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Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, eds., *Mapping the Margins: The Family and Social Discipline in Canada, 1700-1975*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004. Pp. xii + 412; illus. CDN\$29.95 (paper). ISBN: 0-7735-2729-X.

Reviewed by Lorraine Vander Hoef, Wilfrid Laurier University

Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau's thoroughly researched and contextualized study of the Canadian family effectively extends a growing number of revisionist historical projects in re-examining historiographical assumptions about the emergence of a modern society in Canada associated with the increasing division between church and state, the privatization and feminization of religion, the development of the free market economy, and the growing ethos of egalitarian individualism and self-determination. More particularly, this volume investigates the reigning "nuclearity thesis" propounded by historians of the family in the post-war period. Here, Peter Laslett receives the most frequent mention in identifying the narrowing of family ties with the incursion of modernity. By this standard interpretation, the traditional patriarchal family, structured by highly authoritarian and gendered social and economic obligations within broad kin and even non-kin networks, was displaced in industrial society by the modern, nuclear egalitarian family that was predicated on contractual and affectional connections among related individuals living within the same household. The privatization of the family, tracked by demographers in the census data, revealed a transfer of economic assistance from the family to the state. According to proponents of the "social control thesis," in this golden age of institutional building, traditional avenues of intergenerational dependence and support were weakened. In their enthusiasm to signal a new egalitarian construct of the family rooted in the expansion of married women's paid labour and the development of a public maternalism, according to Christie, historians of women's labour have surprisingly colluded with historians of the family to ignore the ways in which the patriarchal family continued to shape society. Similar to other social institutions, families were affected by variables of gender, age, health, religion, and status.

The contributors construct their historical and literary analyses on a wide range of documentary evidence from notarized household inventories, census and policy records, private collections of diaries and family letters, and literary writings. They argue that far from decreasing dependence on intergenerational and extended kin ties, industrialization led to more inclusive and complex definitions of the family. Economic need mediated by life-cycle changes and illness dictated reliance on wider kin and non-kin circles that continued to reflect the hierarchical and economic relations of the patriarchal family. Rather than being unseated by the sentimental family, according to these essayists the patriarchal family continued to dominate Canadian society until mid-way into the twentieth century. As Gauvreau points out, prompted at that time by a general crisis about the decline of the family, social scientists and social

historians were determined to uphold the ideal of a democratic and domesticated family unit whose origins they read back into the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. At the same time, however, they pathologized the nuclear family as victim of an overweening maternal influence. The wholesale result of these rather contradictory interpretive claims, the authors note, was to drive other economic and social constructions of the family to the margins of academic concern. As a result, historians of women and the family as well as cultural historians working across a variety of disciplines will find this well-written and thoroughly edited volume of value not only for the questions it raises about the discontinuities associated with modernity, but for its relocation of religious converts, spinsters, bachelors, orphans, stepchildren, unmarried mothers, the ill, the insane, and the aged who were very often in the hub of the Canadian family.

Bookended by the excellent historiographical work on this literature in Christie's introduction and Gauvreau's conclusion, many of the twelve essays in the volume benefit from their participation in broader studies. They are subdivided into three sections and further introduced by Christie. In the initial section on "Broken Families" which explores the marginalized identities of orphans, spinsters, stepchildren, and the widowed from the eighteenth into the twentieth centuries, some broad patterns emerge. Josette Brun, Nancy Christie, and Bettina Bradbury point out that only in rare instances did widowhood for either men or women lead to economic independence rather than reliance on kin or near kin relationships for credit or labour. Nancy Christie examines, for example, the continuing economic function of reciprocity in the nineteenth-century family by which primarily destitute widows and female orphans were forced to throw themselves at the mercy of wealthier, often distant kin, in what she identifies as family begging letters. Christie notes that "the language of affection and 'sensibility'" in family correspondence was part of a broader system of economic obligation and codes of "deference and subordination" as well as a deliberate strategy employed particularly by female kin to ensure support (71). As Peter Gossage points out provisionally in his essay "Marginal by Definition," since stepparents and stepchildren in Quebec were likely to be equally dependent on each other, blended families must be understood as participating like widows and orphans in complex roles of familial obligation.

Considering the evidence that now exists for the "longevity" of the nuclear family structure in rural Quebec, in the opening essay to "Bachelors and Spinsters," Olliver Hubert argues that as a "cultural construct," the "traditional" family was maintained initially through "community control" — that is, gossip, and in the latter part of the nineteenth century by an "elite discourse" that privileged the male breadwinner over the single male. From his reading of Ralph Merry's journal, Jack Little concludes alternatively that a radical religious conversion could sometimes upset family relations as well as the "patriarchal role" of the father, thus slowing the development of the modern nuclear family. Gwendolyn Davies similarly shows from diary and letter evidence that rather than a miserable state of self-absorption, illness, and isolation, spinsterhood offered an alternative to marriage through social and family service. Michele Stairs concludes from literary and census materials that unmarried sons and daughters on Prince Edward Island were at the economic centre, rather than the margins, of the Victorian family.

The final selections on "Institutions and Marginality" that look into the growing individualism and nuclearity of the family by the mid-twentieth century argue that far from being muscled from the scene by the eventual rise of the welfare state in Canada, the patriarchal family was a key force and agent of social discipline in Canada's institutional development. James Moran, David Wright, and Mat Savelli, for instance, remark that rather than a tool of social control, Ontario asylums were put to varied use by Victorian families who wished to alternately abandon or care for family members. Similarly, Denyse Baillargeon contends that orphanages in Quebec continued to uphold paternal rights to children so that adoptions remained rare, while unmarried mothers in Nova Scotia, according to Suzanne Morton, in many cases preferred to depend on family even after becoming eligible for provincial support in 1967. In

the final study, James Struthers identifies the successful construction of the single elderly as the marginalized poor deserving of the universal Guaranteed Income Supplement in order to contest the introduction of a "citizen's wage" in 1951 constructed around the "rights" of the male breadwinner to "a contributory, wage-related public pension plan" (372-3). Struthers' conclusion regarding the thoroughly gendered debate on pensioner entitlement points to the gendered construction of liberal discourses more broadly, now being tracked by feminists, social theorists, and philosophers investigating the racialized and gendered foundations of social contract theory.

At least two further margins are important to examine in testing the continuity of familialism, and the mark of an excellent study is that it would suggest further research in the same vein. Although illness does factor in several of the pieces, most notably in Little's article, more attention needs to be drawn to the gendering of illness in Victorian society in particular, for example in the construction of asthma in the lives of independent and New Women. Their "scientific" doctors very often helped to negotiate a reprieve for single women from family obligations and the rounds of domestic duty by prescribing a change of geographic location through broader kin and non-kin networks even when a wetter climate was suggested. Although a second line of research may require additional discourse analysis attentive to codes and conventions for articulating family violence, much like Christie uses in interpreting the language of sentimentality in family begging letters, one wonders how domestic violence, like illness and religious fanaticism, may also have led to increased dependence on broader kin and non-kin networks. Although the collection focuses on central and Eastern Canada at the exclusion of the Western provinces, clearly much is to be recommended in this revisionist project on the Canadian family that is well supported by documentary and literary evidence.