

'GENTLY SCAN'

Theme and Technique in J. G. Sime's "Sister Woman" (1919)

Sandra Campbell

JESSIE GEORGINA SIME (1868-1958) — a gender-neutral 'J.G. Sime' on the title page of her books and J. Georgina Sime to autograph seekers — was an important feminist writer active in Montreal circa 1907-1950.¹ *Sister Woman* (1919), her book of short stories, is a technically and thematically sophisticated landmark in women's writing in Canada.² In it, Sime created a ground-breaking work of fiction, one that dealt with unprecedented candour with changes in women's consciousness, occupational patterns and modes of life precipitated in Canada by the Great War. Its women characters—the hardy, shrewd, nurturing, lower-class women of Montreal, native and immigrant alike — held a particular appeal for Sime.

In *Sister Woman*, structure supports theme: twenty-eight stories are framed by a Prologue and an Epilogue. The stories are told by a woman to a male companion as *exempla* of women's multi-faceted need for self-realization and the support of men in changing a society whose norms have been hardest upon women, in particular single, working or lower-class women. As the female hero of Sime's 1921 novel *Our Little Life* puts it: "It's women alone have the poor toime."³ W. H. New has described the stories of *Sister Woman* as focused on female life at the margins, "an oblique education in the realities that the male norms of social order do not take into account and an implicit call for attitudinal reform."⁴ In addition, *Sister Woman* embodies Sime's belief that for the woman writer, an important element in transcendence over emotional suffering and gender inequity lies in art. That is to say, for Sime it lay in the leap of faith and affirmation of the spirit that artistic creation embodied. Sime, like many women writers, saw affinities between artistic and maternal creation.

An Anglo-Scot who came to Canada in 1907 on the eve of her fortieth birthday, Sime came of age as a writer during her four decades of Canadian residence. The evolving urban society of Montreal fascinated her. She came to see herself as a "near-Canadian,"⁵ that is to say, a writer focused on Canada whose perspective was rooted both in the cultural values of her British intellectual upbringing, and in the 'view from the margins' implicit in her status as an unmarried, self-supporting woman writer and office worker. Sime was thus a double outsider in the

Canadian society of the day: she was both an immigrant intellectual and an unmarried woman, without proximate family, living alone, a situation unusual for her era and class. As an artist and as a woman, however, she realized that those marginalized in a society can often analyse it more clearly because they are not blinkered by power and privilege.

Some crucial elements of Sime's biography, so long obscure and so vital to an understanding of her art, have been recovered by W. H. New and Jane Watt.⁶ Sime was born in Scotland. A cherished only child, she was brought up chiefly in London with several intervals on the Continent. Both her mother, Jessie Aitken Wilson, and her father, James Sime (1843-1895), a biographer of Goethe, were writers.⁷ Sime treasured childhood memories of such family friends as George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, and W. B. Yeats.

Through her mother, a collateral relative of the popular Victorian novelist Mrs. (Margaret) Oliphant and Sir Daniel Wilson (1816-1892), longtime professor at the University of Toronto, Sime attended Queen's College, London (an institution devoted to the education of women), and then trained in Berlin for a year to be a singer. At the age of eighteen, she returned to London. Her plans for a career in music gave way to a hunger for literary expression. By her own account, at this period the debate over the "New Woman" and the ideas of George Bernard Shaw and especially William Morris impressed her deeply.⁸ From her pen came a column for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, book reviews for the *Athenaeum* and reader's reports for publishers in London and Edinburgh, some of this under a male pseudonym, "Jacob Salviris."

After the death in 1895 of her father, her beloved "friend and counsellor,"⁹ Sime and her mother moved to the latter's native Edinburgh. The rigors of the next decade shaped Georgina Sime's vision of woman's capacity for struggle, fidelity and sorrow. The difficult years 1895 to 1907 spanned the financial and emotional travails of her mother's long illness and death. Sime also experienced in these years women's office work and love unvalidated by society, both major elements in *Sister Woman*. While in Edinburgh she worked as secretary to Dr. Freeland Barbour, an eminent gynaecologist. There Sime came into contact with many brilliant minds. For example, she served briefly as secretary to the visiting William James.¹⁰ Sime's perspective was therefore that of an intelligent, well-educated woman working in a 'subordinate' status as secretary. She moved in a world of ideas and yet was inevitably perceived by others as at its margins. Another event was to influence deeply her fiction and orient her to a concern with extra-marital love, maternity, and medical settings, elements rife in the stories of *Sister Woman*. According to Jane Watt, while Sime was working for Dr. Barbour, she came to know one of his most gifted students, Walter William Chipman, a young Canadian who was winning honours in the medical school at University of Edinburgh.¹¹ Sime and Chipman (1866-1950) were to have life-long emotional, intel-

lectual and occupational ties, ties with important consequences for Sime's life and art.

In 1907, after her mother's death, Sime came to Montreal, initially to visit: she was in fact to be based in Montreal until 1950, the year of Chipman's death.¹² By her own account, she initially worked for Walter Chipman, who had returned to Canada in 1900, where he had begun to establish himself as Montreal's premier obstetrician-gynaecologist.¹³ Tall, commanding and courtly, allied by marriage to the highest social circles of Montreal, Walter Chipman was by all accounts a fine surgeon, a gifted orator, an able administrator and a literary aficionado interested in Kipling.¹⁴ From early in the century until his death, he was a popular public speaker of international repute on women's health and maternity issues. He and Sime enjoyed a rich cross-fertilization of ideas: many of the stories of *Sister Woman* deal with such topics as pregnancy, illegitimacy, venereal disease and female fatigue, issues Chipman was addressing in the same period as a health professional.¹⁵ In addition, the available evidence points to a lifelong liaison between them, a liaison that perforce placed Georgina Sime in a rather isolated social position. This isolation helped to shape her particular feminist vision of art and society.

Accordingly, *Sister Woman*, like Sime's other books published after 1907, expresses her fascination with women's changing roles in Canada and elsewhere. For example, Sime's *The Mistress of All Work* (1916) is a practical household handbook for the single working woman.¹⁶ *Canada Chaps* (1917) is — despite the prescriptive masculinity of 'chaps' in the title of this series — a series of vignettes of Canadian men and women in wartime, both 'over there,' and on the home front.¹⁷ Sime's decision to include women's experience in a wartime chronicle made her forcibly aware that, while she lived in Canada, and was engaged by it, she could never be *wholly* of it. Reviews of her work emphasized this. In 1917, *Saturday Night's* male reviewer tartly relegated *Canada Chaps* to the margins on the basis of the author's gender and nationality:

. . . the publisher would have been better to have had the stories written by a man and a Canadian. Mrs. [sic] Sime not only has a distinct feminine touch in her stories of soldiers, but she is obviously a stranger to the finer points of Canadian life.¹⁸

By contrast, today's reader tends to be more positive about Sime's inclusion of war nurses and waiting wives and children in an account of Canadian heroism in the Great War.

BOTH *Canada Chaps* AND *Sister Woman* use the short-story mode. It is clear that, in Sime's aesthetic, the short-story form mirrored the multi-faceted disjunctions of urban female life in the early twentieth century. In her non-fiction, she wrote of the Montreal she knew:

... one feels in the cities [of Quebec], I think, the potentials 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.¹⁹

She reasoned that short fiction was the best medium to depict Montreal in a period of rapid social change:

Life in the cities of the New World is fluid, restless, like a kaleidoscope to which someone is perpetually giving a shake, and that is one of the interesting things about them.²⁰

The kaleidoscope image is at the heart of Sime's aesthetic in *Sister Woman*. Like a kaleidoscope, the stories 'gently scan' a Montreal of female writers, seamstresses, prostitutes, domestic servants, shopworkers, charwomen, ladies of leisure, paupers, unwed mothers and factory workers. In the twenty-eight stories, the narrator (who strives to give her characters a fair shake!) is usually depicted as a woman of status and situation similar to Sime's in these years. That is, she is an empathetic, intelligent, autonomous, single middle-class woman, one with special feeling for women whose role as mistress or prostitute is censured by 'polite society' of the day. The gynocentric empathy Sime valorises is emphasized by her epigraph for the volume, taken from Robert Burns's "Address to the Unco Guid":

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler, sister woman;

Sime's valorization of empathy and compassion, particularly by and for women, and her rejection of narrow and punitive moralism is echoed in the next two lines of the Burns poem, suppressed in her epigraph:

Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang
To step aside is human.

Gender concerns shape Sime's intricate structural design for the stories. The outer frame of Epilogue and Prologue presents three protagonists: a nameless man and woman, evidently companions, and a typewriter — for the woman is a writer. The frame narrator carries on — the kaleidoscope again — a multilevelled dialogue. Her interlocutors are alternately male and female, Canadian and British, real and fictional. On one level, the stories are presented to us as parables addressed to a man (and men in general) in reply to his query: "What do women want?" The Prologue is explicit:

"Well," I said, after a long pause for consideration, "I'll — I'll skirt the question if you like."

"The Woman's Question?" he inquired.

"The woman's and the man's," I said. "It's the same thing. There's no difference." "That," he said, "sounds hopeful. That's the most articulate thing I ever heard a woman say."

At that we laughed again. When people like each other and are happy they laugh easily.

“When,” I asked him — “when shall I begin?”

“Now,” he said, “this minute. State your grievance, madam!”

I took the cover off my typewriter and sat down before it . . . (8)

However, the stories themselves make it clear that, while a male is the frame interlocutor, within the stories women usually carry on an inner dialogue or address a female narrator. Appeals are made to the shared folk wisdom of women. For example, in the story “A Page From Life,” a husband’s return home is described in this fashion:

“Is that you, Tim?” cried Katie from the kitchen. Well she knew it was Tim but she cried out at him to ask if it was he just in the way we all do when our husbands turn their latchkeys in the door and come home to us. (198)

Thus Sime constructs a ‘kaleidoscopic’ narrative which in effect places her male listener at the margin, just as he appears only in Prologue and Epilogue, the edges of the volume. He becomes by implication the male who ‘overhears’ female lore and mores — and who ultimately is depicted in the Epilogue as unable to deconstruct and interpret what he has heard.

Sime is addressing the British reader as well as the Canadian. In a book published in London and Toronto in 1919, Sime is quite aware that the narrative had to cue a British reader to ‘hear’ the nuances and peculiarities of Canadian speech and custom. Her kaleidoscope presents facets of nationality as well as gender. Accordingly, we find a passage in “Art,” a story in which a London-born resident of Canada asks a British reader:

Why do English people come out to Canada and antagonise the whole Dominion? Why? Why can’t they be the natural, kindly people that we mostly are at home . . . (230)

Sister Woman, therefore, is at once addressed to women, to men, to Canadians and to non-Canadians in a kaleidoscopic, multi-levelled fashion.

Moreover, the title of *Sister Woman* has a double meaning: not only does the work deal with women’s relationships with men, it also deals with women’s interactions with one another. These connections occur in the empathy (sisterhood) of female narrator for women characters, and in women’s need for tolerance and understanding — a ‘gentle scan’ — from both sisters (women) and brothers (men) in a world of social change. The stories repeatedly valorise empathy among women which transcends differences in class, education, occupation, language and ethnic origin. For example, the narrator in the story “Love-O’-Man” — a “leddy born” to Elsie, her elderly Scots ex-cook — feels the social barriers between them dissolve when she learns how selflessly Elsie has loved:

To me Elsie is no longer only the cook who baked and boiled and roasted for me for a given wage; she has become a sister creature too, hoping and fearing like myself, trusting more faithfully than I shall ever do — and loving so well that the very bitterness of her grief has passed into a sort of second happiness. (54)

EMPATHY ALSO SOFTENS moral censure. Most of the stories present women who, by the standards of 1919, were social pariahs or at the margin of social acceptance — ‘kept’ women (“A Woman of Business”), prostitutes (“Adrift”), paupers (“Waiting”), mistresses (“An Irregular Union,” “Alone,” and “Union”) and single mothers (“Motherhood” and “The Child”). Like the Burns quatrain, the stories stress that to empathise with the female deviant is to view her less censoriously. By contrast, prudery and joylessness are censured. A vicious Mrs. Grundy is exposed in the story “A Circular Tour”: “So do the Harpies smile while they are sharpening their claws.” (222) It is different when the narrator of “A Woman of Business” discovers that her neighbour is a kept woman, about to retire on her illicit gains to live with the daughter whose virtue her income has protected. Attitude becomes theme as the narrator muses:

She had gone right down into the [moral] deeps and let them all go over her — and the odd thing was that she didn’t seem much the worse. If ever I were in a tight place I don’t know anyone I would rather have with me than Madame Sloyovska. She gives me the feeling of a straight woman — and yet her life has been crooked enough if we judge it by our customary standards. (203)

Sime also places before the reader the ethical dilemmas posed by the poverty of sweatshop life for urban, working-class women, a situation well-documented in the urban sociology of the day²¹:

If Madame had led what we call an honest life, earning a sparse livelihood, say with her needle, then Dilli [her daughter] would have had but a poor chance of virtue. She would have been the scapegoat instead of her mother, and there would have been all the difference. As it was — Madame had sold over and over again the only thing she had to sell — her body. (206)

In story after story, Sime depicts the exploitative conditions of much of the major female employment areas of the day: dressmaking (“Adrift” and three other stories), domestic service (“Alone” and ten others), factory work (“Munitions!”), office work (“An Irregular Union” and two others) and the retail trade (“Mr. Johnston” and “The Cocktail”). The pitfalls of exploitation are depicted unsparingly: poverty, sexual harassment, prostitution, alcoholism, ill-health, and isolation, among others. Sime also keeps her criticism of the exploiters implicit, not explicit. She invokes compassion rather than political action, a result of her precept that “the great sin against art” was writing “to the order of a philosophy of life instead of to the order of life itself.”²² Rather, she valorizes the fellow-feeling of women, which arises out of their widespread subjugation — sexual and occupational — in a male-dominated world.

Sime’s stories also depict women who attempt (and often fail) to balance the demands of tradition and convention with their urge for sexual and occupational

fulfilment. In a link with the norms of Victorian women's writing, stories like "Motherhood" and "The Child" celebrate women's maternal love, even in situations of illegitimacy and social isolation. Not surprisingly, given her ties to obstetrician-gynaecologist Walter Chipman, many stories deal with sexuality and maternity, and are set in hospitals or a physician's waiting room. "An Irregular Union" sketches a young woman as she waits for a telephone call from hospital about the health of her lover/employer. The sensibility of a young working woman is presented with a complexity not matched in Canadian short fiction until the Linnet Muir stories of Mavis Gallant's *Home Truths* (1981).²³ Sime brilliantly marshals the imagery of domestic space often found in women's writing. Phyllis Redmayne is "the ubiquitous Business Girl of our time, and she earned the money she lived on by the sweat of her brain" (76). Two emblems of the new technology — the typewriter (work) and the telephone (love) — dominate her life. In work, modest financial independence has meant hierarchical subordination in the office world. As mistress to her boss, Redmayne's emotional dependency is equally unmistakable: her lover is her "Great Reality" (83). Compelled by convention to conceal the affair, she is perforce imprisoned in lies:

... not one person that she knew could be made to understand that she, Dick Radcliffe's mistress, had kept her self-respect, that she was an independent creature — she detested the word mistress, and she didn't feel that it applied to her . . . and yet she knew that it *did* apply to her and that her poor, pitiful little plea about earning her own livelihood and keeping herself decently wouldn't have any weight with anyone at all anywhere. (86)

The narrative comment reinforces this perspective:

She was just the old traditional woman clothed in a Business Woman's garb. For all that was unexpected in her ideas, her typewriter might just as well have been a kitchen stove — or a cradle. She looked on Dick Radcliffe as Eve looked on Adam. She thought the same old things that women always have thought, though she gained her own living and imagined she was independent and free and modern and all the rest of it. (78)

The theme of the story is Redmayne's desolation at her marginalization, a desolation unrelieved by the long-awaited telephone call. The small 'bachelor' flat symbolizes the calustrophobic confines of the cramped environment she is actually free to share with her lover. "An Irregular Union" ends in desolation:

She looked out through her little window at the early evening sky. She sat watching the lovely evening clouds going their majestic peaceful way. And suddenly — no one could be more surprised than she herself — she laid her head down on her two outstretched arms — and she sobbed and sobbed. (88)

In other stories, such as "Munitions!" and "The Cocktail," Sime portrays female sexual mores in the light of the demographic shift early in the century in women's

occupations from domestic service to factory and store work, a shift historians of women have described as central to the period.²⁴ Moreover, in many of the stories, as the last quotation from “An Irregular Union” makes clear, Sime uses the landscape and climate of Montreal to counterpoint or contrast with her character’s inner life with a skill that anticipates Mordecai Richler’s similar use of the Montreal climate in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959).²⁵ In Sime’s “Munitions!”, the pent-up vitality of a young domestic-turned-munitions worker is displaced onto the thawing March landscape. “It was the very early spring” is the story’s refrain. To a streetcar full of girls bound for a suburban factory, the March thaw, in company with the explosives they produce, mirrors their own surging sexuality. They are newly-freed from the cloister of domestic service:

. . . massed together in the slushy road, they stood, lighting up, passing their matches round — happy — noisy — fluttered — not knowing what to do with all the life that kept on surging up and breaking in them — waves of it — wave on wave. Willingly would they have fought their way to the Munitions Factory. If they had known the Carmagnole they would have danced it in the melting snow. . . . (45)

SIME’S ARTISTRY GIVES similar richness to the framing of the volume. The outer frame of the stories — the Prologue and Epilogue — encloses an inner frame made up of the first and last stories in *Sister Woman*: “Alone” and “Divorced.” A reading of the two delineates the nature of Sime’s feminist dialectic. Both stories present Mansfieldian *dames seules* — with instructive differences between “Alone” and “Divorced.” The stories move from despair over woman’s lot to a qualified and stoic affirmation (bought at enormous cost) of male-female love. “Alone,” the first story in the volume, recounts the despair and suicide of a young immigrant housekeeper whose employer/secret lover (at whose insistence she has earlier aborted a pregnancy) has suddenly died. In “Divorced,” a lonely office worker who has divorced her adulterous husband is moved to affirm her enduring love for him, one only to be fulfilled in the world to come. Both stories employ third-person centre-of-consciousness narration as Sime depicts how and why each woman suffers and how each responds. Both stories affirm the richness of sexual initiation, even given subsequent suffering. Sime does not valorize marriage. Marriage, denied Hetty in “Alone,” has brought Ella of “Divorced” no economic or emotional security. Yet “Divorced” is less bleak than “Alone,” and deliberately so, because Sime’s maternal feminism affirms women’s spiritual power and fidelity in the face of male perfidy. Ella Hume has chosen the painful autonomy of divorce, yet even cuckolded, and rejected, she embraces a mystic fidelity to the man she loves sexually and spiritually:

The thought came to her that she was the keeper of their love and that, in that day to come, she would have his share to hand back to [her husband]. (290)

Given a degree of economic independence, Sime's characters affirm both the sorrows and joys of experience and female idealism:

[Ella] saw clearly enough that she had had a bad time; but she also saw that if she hadn't had that bad time she might have had a worse in not having any time at all. "It's better to suffer than not to *feel*," she said to herself. It's better even to be maimed than never to have had an instinct." And then — quite suddenly and unexpectedly — she realised that she had not stopped loving her husband.

(288-89)

Sime's brand of feminism was thus not anti-male. As woman and artist, she remained committed to male-female relationships while recognizing women's suffering in the prevailing social order. In espousing this view, Georgina Sime subscribed to a dominant strain of thought in the Canadian feminism of her day. Women's historian Deborah Gorham has written that feminism in Canada was "characterized by a spirit of reconciliation," a maternal feminism in which "self-sacrifice was central to women's role and the key to her psyche."²⁶ Men might wreak havoc, but they were essential to Sime. This is confirmed in *In A Canadian Shack* (1937), her memoir of her rural Laurentian sojourns during World War I. There she mused whether it was feasible for an autonomous "*thinking* woman to have and hold her flocks and fields and to be content alone. Is this possible? I don't know. Where would be the fun of shearing the sheep and fashioning a gown for myself out of the wool if there was no one there to cry at the end, 'Bravo, you look nice?'" (*Italics* Sime's).²⁷

She was convinced that "whatever we [women] say and however feminist we become, it is woman's nature to serve, and I think we are never happier than doing so."²⁸ Given this credo (whatever its psychobiographic origins), the final story of *Sister Woman* celebrates its female protagonist as a lone keeper of the flame of eternal love, a kind of sexually-initiated vestal virgin.

The Epilogue adds final thematic elements to *Sister Woman*. As the he/I dialogue resumes, the male interlocutor has clearly failed to understand what he has heard. "He" is bemused: the woman is perturbed, albeit gently. The male complacently relinquishes to the female narrator the challenges of expressing woman's state:

"I've got reams and reams and reams to say," I said to him. "Oh, so you think it's simple, do you? Well, let me tell you that what we women want is simple — but the world isn't simple. "Don't you see," I said, "you've got to start the world again if — *We* can't fight the world the way it is. You — you've got to . . ."

I stopped for breath. He sat there saying nothing for a bit. At last he said: "When you've got started, let me know." (292-93, *italics* Sime's)

For Sime the task of the female artist is to portray the kaleidoscope of women's lives, and to affirm the empathy, the sexuality, the maternal devotion and the idealism that give meaning to women's vicissitudes. Accordingly, the final sentence of *Sister Woman* focuses on woman and typewriter, not woman and man. The symbol of women's entry into the business world also becomes the instrument of female expression. Sime subverts the traditional happy ending as the female narrator caresses — "gives her hand" — not to man but to machine:

I ran my fingers over the typewriter keys — and felt them lovingly. . . . (293)

ONE MAY WELL ASK about the Canadian reception to (for its time) such a candid, socially-aware maternal feminist work, unmatched until the fiction of Mary Quayle Innis, Irene Baird, Dorothy Livesay, Gwethalyn Graham and others in the 1930s and 1940s. While Sime has affinities with Canadian contemporaries like Nellie McClung and Marjorie Grant Cook ('M. Grant'), no contemporary equalled her documentary style and sexual candour.²⁹ Reviews of *Sister Woman* treated it gingerly. Peter Donovan commended its candour rather coyly in *Saturday Night*. Like the male of the Epilogue, he missed the point, and the artistry of the story cycle:

Clerks, munitions workers, charwomen — the author knows them all and writes of them gracefully and sympathetically, especially of those whose histories are rather unconventional, let us say. It is an attractive and clever book, but the constancy of the point of view in the tales gives a certain monotony. But one doesn't need to read them all at once.³⁰

For its part, the *Canadian Bookman* reprinted "An Irregular Union" in its April 1920 issue. The anonymous reviewer, unlike Donovan, was willing to accept Sime as a "near-Canadian" woman writer:

There are qualities about the collection of short sketches . . . which make us hesitate to describe it as belonging to Canadian literature. Nevertheless, the author is and has been for a good many years a resident of Montreal; most of the characters and episodes of the book belong to Montreal; one feels that Montreal has to do with the shaping of the author's attitude toward life.³¹

Yet both reviewers shied away from Sime's "European" candour about female sexuality. Class and gentility, not gender, was the *Canadian Bookman's* sticking point:

Miss Sime has an enormous sympathy with all the great primitive motives and feelings, which probably form a larger part of the structure of life among scrub-women than they do among the guests at the Ritz-Carlton [a Montreal society hotel] — although this is a proposition that we put forward diffidently, and with some fear that we may be slandering the wealthier classes of society.³²

Sister Woman, it declared in effect, was just too sophisticated and avant-garde for the Canadian literary public:

It is scarcely likely that her volume will receive full appreciation in this country, at any rate unless it is so brilliantly successful in England that an echo of that success makes its way over here. It is not a book for a young country. It is lacking in sentimentality and optimism, which we seem to demand from purveyors of fiction on this North American continent.³³

No doubt Sime relished the ironies of this judgement. *Sister Woman* gently scanned women's lot, but its illuminations were as yet too harsh for the eyes of the largely prim, patriarchal, middle class literary world of Canada in 1920.

NOTES

I am grateful to Lorraine McMullen of the University of Ottawa, my co-editor for *New Women*, our University of Ottawa Press anthology of short fiction by Canadian women 1900-20 (which includes Sime's "Munitions!"), with whom I first explored Sime's work. Thanks also to W. H. New and Jane Watt, two generous scholars with whom I exchanged information about Sime's career, and to Frank Tierney of Tecumseh Press, which has just (1992) reprinted *Sister Woman*.

¹ For a description of Sime's life and work and a bibliography, see W. H. New, "Jessie Georgina Sime," *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 92, ed. New, 356-361.

² J. G. Sime, *Sister Woman* (London: Grant Richards, 1919). The work was also issued by S. B. Gundy, Toronto. All subsequent quotations from the work are from this edition, and are inserted in brackets in the text by page number.

³ Sime, *Our Little Life* (New York: Stokes, 1921) : 29.

⁴ New, 359.

⁵ The phrase Sime used of herself in an interview for "Canadian Women in the Public Eye: Miss Sime," *Saturday Night* (18 Feb. 1922) : 31.

⁶ Jane Watt, currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Alberta, has done extensive research on Sime, and has recovered an important collection of her correspondence.

⁷ See "James Sime," *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁸ Sime's memories of this and her encounters with other mentors and celebrities are recounted in a book of essay-memoirs, written with Frank Nicholson, *Brave Spirits* (London: Authors, 1952).

⁹ Sime & Nicholson, *Brave Spirits*, 52.

¹⁰ Sime & Nicholson, *Brave Spirits*, 98.

¹¹ Jane Watt, letter to author, 16 April and 14 May 1990, information based on interviews with Mrs. Nicholson, widow of Sime correspondent Frank Nicholson.

¹² Montreal city directories and other sources list various addresses for Sime for the period 1907 to 1947. Through interviews, Jane Watt has learned that Sime was in Montreal at the time of Walter Chipman's death in April 1950.

- ¹³ Walter William Chipman had a brilliant medical career at McGill University Medical School and the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal. Nova-Scotia born, he had graduated from Acadia University in 1890. His first love was literature, and he initially worked as a journalist. In 1889, he married Maud Mary Angus (d. 1946), a daughter of wealthy Montreal banker and CPR director R. B. Angus. R. B. Angus was a sometime governor of McGill University and president of the Royal Victoria Hospital, positions Chipman himself later held. See "Dr. W. W. Chipman, Former President of R.V.H., Dies," *Montreal Star*, 4 April 1950, p. 1 and E. H. Beasley, "Walter William Chipman," *McGill Medical Luminaries* (Montreal: Osler Library, McGill, 1990): 70-73.
- ¹⁴ Chipman published a monograph on Kipling, "Kipling: An Appreciation," (Montreal: Author, n.d. (1910?)). As director of the Women's Pavilion of the internationally-known Royal Victoria Hospital, he oversaw its amalgamation with the Montreal Maternity Hospital in 1926 to much praise. The amalgamation was enriched by Maud Chipman's philanthropy to the Women's Pavilion in the years after her father's death in 1922.
- ¹⁵ See, for example, Chipman, "Sociological Aspects of Medicine," *McGill News* 11 (June 1930), 15-20. Here Chipman criticised the exploitation of shop-girls, dealt with maternal public health issues and declared that "the rich and poor must meet, and in their meeting secure for themselves a mutual salvation. It is indeed a question of Social Medicine."
- ¹⁶ Sime, *The Mistress of All Work* (London: Methuen, 1916).
- ¹⁷ Sime, *Canada Chaps* (London: Lane/Toronto: S. B. Gundy, 1917). The "Chaps" series were patriotic tales of martial life in each of the Allied countries published by Lane during World War I.
- ¹⁸ Peter Donovan ("Tom Folio"), review of *Canada Chaps*, *Saturday Night*, 7 April 1917, p. 9.
- ¹⁹ Sime, *Orpheus in Quebec* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1942): 34.
- ²⁰ Sime, *Orpheus in Quebec*, 38.
- ²¹ See for example the classic work of urban sociology for Montreal, H. A. Ames, *The City Below The Hill* (1887; rpt. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972).
- ²² Sime, *Thomas Hardy of the Wessex Novels* (New York: Carrier, 1928): 45.
- ²³ Mavis Gallant, *Home Truths* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981).
- ²⁴ See Alison Prentice et. al., *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt, 1988): 113-189. In 1891, 41% of women working outside the home were in domestic service; by 1921, only 11% were.
- ²⁵ Mordecai Richler, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (London: Deutsch, 1959).
- ²⁶ Deborah Gorham, "The Canadian Suffragists," in *Women in the Canadian Mosaic*, ed. Gwen Matheson (Toronto: Martin, 1976): 43-44.
- ²⁷ Sime, *In A Canadian Shack* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1937): 62.
- ²⁸ Sime, *In A Canadian Shack*, 206.
- ²⁹ Nellie McClung is well-known. Canadian Marjorie Grant Cook ('M. Grant'), a Quebecker, addressed similar themes in her 1921 novel *Latchkey Ladies*, a tale of upper middle class young women in war work in London. Anne, her main female protagonist, becomes the mistress of a married man and bears his child to social censure. Cook lacks Sime's artistry and her social breadth. See *Latchkey Ladies* (London: Heinemann, 1921).

- ³⁰ Peter Donovan ('Tom Folio'), review of *Sister Woman*, *Saturday Night*, 28 Feb. 1920, 9.
- ³¹ Anon., "A Montreal Woman on Women," *Canadian Bookman* (April 1920) : 57-58. The reviewer was obviously chary of the lower-class forthrightness depicted by Sime, and admiring of her "wonderfully moving presentation of unmarried love." "An Irregular Union" was reprinted with the review, a daring choice of topic and treatment for a Canadian periodical of this period.
- ³² *Canadian Bookman*, 57.



GARDENS

Lorna Crozier

Moving away from winter, he retires
to the coast, westering, mile zero,

land's end. And what of a garden
I ask? Is there room for that?

Yes, but of a different kind
from the ones he remembers,

the sweet peas his mother planted,
her hands pale spiders in the earth,

the cabbage and potatoes, the anemone
of dill, the rows of beans and beans.

On the coast the soil is thin, a linen
napkin over stones. There, he says,