing years, Katie will never fulfil her expected role as nation-builder through the production and rearing of children. Nor is it likely she will be able to alter substantially her economic future. These signs of failure are embodied in overt ways:

> In a slit of looking-glass...she saw her own face. Old, faded, pinched, lined. And the thought passed through her mind that if it had been a man's face in the mirror it wouldn't have mattered so bitterly. The point was that it was a woman's. She was a woman. You can't change your position and leap into new fortune if you are a woman and forty-seven. Miss McGee stood still a minute and regarded herself in the slit of mirror. She noted remorselessly each dint that time had made in her face, and each scar that worry had left. "Ye're ugly," she said to the reflection in the mirror. "Ye're *ugly*" (274-5).

Katie's position as aging, unattractive, unmarried woman throws the parameters of her life-choices into relief: she realizes that no matter how hard she works, her age and appearance will guarantee her economic oppression. She becomes "conscious that

nothing she could feel or say or do could alter the hard round way the world was made. She knew that she was outside--for good. She felt *old*" (275). As McGee's situation suggests, possibilities for economic improvement for women in the novel, and indeed in Canadian society of this time, are bleak. Her sister, Mary, married the fine boy her mother recommended, bore him eight children, buried four of them, and improved her economic situation dramatically, but she never cared for this man with whom she spends her life. The hairdresser, Queenie MacGowan, married into a great deal of money, but unlike Katie, she had the biological advantage of beauty to aid her social movement; her much coveted "good" marriage is not a loving relationship between two equals, but rather a business arrangement involving a bestowing of possessions by one and an acquisition by the other. Thus, while marriage for women of Katie's economic circumstance is the only way to financial security, it is also a bit of a lottery: the slatternly Nonnie Finn dies virtually penniless as the young mother of many children; the wealthy Biddy Ryan must stand by while her corpulent husband buys his way into the affections of painted ladies.

Sime's portrayal of the Catholic "odd woman" Katie McGee, too, refuses the simplicity of the stereotype of asexual spinster by insisting on her sexuality as a facet of each of her many womanly roles despite the oppositional relationship that often holds between feminine duty and personal fulfilment. Her role as caregiver to her aged mother meant that she refused to marry a man for whom many years later, she still harboured tenderness, a man she had loved "with all the hot blood that lay back of those blue-black eyes of hers. She had wanted him with the fire of her blood and the craving of her flesh. She had longed to touch him, to be touched by him, to lie in his arms.... And she had given him up" (57). This cycle of repression and duty repeats itself much later in her life when a suitor waits in the wings for Katie's mother to die that they might marry. Mother hangs on to life stubbornly, Katie clings to her duty, he refuses to wait. Eleven years later when her relationship with Robert has reminded her not only of the depths of her feelings and the demands of her body, but also of the matronly way in which she is regarded, Katie weeps to think of all that she gave away and all that she has lost with the passing of time:

"Won't you shake hands?" he said smilingly; and he stretched out his slender, womanlike hand.

Miss McGee slowly put her plump warm soft hand into his. She let it lie there, and she allowed him to clasp it and hold it--and then shake it warmly. She felt that he only shook it as he would have shaken any other human being's hand that had praised him. It might have been a man's hand in his--or his mother's--or his aunt's....

She watched him run rapidly up the stairs, and then she closed her door slowly.

"I'm old," she said to herself. "I'm old."

The thought seemed to her for the moment almost too bitter to be borne. The thought of her ardent youth that she had sacrificed to her mother came rushing over her like a torrent. She went about mechanically putting the room in order, mechanically getting out the tea-things to wash--and the hot tears coursed down her cheeks (39).

Katie's feelings about her singleness are grounded, in the context of the novel at least, in her class. She "belonged to the workers, and with them the woman question is a simple thing, not worthy of any capitals at all" (114). While many young women work, it is always "with the expectation of matrimony in their minds" (114). McGee was no different: "she regarded a woman as a home-keeping animal; a thing that got married as soon as it could and kept a house and bore children and saw that those children got a chance in the world (to the best of her ability) when they were ready to go out into it" (114). Clearly now at forty-six, Katie is outside the reach of motherhood and she rationalizes her position as unmarried woman with religious truisms she recites but does

not always believe, fighting off the feeling that single women "were old maids, creatures who had missed their vocation in life--failures who were only fit for the scrap-heap" (114) by "parading the Church's teaching of the value of virginity" (115) and proclaiming "that it is not only preferable, but immensely and incontrovertibly superior, to the completest married state" (115). But this "elevated position" (115) was difficult to keep up, and it would not be long before McGee would once again feel herself to be "not only a virgin but an old maid too" (115).

It is, curiously, through Robert's influence in the reading of the Canada Book that she reconsiders her singleness in the context of the nation and learns that work is not a gendered category, that she does make a positive contribution to society. She is forced to reevaluate the paradigms she has hitherto upheld that understood woman only as "an appendage of man" (116). Under Robert's indirect tutelage, Katie comes to understand that she needs to be neither "a virgin of exceedingly high repute" (116) nor "a poor little insignificant old maid whom everyone very naturally looked down on and patronized" (116). Her unconventional relationship with Robert Fulton cuts across many of the paradigms of knowledge and ways of knowing that Katie has relied on, and that define her. Although the written word is largely an alien resource in her world, she is surprisingly astute at divining its meanings. She realizes quickly that Robert's writing of the Canada Book is an act of denial, both a way of avoiding the reality that is his life and a way of taming his conscience by refusing to admit responsibility for his own mistakes in Canada. Here Robert rationalizes the impossible lot of the immigrant even as other realities stare him in the face. Indeed, before their first sharing of his "Canada Book", Robert confesses to Katie his reservations about the mythical possibilities of Canada. Characteristically, in this early glimpse into their relationship, Katie converses through a litany of time-worn phrases, doing her duty by polite conversation, all the while leaving her own thoughts and feelings aside in the interests of social protocol. Her beginnings of dialogue with the remark "It's the grand country, Canada. There's a space in ut, eh, an' room to grow...." (102) is countered by his puzzled retort, "But to grow into what? That's

the disappointing thing. There's room to grow but nothing to grow into." (102) On two sides of the question of Canada, these speakers are divided by more than opinion. A legacy of class and gender expectations, written into social codes governing even the most mundane attempts at conversation, is little by little relinquished in the light of the beginnings of a real honesty between them, poles apart in almost every way. At the convergence of Katie's one-sided conversation and Robert's interminable monologue are the liminal spaces of real teaching, real learning, real interchange. Because it is largely by her early inability, or her refusal, to say what she thinks that Katie teaches Robert about the shortfalls of his position, he must learn to read a *different* set of codes, read into the interstices between words, into the silences, the halts in Katie's explanations. As she searches for words to explain her point of view, "It began to dawn upon him dimly, as she spoke, that possibly there was another side to Canada that, all-round and impartial as he had resolutely striven to be, he hadn't managed to set forth." (108). Katie struggles more to explain her objections to Robert, fails, then resorts to conventional praise to fill up the empty space of the moment, admitting his book is "the lovely thing a'alroight. It has ut so pat ye can't foind nothin' to say when you know it's wrong....[Then] she gave a deep sigh--it rose up in her from the fact that she couldn't say what she wanted, and that she felt things generally too much for her; and she turned her eyes away from Robert and sat looking, rather sadly, into the fire"(108).

If it is in her elliptical statements, her pursed lips, her shrugs, that Robert learns from Katie, it is in the snatches of his writing that reach her through the haze of her inability to understand his literary form that Katie benefits and sees herself in a new way in relation to the other immigrants of his musings. A Canadian woman of Irish descent, Katie epitomizes the complex and conflicting networks of allegiances that existed among the Anglo-Celtic races and between white and not-white (or less white) immigrant groups. Amid the din of a strident and vocal nationalist movement McGee lives a quiet life and builds into the interstices of her conflicting nationalism a calm place of her own, a home amid limbo.

She was, like all older Canadians, ultra-loyal. She accepted Queen Victoria (but nothing later) as something God-given and entirely irreproachable. She admired England (in a sense); she regarded herself as a British subject; she stood up in an aggressive manner whenever she heard "God Save the Queen" (which was the way in which she continued to regard the National Anthem), and she looked upon the Union Jack as the best, if not the only, flag, in the world. At the same time Miss McGee was not sorry when she heard England had got a bruise. She didn't want anything *very* bad to happen to England; she didn't want her even to be too much shaken up. Still, at the back of her mind...there was the distinct sensation of England having behaved extremely badly to Ireland in the past...She had been delighted at the time of the Boer War when England had been getting knocks from the Dutch farmers. "That'll teach 'em!" she had said. She had been equally enthusiastic when the regiment of "Irish Rovers" (bless the bo'oys) had been recruited for the Great War. She had gone to the presenting of the colors at St. Patrick's, had seen the bo'oys off; she had wept over their casualties and prayed for their safety to God...and she had been *proud* that Irish-Canada should have gone to the help of England in England's trouble. She loved England to get it hot, yet for all that was in her and for everything she possessed, she would not have had England suffer a defeat. Canada was the halting-place between England and Ireland, and Miss McGee, brought over to Canada when she was a child, had adopted Canada as her country. When thought took her back across the ocean, her blood went to Ireland, her Canadian tradition homed to England. The upshot of it all was that she really hadn't any country at all (105-106).

McGee's Canadianness, like her religion and her feminism is fluid and inclusive, a negotiated relationship: "She felt, all down her backbone, that it was Canadian and not

English she was; and deeper than the backbone--in the marrow itself--she felt she was Irish" (117). Her ability to accommodate other nationalities in her national schema extends, only, however, to fair-skinned races. Neither the "'dagos' who stood at the doors of their Shoe Shine Parlors showing their excellent teeth" (vii) nor the "nigger man" who Katie's friend nurses and cleanses would hold places as Canadians in the visions of McGee and her contemporaries; instead, they would remain forever foreign.

The apparently static nature of the physical edifice within which the events of the novel unfold stands as an index to the degree of human change occurring beneath the unaltered regularity of routine: Katie falls away from the church and finds her way back again, gains strength as a single woman even as she relinquishes her youth and becomes in her own eyes an older woman; she returns to the fold of her family, but on her own terms and valuing her independent life; she falls in love, then sees that love grow into, for her part, an enduring bond marking a definitive point in her life and propelling her beyond the cocoon of her self; she sees friends die and comes to understand the impact of their passing on her own life. This human drama, which merely resonates against "greater" dramas of national, even international importance--including World War I and the influenza epidemic brought home by returning soldiers that killed as many Canadians as did the fighting--exceeds its organization under the temporal regularity of days, weeks, and months, and challenges the possibilities of fictional, even historical time. Important events are marked not by the tyranny of the calendar or the clock, but by the sharing of a meal or a cup of tea, by a party, a fight, a wedding, a reconciliation. That Katie McGee is clearly a reworking of Miss McGuire, a woman from "The Damned Old Maid" in Sister Woman suggests that Sime remained interested in getting it right, in working towards that space of artistic communication she so desired that revealed not only the interstices of women's lives, but also the "psychic atmosphere [of the city] emanating not only from each of [its] present inhabitants, but from the men and women who have lived and worked in [it] in the past."[20] Miss McGuire, an aging spinster, is shaken and upset by a recent conversation with a man she had loved many years before but had refused to marry

because of his fondness for alcohol. He married, he admits, a woman he never loved as much as McGuire. He is drunk when McGuire gets reacquainted with him and reminds her not only of the loneliness that has characterized her life, but also of the social stigma attached to her long life lived outside the norm of marriage. Her damnation lies in the perception of her uselessness: she regrets keenly the sense of order and purpose that marriage would have brought her, especially one to a man who continues to love her despite the passage of many difficult years. Her disappointment rests on her perceived avoidance of life, her inability to engage with it, to live through and learn from even the troubles it brings. She had, she notes, "as gay a foot and as light a heart...as any woman, and...as many fellahs after me as any woman ever had."[21] But she refused them all because "I was dry meself an it's half-frightened I was at the men and half waitin' I was on somethin' the never did come."[22] She admits that she should have married her lover, for once choosing the risks of life over a staid, but safe existence that keeps out a dangerous evil as well as its corollary happiness:

> "I should have married Charlie MacBryan," said Miss McGuire, "he's right. What if he did get soused? What if he did turn and beat me as they say he beats his wife this day? Isn't it better to be sore and live with a man than to live safe and sound with yer past behind ye and no future to come? What's life?..." said Miss McGuire.
>
> She sewed.
>
> "There's times, God forgive me," she said, "when I've envied the bad women. They've known!"
>
> She sewed.
>
> "Who's me to be left all alone," said she, "who's me to be left knowin'

nothin'--never havin' tasted life at all?"

She was silent. There was a considerable pause.[23]

For readers of our era, this passage with its casual reference to domestic violence is a difficult one. But like much of Sime's work, it raises questions about that which can be talked about, those topics safe for fiction. For this aging woman weighing the outcome of her choice between a possibly abusive marriage to a man still in love with her and a life-long celibacy is not as clear-cut as it might be today in Canada when domestic violence figures so prominently on the public agenda or at least in the fantastical plane of political or government rhetoric. The point is that neither Miss McGuire nor Katie McGee had the kind of self-determination that most women of their age and class now take for granted--the combination of poor birth control, and the kind of moral policing that guaranteed significant economic and social ramifications of pregnancy out of wedlock, meant that most women refused to engage in "illicit" sexual liaisons. The choice for both women seemed simple, but in adhering to religious dogma that scorned alcohol and thereby refusing the attentions of their suitors, they were also bound to adhere to strict sexual codes that limited their private choices. The only course left was to wait, to live stigmatized as spinsters and to hope that more suitable suitors would arrive on the scenes. They never did; thus, McGuire and McGee have lived out their lives sewing, ghettoized by norms--of the maternal and the useful--and denied the kinds of contact--specifically sexual, and by extension maternal--that they deem valuable.

Notes

1. J.G. Sime, Orpheus in Quebec (London: Allen and Unwin/PEN, 1942) 32.

2. A version of this chapter was published in K.J. Watt, "Introduction," Our Little Life, by J.G.Sime (1921; Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1994).

3. Desmond Pacey, "Fiction 1929-1940," Literary History of Canada ed. Carl Klinck (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1977) 185.

4. Pacey 186.

5. Pacey 186.

6. Pacey 187.

7. Suzanne Clark, Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) 11.

8. J.G. Sime, Orpheus in Quebec (London: Allen and Unwin/PEN Books, 1942) 17.

9. Hamilton Fyfe, rev.of Our Little Life, Daily Mail 28 October 1922.

10. Rev. of Our Little Life, Birmingham Post 28 October 1922.

11. Publisher's Catalogue for 1921, Grant Richards Archive, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

12. Rev. of Our Little Life, New York Times 22 May 1921: 22.

13. Rev. of Our Little Life, Literary Review 14 May 1921: 3.

14. Rev. of Our Little Life, Times Literary Supplement 9 June 1921: 371.

15. J.G. Sime, The Mistress of All Work (London: Methuen, 1916) 4.

16. The novel in question was one of John Lane's bestsellers: Edith Margaret Wherry, The Red Lantern: Being the Story of the Goddess of the Red Lantern Light (London: John Lane, 1911; Montreal: Publishers Press, 1912; New York: John Lane, 1919).

17. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 10 June 1913.

18. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 10 June, 1913.

19. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 10 June 1913.

20. Sime, Orpheus 35.

21. J.G. Sime, Sister Woman (1919; Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1992) 188.

22. Sime, Sister Woman 188.

23. Sime, Sister Woman 189.

Conclusion

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Georgina Sime's early work was produced in Canada in an intellectual milieu in which the interpretation of the new century, the making of meaning of war, and the explanation of sweeping social changes were considered triumphs over the chaos of modernity. It was, for some, a time of tremendous optimism, and, for others, a time of nostalgia for things past and trepidation for what the future might hold, as Arnold Haultain, secretary to Goldwin Smith,[1] wrote in 1904:

> The nineteenth century seems to have brought us to the edge of a precipice, and to have left us there gazing wistfully into outer space. That rather smug era led us to believe that we stood on *terra firma* whence...we might bridge any chasm that presented. It was a scientific century, and--so it seems to us now--rather a myopic one....But things have changed...[This is] an age that finds no anchorage in materialism, yet is afraid to drift; an age that feels that the nineteenth century solution of the world problem was inadequate, yet that...is too far removed from the solutions offered by the eighteenth century to derive much comfort from them; an age which sees that it must find a solution for itself, but has no data for the task, and as yet can do little more than stand shivering timorously at the brink.[2]

The alternative to this anxious intellectual stasis, a reaction to radical changes in the "normal" and "moral" workings of the world, was activity. According to S.E.D. Shortt, the intellectuals of Sime's era initiated what he characterizes as "a frantic search for an ideal, a new world view which would explain the nature of man and his place in the universe."[3] In the realm of literary criticism, numerous anthologies[4] were produced to counter modernist anomie, to make meaning of, to organize the "flotsam of unharvested fragments"[5]of contemporary literature into a recognizable, unified and unifying,

serviceable national pattern. This search entailed both telos and rationale in the service of nation, both the discovery of "Canadian" literature and the inscription of this literature into a system of value predicated on, as Dermot McCarthy suggests, "the fusion of logocentric and topocentric premises which organizes Canadian literary history."[6] This fusion has certain expected corollaries related to the valuing of a literary text: "The canonic writer is the 'voice' of the people/place, the canonic work 'speaks' to the people, for the people, because it has the spirit of the people/place within it, 'innate.' It is precisely--and often literally--in these terms that early, and later, Canadian literary histories select their canonic writers and works..."[7] According to McCarthy, place becomes an overdetermined marker of 'merit' that is seen to embody the hallmarks of nationality, for, he writes:

> if our origins do not make us different, and if we lack an historical action/event which the collectivity can accept as having made us different, then all we are left to 'ground' our sense of difference is the uniqueness of place itself. Geography must serve in the place of history; space must overdetermine time. Or, in Frye's most famous formulation of this determinism, the question of Canadian identity is not phrased in terms of 'Who am I?' but rather as 'Where is here.'[8]

But place is not locatable merely topographically or geographically, for conflated with spacial or latitudinal markers defining the limits of Canadian landscape are attitudinal markers of wholesomeness or purity, expansive moral longitudes mapping nationality and the possibilities for textual merit as firmly as any signpost or compass bearing. Appropriate Canadian places were not busy cities, but forested tracts or the snowy purity of wide-open spaces imbued with a transmittable calmness or divine order; they were log cabins with families perched on the edge of survival, difficult places prone to blizzard or marked by a challenging isolation, places the human body and spirit rose to meet head-on, enduring, stretching, learning in the process.

Georgina Sime's work entered the critical domain during this era of the "academic institutionalization or reading choices,"[9] a time in which the parameters of criticism were first felt, then policed, by coteries of powerful critics consolidating their position in the academy and in Canadian culture at large through the definition of a body of representative Canadian works. Both the boundaries of their profession and the value of that professional community hinged on these literary selections and on the national values that resided therein. Carole Gerson explains the ramifications of the shift of cultural arbitrage from a range of reviewers, journals, newspapers and magazines into a closely defined academic setting:

> During the post-Victorian era, from approximately 1918 to the 1940's, the canon of English-language Canadian literature was particularly arbitrary and malleable, governed less by cultural consensus than by the whims and agendas of certain individuals in positions of power. The literary heroes and perceived traditions of a small country grasping for identity...while struggling to reconcile its Romantic inheritance with the encroaching wave of modernism, were not constructed by the reading public at large so much as by backstage decisions of publishers, editors, and English professors. These men formed a loose 'invisible college' distinctly masculine in gender and taste that determined who and what got into print and into anthologies, and which works received prizes and plaudits.[10]

Georgina Sime's "early" work was fielded during a moment of quest--what Shortt calls a "frantic search"-- for an understandable order, a moment in which an emerging critical profession staked out a nationalist aesthetic in different ways: a metaphor of biology that invoked claims of and for Canadianness in terms of a metaphysics of human development; a fragmentation model that envisioned the dynamics of North American cultural politics as a single American entity. Thus Canadian literature of Sime's time was described as being in its "infancy," in an early stage of a growth curve that would see it becoming larger,

mature, more powerful; or, it was described as being merely "a minor branch of American,"[11] a small fragment of the totality that was the culture of the Americas. In either construction, the emphasis for Canadian critics was on protecting, fostering, and interpreting the fragile nature of Canadian culture as a way of defining their own professional (and national) activities while trumpeting its strengths and its progress as a way of ensuring a vital profession for the future. In this conception of the literature of Canada--in which no less than the foundations of a national spirit were at stake-- Sime's work in urban women's lives and issues was repeatedly deemed not Canadian enough. Her status as single, immigrant woman made her also intellectually marginal: she could never be a true Canadian writing truly Canadian fiction. Thus Sandra Campbell explains that Canada Chaps, was "relegated to the margins on the basis of the author's gender and nationality"[12] and she quotes a 1917 Saturday Night review in which it was suggested that "the publisher would have been better to have had the stories written by a man and a Canadian."[13] Critical expectations of a wholesome, wide open Canada, too, were exportable and proved the proclamations of the Earlier Sifton era: Sister Woman was reviewed in the Times Literary Supplement in a similar vein, described as "studies...[in which] there is not very much specially Canadian about them."[14] Our Little Life was panned in the same publication for Sime's inability to convey ideas about "Canadian patriotism and the growing self-consciousness of a young nation.[15]" Good Canadian fiction was about a certain kind of sanctioned Canadian place; it was written by a genuinely Canadian writer. Personal indigenity and the wholesomeness of the place guaranteed the mimetic function of the work as bodies of fiction stood in for the best of the nation.

Sime's work was not championed in her own time for its essential "un-Canadianness." Later her work was effectively effaced in the entrenchment of the nationalist aesthetic in the rubric of an essentially modernist one, that, in Sandra Djwa's words, "brought international standards of literary taste to a national literature still in the process of development"[16] and stabilized these standards in large-scale works of reference,

in anthologies, and in university curricula. But these "international" standards, as we have been taught by feminist scholars of modernism, held deeply entrenched protocols defining meritorious, universal, literary production beneath their avowals of objectivity. In Canada the tenets of high modernist criticism were conflated with the discourse of the outdoors to once again, produce a yearning for work that was at once distinctly Canadian, universal,[17] and apolitical. By the centenary of confederation these had been combined in Frye's "Conclusion" to the Literary History of Canada[18], a landmark document fixing in time what Charles Altieri calls "selective memories of traditions or ideals,"[19] and affixing these to structures of cultural power. Frye's "Conclusion" was necessarily the jewel in the crown of a large national reference project that distilled the essences of good Canadian writing for ready access in classrooms, on campuses, and in public libraries nationwide. As McCarthy points out, this, "the most powerful version of Canadian literary history of the past quarter century"[20] was a logical outgrowth, or a distillation of the critical groundwork of academics of Sime's era.

Once forgotten in the wave of critical energy expended in the early part of the century to define nation, Georgina Sime's work remained so, as the national imperatives of post-confederation and early twentieth century were remobilised in the years around the Canadian centenary and cast into the future. Searching for, then finding, her papers made it necessary to reconsider the nationalist conceptions of value I was schooled on and to begin to think about an archival pragmatics that would mobilize what Graham Good describes disparagingly as a "rhetoric of marginality"[21] to create a space for the hearing of the previously unheard--or unlistened to--articulations of marginal women, forcing the reconsideration of the politics and legacy of Sime's silencing, the context of this cultural forgetting, the personal, sexual, and racial weight of valued expectations of nation or of taste. Georgina Sime is a vital and important writer in almost any conception of value; she is also, however, for my purposes, an important theoretical figure because the negotiations she made in her own life between the demands of her life and the possibilities of her art, between the need to support herself and the need to express herself, between the need for

secrecy and the need for openness, have necessarily been mirrored in my own reflexive critical project, and required me to use the critical methodology of this project, developed as a consequence of her difficulty, to begin to locate a feminist theory of recuperation--including a politics of value--that makes ties to the social and to the immediate both plausible and possible.

Georgina Sime accomplished two very important things in her lifetime: she wrote about women in Canada and she kept on writing about women in Canada. On these points she refused to negotiate. She was made uncomfortable by critics who chose not to read as she prescribed but she insisted on writing and on keeping on writing despite all, despite her problems in getting taken seriously, in getting published, despite the challenges to her work and art of her increasing infirmity, her blindness and finally her virtual isolation. Georgina Sime had a vision and a stubbornness, a conviction about the possibilities of women's lives that she had to share, and like other women writers, she worked out ways to speak from the sidelines, to participate in debates, to articulate the unspeakable through variations on genre, mode, and form, along the way demanding that we take the stories of women's lives seriously, that we take their work, their concerns, and their accommodations, seriously. Like other women writers, Georgina Sime engaged in personal negotiations to allow her work to go forward, like using pseudonyms when necessary and developing two bodies of work, one to pay the bills (in her case lecturing) and one to satisfy the writer within. Some negotiations, however, were destined to fail precisely because of the disingenuousness of the critical rhetoric of her time that developed ways of articulating the value of containable, explainable textual practices, but ignored their difficult corollaries. Georgina Sime, for example, was praised for her facility with realism, that is, for her ability to write in the realist mode, a mode that was valued in her time as a genre suitable for the projection of nation-based values. Ironically, however, this mode valued for its objective rendering of totality and its ability to encode and to circulate distinctly Canadian values, representative experiences, and heroic types could also carry the threateningly un-national, as in the case of both Sister Woman and

Our Little Life. Some of her works, then, were valued for Sime's ability as a writer, but devalued for their content. This is perhaps too great a simplification of a subjective and lengthy process, but the essential point stands: critical imperatives of form upon which texts are valued were often, in Sime's time (and later), underpinned by notions of content, by critical advocacy against those subversive or unwholesome topics *not talked about* in valuable discourses of nation.

The problem for feminist recuperation comes down to the possibilities and problems of theorizing content, of valuing information without privileging what has been disparaged as mere sociology and without doing away completely with notions of the aesthetic. But as Rachel Blau DuPlessis points out, "literature as a human institution is, baldly, organized by many ideological scripts"[22] that weave and sway between notions of use and demands of art, for "[a]ny literary convention--plots, narrative sequences, characters in bit parts--as an instrument that claims to depict experience, also interprets it. No convention is neutral, purely mimetic, or purely aesthetic."[23] Beginning to articulate or to theorize the nature of literary content is an excruciatingly difficult enterprise, because in order to theorize content it becomes necessary to embrace some idea of readable, transmittable intentionality that incorporates a social politic, an acknowledgement of the intended or apparent work of the text in the world. Such an awareness of intentionality demands a vocabulary for the discussion of women's writing both outside of formalist categories--that is, purely attention to form--as well as outside of the perceived transparency of the documentary: it demands the ability to position and to value early women's writing somewhere between pure aesthetics and pure instrumentality. Arun Mukherjee articulates her experiences of reading/writing away from the exigencies of the formal:

> My own responses to works of literature were often disallowed by the overall climate of the profession. For instance, while I responded to a work of fiction on the basis of what I would call my ethical consciousness, the

> academic papers that I had to produce were based on the so-called formal aspects of the work. I wondered why the critical work on a book ignored aspects that seemed the most important to me, such as poverty, exploitation, social inequality, social and political conflict, imperialism and racism (gender as a separate category came much later for me).[24]

She confesses that it is "moral passion, or what one might call social consciousness, of the writer that engaged me most deeply in literary texts," for "literature...is not a 'confection' to be admired for its taste and texture. Rather, in Kenneth Burke's phrase, literature is 'equipment for living.' It is someone speaking rather than a cold, dead objet d'art."[25] What draws Mukherjee to texts and keeps her interest is predicated on the intentional, a concept we have been taught to avoid precisely because it demands a turn away from the safe haven of the literary artifact into the messy domains of biography, history, politics.

Paying attention to content and taking some notion of intentionality into account means, suddenly, the need to deal with all kinds of contradictions, with difficult unassimilable, unrepresentative textual behaviours. Theorizing content, or aestheticizing content, means learning a vocabulary to speak about Sime's "good" women with numerous sexual partners, her poor women who live worthwhile lives in slums, her older women who regret their life-long loss of sexual contact even if such contact would have meant living with and in alcoholism and its attendant abuses. Pragmatically, however, contradiction is devilishly unteachable, much more difficult to convey, and less satisfying for many students than sealed, circular, straightforward theories of texts, than the comfort of critical scientism. My work with Georgina Sime, a difficult subject for biographical and critical explorations, has required the use of the contradictions engendered by archival information as a proving ground for theories. Sime's recalcitrance lies in part in what seems like her generic restlessness, her search for an fitting voice and a form to articulate the many rhythms and resonances of women's lives in the Canada of her time. It lies in the misinformations of her life, her unwillingness to reveal her age, for example, an oversight

that still haunts her cataloguing data and allies her with a much younger generation of artists.[26] It lies, too, in the many secrets of her life and her relationships, many of which we will never know. This designation of difficult, however, rests primarily on the inflexibility of the protocols we bring to the valuing of literary work. When we cast her as difficult, we leave out an implied phrase *"to fit in."* When we ask, *"Was she a good writer?"* we mean *"in terms of a Canadian literary scene as we understand it, in the terms by which it has been described,"* demanding an answer in terms that can only be a disservice to the work that constituted her career and her legacy.

Despite my work, Georgina Sime's *bios* remains sketchy: while I reconstructed the details of Sime's family's past and its connections in Edinburgh, her relationship to Mrs. Oliphant the Victorian novelist, the fact of her liaison with Chipman, her enduring friendship and collaboration with Nicholson, the substance of the Grant Richards archive, and while I recovered the archive of her writing, much remains to be done, particularly the details of her life in the closed circle of the English enclave of Westmount in Montreal. Where did she live? Who did she sleep with? What are the details of her connection with Chipman? What did he mean to her personally? Professionally? Why were letters of 1913 sent from 552 Pine Avenue West, the home of F.P. Walton, Dean of Law at McGill? As Sandra Campbell asks, "Was she guest? Governess?"[27] And what of her almost twenty-year tenure at the Mount Royal Hotel, advertised as a place with "1000 rooms---1000 baths."[28] And what to make of her copious correspondence with Walter de la Mare in the era of World War II, and through him her tangential connections to other figures of her time.

In the time it has taken to complete this project, in this form, much has shifted in the academic terrain as well as in the knowledge of Georgina Sime. In 1989 when I began to be interested in Sime, very little was known of her, apart from a fleeting mention in the Literary History of Canada[29], since then her accomplishments have been monumentalised in the Dictionary of Literary Biography[30] and The Feminist Companion to Literature in

English[31]. Two of her works, Sister Woman[32] and Our Little Life[33] have been reprinted and made available to a general reading public. When I began this project, too, archival methodology seemed millennia older: researchers relied on card catalogues; microfiche represented a monumental leap into a technical age, and older library holdings were just beginning to be catalogued on computers. Standard beginning points for information on the work of Canadian women writers of Sime's era were the Literary History of Canada[34], the Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature[35] and Reginald E. Watters' A Checklist of Canadian Literature and Background Materials 1628-1960[36]. Checking the British Museum General Catalogue[37] covered off editions printed in Canada or the dominions, while the National Union Catalogue[38] yielded information on American editions. Microforms and microform collections were considered "an enormous new resource for scholars and researchers in the humanities.[39] Now computers have made basic searches faster and easier; e-mail and the World Wide Web have made exchanges of information and networking instantaneous and have attempted to organize the landfill of information online. Access, or proximity to information, has made possible a return to the archives, with considerable theoretical ramifications, as Warkentin and Murray explain in their editorial prefacing a special edition of Canadian Literature on early Canadian texts:

> Throughout the western world, many literary theorists of the mid-century reacted against the antiquarian, editorial, historical scholarship by concentrating criticism on the text and nowhere else. But at the present time we are seeing a return to historical scholarship in its various forms and schools: the "new literary history," "new historicism", "cultural materialism," "social archaeology."[40]

New information is important to the feminist recuperative project; it tests critical certainties, seeping into their mortar and crumbling their foundations. But information alone has its theoretical limits, as the following explanation of the mammoth task of a

particular diarist named Robert Shields, suggests. Described as a man "driven by compulsions,"[41] he has recorded his life in five-minute intervals since 1972:

> Stored in 81 cardboard boxes and running to more than 37.5 million words, the diary records every event in Shield's [sic] life during the past 24 years. Every expense. Every trip. Every bowel movement. Everything you can't print in a family newspaper....Taped to the pages recording his travels, financial transactions and philosophical ruminations are pennies he's found on the sidewalk, nose hairs...grocery-store receipts, meal labels and the compete text of Jasmine Nights, an erotic novel he ghost wrote.[42]

Shields's mountain of facts and artifacts relating to his life remain just that: facts, data that cannot stand in for the real flesh-and-blood man, cannot recreate his aspirations and disappointments, cannot interact with others. A provisional feminist archival pragmatics, then, is not just about efficient ways of gathering data on lost women, but on coming to understand the meaning to be made both from them and from the exercise. In Sime's case, the questions of why and how she was "lost" yield as important cultural information as her place of birth or her date of death and can begin to get at the underpinnings of naturalized notions of literary value, expectations of texts. Georgina Sime's recalcitrance as a figure points up the difficulties of fulfilling the recuperational contract, of articulating the multiple possibilities of her life and work writing with the tools we have at our disposal, tools that leave no place for a discussion of her compelling strength or the tremendous pressure she exerts-- both as a woman and as a writer--on the very institutional and critical categories that confine her and exclude her even as they attempt to describe her.

Perhaps the solution, then, is not to know more, but to know differently.

Biographical and textual information, or first order archival work, acts as a thread

from outside, a check and a balance in the theoretical machine, constantly grounding inquiry, challenging its bold assumptions, perhaps provoking a wholesale reconceptualization of literary historical enquiry in order to leave room for discussions of what women did and how they did it, not merely what they did not do, how they did not measure up. Speaking of the life and work of a writer like Georgina Sime demands that, as a critic, one assert such apparently naive and uncritical statements as "feelings matter," to argue that content and context have consequences both in the lives of individuals and in conceptions of the value of art. Through an examination of Georgina Sime's refusal to buy into a politics of literature demanding women's silence, this document has, I hope, argued for some kind of a critical conflation of the discourses of aesthetic value and feminist social value[43] by teasing out of an unwritten history some of the material consequences of the evaluative discourse of nation. Georgina Sime repeatedly questions the tenets of Canadian literary value of her time, and I would like to argue, of later times, through her use of an "unfamiliar ordinary" to her own artistic and social ends, through her insistence that Canadian art could be made not only from the textures of a bleak and windswept landscape or from a verdant, fertile expanse peopled by model types, but also from the contradictions of community, the messy, lonely, compromises of the individual, perhaps invisible, life. The exceedingly potent cultural myths of cleanliness, of wholesomeness, of a land tied together by rails from sea to shining sea, created and fielded in the critical writings of Sime's contemporaries worked to militate against the evaluation and incorporation of Sime's writing into the nationalist criticism of her time and into its knowledge about the limits of representative Canadian texts. These myths are tremendously long-lived, and continue to underpin, in overt and in subtle ways, much criticism of our own time. Sime's writing works out of the demographic context of her life lived in (what was then) Canada's largest city to challenge the apparent seamlessness of myth by insisting that the unclean not only exists, but matters, amid the spaces of the wholesome, that lack and want and ignorance thrive in the niches of plenty; her work reminds us of the ground that can be overlooked by the ambitions of literary theorizing preoccupied with concepts of totality and order. But first we need to admit Sime's spaces

of compromise operated--and still operate--not only "out there," displaced in a homogeneous Third World of despair, in the barrios of South America or in the ghettos of Calcutta, but also in our own geographical space on isolated Indian reserves in British Columbia, for example, where there is no mail delivery, where a visit by the public health nurse once a month is the extent of the medical care promised to all citizens of the province, it exists in the schools of Vancouver where hot breakfast/hot lunch programs and extended school opening hours (including weekends and holidays) have been instituted to care for children who have no other safe place to go.

The point is that the difficulties and problems raised by figures like Georgina Sime do not have purchase merely in the historical and in the theoretical, but also matter in the here and now; the point is that critical work locked in a romance of landscape, in the "objectivity" of good taste, or in feminist work defined by stringent definitions of activism must necessarily overlook or flatten the import of the everyday life lived, in most cases, outside these narrow bounds. The rhetoric that structures a 1992 collection of essays called A Few Acres of Snow: Literary and Artistic Images of Canada[44] would be a case in point: its introduction asserts that Canada is "no vacant Eden" but rather a difficult, mysterious--and above all cold--setting for culture and for acculturation of the individual, for "beneath the blankets of snow lies a Canadian land endowed with considerable wealth, but which yields its wealth only reluctantly....It requires stubbornness to survive its periodic displays of elemental fury, and patience to discover its beauty and hidden resources."[45] I have chosen this collection and this quotation to show the tenacity of the twinning of literature and art with landscape as both a site for art and as a testing ground for pioneering mettle, the necessity of the display of what these editors term "topophilia" to great Canadian art. The reductive--but highly teachable--binaries of "man vs. man" or "man vs. environment" through which I came to understand the workings of literature, are, the products of specific critical legacies that are, finally, disrespectful to the experiences and the literary production of early Canadian women writers.

It is easy to attribute such displays of critical single mindedness (that figure Canadian literature in terms of a simplified, gendered, relationship to a hostile land) to the difficulties of interdisciplinary work, to the contributions of ill informed critics or to work that has been poorly researched; however, such a critical shrug ignores the operative politic of Canadian studies and Canadian literature that has fielded a range of sanctioned experiences--both intratextual and extratextual--as a way of defining a discipline. Critical rhetoric that repeatedly characterizes Canada as a sort of challenging utopia where the "right kinds" of people may prosper must inevitably deny experience beyond the land, must ignore once again, as it did in Sime's time, the seamy underbelly of the city, the import of sexual power, the operative racial politic that leads us to believe that poverty and racism exist somewhere else, somewhere beyond the shining discourses of nation. We have been so conditioned as critics, then, by the bounds of good taste, by the Canadian myth of plenty not to peer at the unseemly, not to waste time on inappropriate, second-rate, or unwholesome material, that we have little vocabulary for the discussion of, or the evaluation of, messages, for the critical import of the information imparted by literary works.

The humanist purchase of literary study that fosters and displays the development of good taste and cultural understanding coupled with what Suzanne Clark sees as the modernist gendering of ideology[46] (or the dichotomizing of the political and the cultural) has had significant effects on the reading of women's literary production, particularly, it seems in the context of the history of Canadian criticism in which it was necessary to develop a cultural telos, a rationale for evaluating the importance of the writing engendered here in order to display the solidity of cultural inheritance. However, Clark writes, such an "exclusion of everything but the forms of high art acted like a machine for cultural loss of memory;"[47] What was lost to the Canadian and feminist agendas in the shadow of nation or in the sands of formalism is constituted not only of the textual restlessness of women writers, of information on the contradictory lives of real Canadian women, but also the apparatus by which we might understand them: this loss of memory

of context means that dangerously ambivalent women like Sime with unwholesome content and "experimental" form (and here I mean experimental in terms of changing and changeable--she was not only an essayist and playwright, but also a short-story writer and novelist, a writer endlessly experimenting with the projection of herself and her message as a writer) who cannot be coopted into critical/national progress models must necessarily be left outside of literary discussions.

Ideas about the forgetting of possible sites--and strategies--of representation through the working outward of mannered criticism, spiral back into the critical project by inflating the limits of the "second rate" and reading its cultural work as dangerously outside of parameters of value. My experience with the archive of the life and writing of Georgina Sime has suggested the opposite, that contradiction is excruciatingly important, particularly to the production of feminist literary knowledge. My work with Sime has suggested the need to embrace the "meaningless" precisely for its uncanny ability to pierce, in Patricia Williams' words, "the myth of a purely objective perspective, the godlike image of generalized, legitimating others [that] are too often reified in law as 'impersonal' rules and 'neutral' principles, presumed to be inanimate, unemotional, unbiased, unmanipulated, and higher than ourselves."[48] It is through the objective, necessarily authoritative, voice that hidden "models of legitimacy"[49] are made available, and operate to make visible, make valuable, those textual experiences and expressions pertinent to their world view. "Mediocre" texts and "meaningless" criticism can provide a glimpse behind the facade of objectivity and the gendered constructions of textual merit.

The problems of feminist recuperation--as demonstrated by the difficulties of discussing Sime's work under the constructions and legacy of early Canadian criticism--engage with all kinds of questions, but return to questions of value and evaluation in ex-centric sites, a term post-colonial critics have been using to designate cultural spaces physically removed--and necessarily different--from sites of "high" cultural production, from centres of "literarity." Places such as Canada and Australia where criticism for many

years was panoptic, at once interested in the present and involved in the construction of indigenity, of home-grown tradition, are useful because here the threads of valuation lie close to the surface and assertions of value and the outline of the domains of literature have been stridently offensive, constituting a marking off, a consolidation of a national idea and ideal. The ever-present facts of the fielding and guarding of related versions of nationhood make the problems of discussing textual value in Canada different from discussing them in the context, for example, of a literary movement like Modernism that has ties primarily to an international vision of literature. What texts and textual strategies are we therefore to take seriously?[50] Georgina Sime's emplacement in the context of an emerging national literature, her position as woman writer in Canada ignored within conventions of gendered intellectuality and discourses of distinctiveness related to the progress of the Canadian nation, means that her work--and her recuperation--must be considered carefully in this context. Clearly, she cannot be recuperated and revalued within a feminist aesthetic that privileges the anti-realist, "experimental" text[51] because such an emplacement would elide issues of her own day. But if her life and her work are to be discussed--and perhaps taught--in the context of an academic institution, she must somehow be entered into an understandable, productive axiology of value--that incorporates both her textual and social work and the challenges to concepts of value her troubling life and equally troubling recuperation raise--as a hedge against her production and reproduction as a purely other figure, a merely messy woman who temporarily troubles prevailing paradigms but who can continue to be contained under notions of the "second rate" or the reactionary. Attention to her content and context as well as her negotiations with form and with her perceptions of Canada render difficult any containment of the ramifications of the questions she raises to issues of nation, value, gender. The archive of her life and writing challenges the simplicity of characterizations of feminist lives and preoccupations, as well as the straightforwardness of women's contributions to discourses of nation, while the biographical and bibliographical questions her simultaneous presence and absence provoke challenge feminist recuperational strategies underwritten by a belief in a weight of information, without a drive to

interrogation, as in itself recuperative.

The recuperational contract has a number of demands: the first is that first order biographical and bibliographical work be done; the second, is that a productive categorical or theoretical home be found for works to enable discussion; the third is that the provisional nature of these discussions be recognized and encouraged. Like the work of other women writers, minority writers, even marginalized male writers, Georgina Sime's work speaks to us even as it refuses to fit within sanctioned reading models and classical notions of literary value; her work speaks to us *because* it refuses the easy certainties of tradition. But playing with tradition, and playing with value, are dangerous games because they run roughshod over the terrain between the purely visceral and the highly cultured response, along the way provoking questions that are difficult to answer by unsettling the loaded notions of commonality and humanity that underscore our disciplinary foundations and mark our claims about the discipline of English. My work with the life and work of Georgina Sime begins within the powerfully nationalist trajectory of Canadian criticism of the early-twentieth century and capitalizes on strategic critical alliances to consider the following questions: what were (and are) the possibilities for valued textual existence beyond and behind the fires of nationalist rhetoric? How are such possibilities gendered? And what are the strategies of negotiation developed by women writers to cope with the expectations of such gendered (im)possibilities? The answers to these questions lie in transition, in the need to move both from the "scientific" stability of form and the neo-scientific purchase of contemporary high theory in order to speak cogently of women's choices about life and work. The answers are, in part, in the very process of questioning, in the attempt to frame answers that theorize the ephemeral and emotional realms of story, the unquantifiable realm of the personal, and the baldly untheorizable realm of feelings. The answers are in a renewed attention to a pragmatics of the archives that begins to recast existing conceptual frameworks with regard to the valuing of the writing of early Canadian women.

Notes

1. Author of Canada and the Canadian Question (1891), Smith was convinced Canada was not viable as a nation and supported it annexation with the U.S.

2. Arnold Haultain, Canadian Magazine 1904, cited in S.E.D. Shortt, The Search for an Ideal: Six Canadian intellectuals and their convictions in an age of transition, 1890-1930 (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976) 3.

3. Shortt 3.

4. See Dermot McCarthy, "Early Canadian Literary Histories and the Function of a Canon," Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value, ed. Robert Lecker (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1991) 31-45. In this essay McCarthy reads the cultural work of a number of early anthologies of Canadian literature: E.H. Dewart's Selections from Canadian Poets (1864), W.D. Lighthall's Songs of the Great Dominion (1889), Roy Palmer Baker's A History of English-Canadian Literature to the Confederation (1920), Archibald MacMechan's Head-Waters of Canadian Literature (1924), Logan and French's Highways of Canadian Literature (1924), Lionel Stevenson's Appraisals of Canadian Literature (1926), and Lorne Pierce's An Outline of Canadian Literature (1927).

5. McCarthy 33.

6. McCarthy 42.

7. McCarthy 42-43.

8. McCarthy 32-33.

9. Paul Lauter, "Race and Gender in the Shaping of the American Literary Canon: A Case Study from the Twenties," Feminist Studies 9 (1983).

10. Carole Gerson, "The Canon between the Wars: Field-notes of a Feminist Literary Archaeologist," Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value, ed. Robert Lecker (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1991) 47.

11. Sandra Djwa, "Introduction," Giving Canada a Literary History: A Memoir by Carl F. Klinck (Ottawa: Carleton UP/U of Western Ontario, 1991) x.

12. Sandra Campbell, "'Gently Scan': Theme and Technique in J.G. Sime's Sister Woman (1919)," ts., forthcoming in Canadian Literature.

13. Campbell 5-6. She is quoting Peter Donovan ('Tom Folio), rev. of Canada Chaps, by J.G. Sime, Saturday Night, 7 April 1917: 9.

14. Rev. of Sister Woman, by J.G. Sime, Times Literary Supplement 5 June 1919: 298.

15. Rev. of Our Little Life, by J.G. Sime, Times Literary Supplement 9 June 1921:371.

16. Djwa xiii.

17. McCarthy 44.

18. Northrop Frye, "Conclusion," in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, ed. Carl F. Klinck, 2nd ed. (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1976) pages.

19. Charles Altieri, "An Idea and Ideal of a Literary Canon," Canons, ed. Robert von Hallberg. (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1984): 41.

20. McCarthy 32-33.

21. Graham Good, "Northrop Frye and Liberal Humanism," Canadian Literature 148 (Spring 1996): 76.

22. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 2.

23. DuPlessis 2.

24. Arun Mukherjee, Oppositional Aesthetics: Readings from a Hyphenated Space (Toronto: Tsar, 1994) viii.

25. Mukherjee viii.

26.In his research for an entry on Sime in the Dictionary of Literary Biography, WH. New fund that her date of birth was not the 1880 that had always been reported, but 1868.

27. Sandra Campbell, letter to K. Jane Watt, 29 August 1990.

28. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 3 July 1942.

29. Note to LHC

30. W.H.New, "Jessie Georgina Sime," Dictionary of Literary Biography: Volume 92: Canadian Writers, 1890-1920. (New York: Gale, 1990) 356.

31. Virginia Blain et al., The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) 984-5.

32. J.G. Sime, Sister Woman (1919; Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1993).

33. J.G. Sime, Our Little Life (1921; Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1994).

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38. National Union Catalogue Pre-1956 Imprints (London: Mansell, 1977).

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40. Germaine Warkentin and Heather Murray, "Editorial: 'Is Winter My Country" Canadian Literature 131 (Winter 1991):10.

41. "Man plugs away on biggest diary," Prince George Citizen 27 March 1996: 19.

42."Man plugs" 19.

43. See Rita Felski, "Introduction," Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989) 1-18.

44. Paul Simpson-Housley and Glen Norcliffe, ed., A Few Acres of Snow: Literary and Artistic Images of Canada (Toronto: Dundurn, 1992).

45. Simpson-Housley and Norcliffe 1-2.

46. Suzanne Clark, Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word (Bloomington: U of Illinois P, 1991).

47. Clark 6.

48. Patricia Williams, The Alchemy of Race and Rights (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991) 11.

49. Williams 9.

50. The question is Clark's. She writes, "what texts are we to take seriously? Modernist sanctions against the personal and the sentimental continue as a political unconscious of criticism" (13).

51. Felski 2.

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Appendix 1
Checklist of Georgina Sime Papers

Preamble

This brief checklist gives an indication of the collection of papers, housed temporarily in the vault at the Langley Centennial Museum and National Exhibition Centre, given to me in the Spring of 1990 by Mary Nicholson, wife of Frank Carr Nicholson. Subsequent communication with Mary revealed that Sime had no literary executor; indeed few relatives or friends survived her and without the constant ministrations of Nicholson, none of her work of the 1940's and later would have come into print. I have lost touch with Mary: recent letters to her home have gone unanswered.

Citation Form

Citations may contain the following categories of information in the following order: :

- Title of document
- Name under which it was presented:
- Type of document (typescript or manuscript)
- Number of pages in document
- Date of document (if known)
- Date Designation of 1,2,3 or 4
- Return address on document
- Other pertinent information:

Rationale for Citation Form:

Over the course of her career, Georgina Sime released her work under a variety of names: A. de Silva, Jacob Salviris, Angela Graves, Allison Craig, J.G. Sime, and finally Georgina Sime. Each name corresponds with certain sets of social exigencies: Jacob

Salviris reflects the need to use a masculine name in association with serious intellectual work; Angela Graves, (used on her play, "Love's Revenges," a play about a long-time love affair between a secretary and her married employer, a doctor) builds a space between Sime's lived reality in a markedly similar circumstance, and her fictional worlds. Georgina Sime was the name under which Sime finished her career; it is also the name to which she was referred throughout her life, although sometimes this was shortened to Georgie. These names can be roughly correlated with dates: Jacob Salviris was used publicly only in the period of her writing for the University Magazine in the era of the first world war although she used it as a sort of meditating persona in her letters to Nicholson until some years later.; J.G. Sime was the name she used in association with her writing for the bulk of her career.

Few of the Sime papers are dated. To give an indication of their estimated dates in this checklist, I have included date designations as follows:

- 1: indicates the period between 1907 and 1919
- 2: indicates the period between 1920 and 1928
- 3: indicates the period between 1929 and 1938
- 4: indicates the period between 1939 and 1950.

An important aid in dating the Sime materials has been return addresses sometimes listed on the title pages of the documents. These addresses can be correlated with return addresses on dated letters or with the dates provided by Sandra Campbell who did some digging in Montreal and managed to track Georgina Sime through city directories. She writes

> I've traced Jessie Sime in the Montreal downtown. In 1907/1908 and 1908/1909 she makes her first appearance as "Miss Sime" at the Canterbury Apts, 64 Durocher. She is not listed in the Lovell City

directory again until 1914/1915 when she is listed at apt. 5 at the same address. She appears at this address until 1919/20, when she is listed at apt. 31, 756 Sherbrooke St. West (The Grosvenor Apts.). This continues until 1928/29 when she is listed as Miss J.G. Sime, apt. 31, 1610 Sherbrooke West--the same place--Sherbrooke was renumbered. In 1930/31, the identification "authoress" was added! In 1932/33, she does not appear in the directory and does not reappear until 1938/39, when her address is the Mount Royal Hotel, 1455 Peel; 1947 is the last year of this listing, and there are no further entries.[1]

Other dates are significant: Frank Nicholson did not move to his home in the Lake District until after his retirement from Edinburgh University Library in 1939, so materials displaying his return address, "Idlethorpe, Lonsties, Keswick, Cumbria," can be no earlier than this date. Other materials have been dated in a much more subjective manner based on their appearance : Georgina Sime had one typewriter with a recognizable unevenness of type that she used up to the early twenties; another typewriter, owned, I believe, by a typist hired by Nicholson, yielded clean documents with rounded letters and large margins and dates from post-World War II era. Sometimes a batch of documents on similar topics will clearly have been produced on the same machine in the same era; occasionally, one of them will have a datable address affixed that can be used to date the whole series.

Checklist of Georgina Sime Papers

Autobiographcal Writings

[An Account of Myself] ts. 4.
An account of her early years, edited in Nicholson's hand.

"[This Girl Was I]." 292 pages. ts. 4.

"This Girl Was I: Part 2." By Georgina Sime. ms. 4.
In Nicholson's hand. Includes "Extracts from Mr. Walter de la Mare's proposed 'Introduction' to 'This Girl Was I.'"

Fiction

Novels

"The Lady Without Means: A Period Piece" by [A]G. Sime. Author of In A Canadian Shack and Our Little Life. About 77,000 words. 307 pages. ts. 4.

"The Morn of Youth." By J.G. Sime. 425 pages. ts. 4.

"Tales of a Poultry Yard." By J.G. Sime. 95 pages. ts. 1.
Tales indicating the mimic nature of the poultry yard. Return address indicated as: 64 Durocher Street, Montreal.

"Vera: A Victorian Girlhood." By Georgina Sime and Frank Nicholson. 563 pages. ts. 4.
Part 1: The Gabled Saints
Part 2: The Homestead and the Saints
Part 3: Arleigh Crescent and the Homestead."
Part 4: Port Maillot."
Part 5: Back in London."
Return address listed as: F.C. Nicholson, Idlethorpe, Keswick, Cumbria.

Plays

"A Kiss." 14 pages. ts. 1.

"Babs." 13 pages. ts. 1.
Set in 1915 as a soldier prepares to leave his young family to go off to war.

"Gas and Ether." By J.G. Sime. 15 pages. ts. 1.

Return address listed as: 64 Durocher Street, Montreal.

"Life." By J.G. Sime. 11 pages. ts. 1
Return address listed as: 64 Durocher Street, Montreal.

"Love's Revenges." By Angela Graves. 61 pages. ts. 1 or 2.
Given the nature of this play--a chronicle of a longstanding love affair--it is not surprising that it was listed pseudonymously.

"The Natural Cluster." 51 pages. ts. 1 or 2.

Short Stories

"A Present from the Past." 12 pages. ts. 2 or 3.

"Art Imperturbable." By J.G. Sime. 9 pages. ts. 2.

"A Confession." 8 pages. ts. 2.

"The Criminal Lawyer's Story." By J.G. Sime. 10 pages. ts. 3.

"Entretenue." By J.G. Sime. 6 pages. ts. 1 or 2.
Carbon copy contains "From Grant Richards , 8 St. Martin's Street, WI2."

"Half a Million of Dollars: A Fantasy." By. J.G. Sime. 29 pages. ts. 2. Copy 1.
Return address listed as: 756 Sherbrooke West, Montreal.

"Half a Million of Dollars: A Fantasy." By J.G. Sime. 24 pages. ts. 2. Copy 2.
A revised and retyped copy with the following address stamped on page 1: "Robert Thomas Hardy, Play Broker and Author's Agent, 25 West Forty-Second Street, New York, NY."

"A Happy Ever After Story." By J.G. Sime. 10 pages. ts. 2.
Return address listed as: F.C. Nicholson, 35 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh.

"A Maker of Millions." By J.G. Sime. 9 pages. ts. 3.
Sent to MacLean Publishing Company on 29 November 1932. Returned 7 December 1932.

"Miss Gazello: (Confidential!)" By J.G. Sime. 3 pages. ts. 2.

"A Mood and A Tense." By J.G. Sime. 5 pages. ts. 2.

"The Mother." By J.G. Sime. 5 pages. ts. 3.

"Motley's the Wear." By J.G. Sime. 6 pages. ts. 2.
Return addresses listed as: 756 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, and 35 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh.

"On Beaus." 3 pages. ts. 1 or 2.

"Red Roses." By J.G. Sime. 5 pages. ts. 2. Copy 1.

"Red Roses." ts. 5 pages. ts. Copy 2..
On the first page is one of Sime's pseudonyms: "By Alison Craig, P.O. Box 664, Montreal, P.Q."

"Roger." By J.G. Sime. 16 pages. ts. 2.

"The Spy." By J.G. Sime. 9 pages. ts. 3 or 4.

"The Sinner." 6 pages. ts. 2.

"Stepping Westward: A Fourth Dimensional Story." By J.G. Sime. 13 pages. ts. 2.
Return address listed as: 756 Sherbrooke Street West.

"Suicide." By J.G. Sime. 9 pages. ts. 3.

Non-Fiction

Collections

"Adam's Helpmeet: An anthology, exhibiting what he has thought of her at divers times and in divers places." 120 pages. ts. 2. copy 1
This anthology is divided into five sections: Love and Marriage; Education, Art and Morality; Dress and Household Economy; Random Shafts and Amorous Pinches; Cold Criticism and Dicta Domini and contains quotations from the works of many writers and philosophers including Thackeray, Meredith, Heine, Schopenhauer, Fuller, La Rochefoucauld, Balzac, Southey's letter to Charlotte Bronte, Kant, Sterne, Hawthorne, Boswell.

"Adam's Helpmeet: An anthology, exhibiting what he has thought of her at divers times and in divers places." 120 pages. ts. 2. copy 2.

"Canadian Vignettes." By J.G. Sime. 12 pages. ts. 4

Subtitled "Snapshots at Life," this collection contains three vignettes: "In the Elevator," "The Boy and the Cop," and "Three in One." A transcript in Nicholson's hand is stapled to the collection.

"Market Maxims: by the Monna Lisa of the Marketplace." 130 pages. ts. 3.
Return address is listed as: 1610 Sherbrooke Street.

"Pebbles From the Brook." 104 pages. ts./ms. 1 or 2.
A collection of reflections on work and life. Includes a 4-page manuscript in Nicholson's hand, entitled "The Intellectual Asset."

Sketches

"Adam, Eve and the Serpent." By Georgina Sime. 4 pages. ts.4

"Antique World." By J.G. Sime. 4 pages. ts. 4.

"As It Happened." By J.G. Sime. 15 pages. ts. 4.

"The Boy and the Cop." By Georgina Sime. 2 pages. ts. 4.

"A Canadian Mining-Camp." By J.G. Sime. 8 pages. ts. 4.
Return address listed as: F.C. Nicholson, Idlethorpe, Keswick, Cumbria.

"Chateau Margaux." By Georgina Sime. 3 pages. ts. 4.
Return address listed as: F.C. Nicholson, Idlethorpe, Keswick, Cumbria

"The Daughter of Woman." By the author of "Rainbow Lights." 33 pages. ts. 1.
Return address: F.C. Nicholson, 6 Inverleith Terrace, Edinburgh.

"Evelyn: a psychic episode." By J.G. Sime. 12 pages. ts. 2.

"From Garret to Cellar." By J.G. Sime. 3 pages. ts. 3.
A carbon copy .

"From the Eloquent to the Glib." 3 pages. ts. 2 or 3.
Editorial changes in Sime's hand.

"Gee Ho, Dobbin!" 5 pages. ts. 3

"Happy Ending." By Georgina Sime. 13 pages. ts. 4.

"Hotel Scene in Canada." By Georgina Sime. 3 pages. ts. 4.

"I Hand it to the Feminists." By J.G. Sime. 4 pages. ts. 4.

Madame Puss." By Georgina Sime. 3 pages. ts. 4

"Modern Woman's Debit and Credit." By J.G. Sime. 33 pages. ts. 3.

"The Murder." By J.G. Sime. 10 pages. ts. 3.
Return address: 1610 Sherbrooke Street West.

"My Canadian Pigeons." By Georgina Sime. 10 pages. ts. 4.
Return address listed as: F.C. Nicholson, Idlethorpe, Keswick.

"My Canadian Pigeons: Third part." 5 pages. ms. 4.

"On Serving Food." 4 pages. ts. 2 or 3.
Editorial changes in Sime's hand.

"Res Domestica." By J.G. Sime. 4 pages. ts. 2 or 3.
Return address listed as: F.C Nicholson 52 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.

"Stewardess." By J.G. Sime. 8 pages. ts. 3.

"Shopping Scene." By Georgina Sime. 4 pages. ts. 4.
Represents the transformation to a new persona: on the title page, the "J.G." of J.G. Sime is crossed out and replaced with "Georgina."

"A Taste of Spinal Anaesthesia." 3 pages. ts. 3.

"A Taste of Spinal Anaesthesia." 2 pages. ms. 3.
Manuscript in Nicholson's hand.

"Tea at the London Zoo." By J.G. Sime. 7 pages. ts. 3. Copy 1

"Tea at the London Zoo." By J. G. Sime. 7 pages. ts. 3. Copy 2.
Return address listed as: F.C. Nicholson, Cowley Cottage, Davidson's Mains, Midlothian.

"Vignette." By Georgina Sime. 2 pages. ts. 4.

"A Vision of Earth: an Impression of News from Nowhere." By Jacob Salviris. 25 pages. ts. 1.
Return address listed as: F.C. Nicholson, c/o Miss Sime, 64 Durocher Street, Montreal, Canada.

"A Vision of Earth: an Impression of News from Nowhere." By Jacob Salviris. 26 pages. ms. 1.

"Woman." By J.G. Sime. 4 pages. ts.4.
Return Address: Mount Royal Hotel, Montreal.

"Woman in Search of Herself." By J.G. Sime. 5 pages. ts. 3.

Dream Records

"A Book For One Reader." 56 pages. ts. 3..

"A Dreamer's Breviary." By J.G. Sime. Being Part 1 of "Horn and Ivory." 209 pages. ts. 4.
Contains dreams "selected from the records of the very numerous dreams--upwards of a thousand--which visited me from October 1932 to March 1936. Return address listed as : The Mount Royal Hotel.

"A Dreamer's Diary" by J.G. Sime. Being Part 2 of "Horn and Ivory." 107 pages. ts. 4.

"Dream Records." 107 pages. ts. 4.
This typescript contains eleven pages of introduction and then the transcriptions of dreams from 24th August 1937 to 10 July 1938.

"Dreams of the World of Light." By Georgina Sime, author of The Land of Dreams. 141 pages. ts./ms. 4.

"Inez and Her Angel." By Georgina Sime and Frank Nicholson. 147 pages. ts. 4.

"The Human Radio." By J.G. Sime and F.C. Nicholson. 261 pages. ts. 4.
Dream recording begins 8 June 1940.

"The Receptive Organ." 25 pages. ms. 3 or 4.
In Nicholson's hand.

Miscellaneous Papers

File of dream records. [200 pages]. Recorded recountings of dreams. 3 or 4.

File of mixed notes. ms. 4.
This file looks like it may be early notes for Brave Spirits or perhaps some

other planned memoir. Georgina Sime's handwritten pages are interspersed with pages of transcription in Frank Nicholson's hand.

Mixed typescript notes. nd.
Includes parts of "Dream Zoo," an account of the menagerie of Georgina Sime's childhood.

Manuscript sections of "Vera."
Contains pages edited out of "Vera." Changes and notes in Nicholson's hand.

Mixed press clippings.

Letters

Frank Carr Nicholson to Georgina Sime

1924
1 letter

1931
8 letters

1932
5 letters

1951
1 letter.

Georgina Sime to Frank Nicholson

1913
All letters from this year are sent from 552 Pine Avenue West
6 letters

1914
All letters of this year sent from 64 Durocher Street, Montreal
6 letters

1925
May 4
From the Royal Hotel, 159 Rue de Rennes, Paris

August 21

From the North Western Hotel, Liverpool

11 letters
From 756 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal

1926
18 letters

1928
11 letters, some on letterhead from 756 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal

1929
3 letters
One is on letterhead from 756 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal

1945
All letters from this year are sent from Room 8121, Mount Royal Hotel, Montreal Canada.
31 letters

1946
Return address listed at the Mount Royal Hotel
59 letters

1947
Return address listed at the Mount Royal Hotel
113 letters

1948
Return address listed at the Mount Royal Hotel
43 letters

1950
Return address listed as: The Hill Cottage, Newton Abbott, Devon.
6 letters

1951
16 letters from Edstone, Wooton Wawen, Warwickshire, the place to which Sime moved after leaving Canada in 1950.

2 letters from Mount Royal Hotel, Montreal, to which she had presumably gone on holiday.

1952

6 letters

Other Letters to Georgina Sime

David Bland, letter to Georgina Sime, 16 July 1951.
Negotiations regarding the publication of Brave Spirits.

Other Letters to Frank Nicholson

E.M. Forster, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 2 December 1942.
Polite statement of disinterest in the typescript Nicholson has sent him to read.

Osbert Sitwell, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 19 August 1945.
Ask for his reminiscences of Wilfred Owen for a short account he is writing.

L.W. Sharp, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 5 November 1950.

John M. Dickie, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 22 June 1953.
On behalf of Chambers's Journal, thanks Nicholson for a review copy of A Tale of Two Worlds and for the corrected proofs of "Jane Welsh Carlyle."

Comments

One of the first things that comes to mind when perusing the documents that make up this collection is the constancy of Frank Nicholson's presence; proofreading, editorial emendations, and notes all display his careful handwriting. This presence increases over the course of time and alerts us to the intensely collaborative--and complicated-- nature of their partnership in the final years. As her eyesight deteriorated, their collaborations saw Sime's drafts moving from hand to hand across continents: she would send pages and pages of barely legible pencil marks on yellow paper from Montreal to her Nicholson's Keswick home. Here, he would transcribe the bits and pieces into his own hand, edit the handwritten text, and send it off to the typist who, incidentally, lived on the Isle of Man. The typescript would be returned to Sime in Montreal to be read to her by a woman hired for this purpose or would wait at Nicholson's home for Sime's yearly visit. Fortified by Mary Nicholson's food and ministrations, Nicholson and Sime would sit in his book-lined

den and read over the creations of the previous year, pausing to alter the text as necessary.[2]

The papers, as demonstrated by the increasingly complicated logistics of collaboration, chronicle Sime's increasing infirmity, especially the difficulties with her eyes. She learned to touch type late in her life in order to regain a measure of independence. Unfortunately, many of the papers she typed read as a sort of code. She could neither see what she had typed thus far nor could she tell if her fingers had strayed from the proper keys or if her paper had slipped. In a long letter to Nicholson in which Sime is relating the story of what became an article entitled "Jane Welsh Carlyle as My Mother Saw Her," Sime indicates the difficulties her loss of eyesight poses. After relating the initial episodes of her story, she writes " [I] Don't quite remember where I stopped 2 or 3 days ago and have no one at hand to read me the last sentences; you will be so considerate I know that you won't mind, if I begin again rather wide of the [m]ark: these accidents, alas, happen."[3]

It is Sime's late material that forms the bulk of materials in this collection. Indeed; the material is slimmest during Sime's earliest years in Canada. Letters are especially scarce; the ones that remain have been carefully marked by Nicholson and consist of meditations on art and on culture, but contain little of the personal.

Notes

1. Sandra Campbell, letter to K. Jane Watt 26 June 1990.
2. K. J. Watt, rev. of reprint of Sister Woman, Atlantis 18.1/18.2 (1992-1993)248-250.
3. Georgina Sime, letter to Frank Carr Nicholson, 31 March 1950.