

## Summaries of articles

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Temps et mémoire des femmes

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[See table of contents](#)

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## SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

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### **Time and Memory, an Introduction**

Micheline Dumont and Nadia Fahmy-Eid

In this issue dedicated to women's time and to women's participation in the construction of collective memory, a general reflexion suggests that the women's relation to history asks for epistemological and political considerations. The articles expose the challenge of discovering women's reality through almost invisible traces (Collin); a critical analysis of the American historiography of feminism (Toupin); the political option of oral history for women (Baillargeon); the new « imaginaire » of authors of historical novels (Simard) and an analysis of the impossible identity, for lack of memory, of France Theoret's heroines (Couillard). Three research notes explore the contribution of three groups of women, the bush nurses (Daible *et al.*), the older women (Charles) and filmmakers at the National Film Board of Canada (Denault) to the constitution of women's collective memory.

### **History and Memory or Mark and Trace**

Françoise Collin

This text examines the connections between *history* and *memory*. To wit, feminist researchers have recently reconsidered what constitutes historical knowledge in order to bring to light both the history of women and the active role women have played in history (as history has been understood). This indispensable work nevertheless runs the risk of remaining imprisoned within the dominant ideology which consists in only recording those events which are considered as *markers*, that is, what it is within the human being which is responsible for change. In this sense memory, explicit of implicit, is larger than history, memory gathers and honors the *traces* of the past without distinguishing between doing and defeat, between action and reception, between light and shadow. Writing/literature is the depository for that memory, perhaps even the real « herstory ».

### **Is a History of Feminism Possible ?**

Louise Toupin

For at least thirty years, an historical framework has been used to study the history of the feminist movement in the USA : the equality-versus-difference dichotomy, which is based on the debate over the two underlying definitions of women : are they a « neutral » subject, or a « sexual » subject ? After studying the evolution of dichotomy – which takes the shape of a true historiographical debate on the historical identity of women –, the author surmises that this analytical framework is a real ideology which plays the role of a filter to our understanding of the feminist movement past. In conclusion, the author suggests some conditions for a new conceptualization of oppositions within feminism.

### **Oral History and Women's History : Itineraries and Common Grounds**

Denyse Baillargeon

This paper seeks to shed some light on the numerous similarities presented by oral history and women's history when one considers the causes of their emergence, their evolution, the criticisms they faced and the challenges they presented to traditional history. The author also specifies what oral history teaches us about memory, especially that of women, and assesses its possibilities for the making of a history which takes gender relations into account.

**Women Authors of Historical Novels. Quebec in Fiction**

Louise Simard

The historical novel genre has a double relationship with history : it is an historical object and it uses history in order to create a novelistic universe. As such, it has become an interesting witness to the evolution of feminism. This article examines the works of women authors of historical novels going back over a hundred years in Québec. It looks particularly at the effects of ideology on these authors and at the changes in women's images through time, which go from saints and submissive persons to women playing a determining role in history as well as in the novelistic universe.

**France Théoret : The Necessity of Women's Memory**

Marie Couillard

In the light of France Théoret's essay « Éloge de la mémoire des femmes », the author of this article examines Théoret's eight short stories contained in *L'homme qui peignait Staline*. The main characters of these stories feel, each in her own way, the need to individuate themselves from their historical past. In the absence of role models or a specific memory, these women fall short of identifying themselves with other women, past and present, the only way in Théoret's view, to a collective commitment and to the realization of the ideal self.

**Footsteps in the Snow... The Contribution of Bush Nurses to the Development of Quebec's Isolated Regions in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Johanne Daigle, Nicole Rousseau and Francine Saillant

Heroic women or doctors at a discount ? Responsible for providing health care to local communities, bush nurses contributed to the development of isolated regions of the province of Quebec in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This article highlights an ongoing research project on this matter. The authors set forth their analytical framework, sum up their findings to date and, finally, enumerate the difficulties involved in reconstituting this history. These nurses have left marks, partly erased, in the snow.

**Work and Aging Women : a Feasible History yet to Come**

Aline Charles

The history of older women's work is still waiting to be done. Such a history surely presents many possibilities, for example, the consideration of older women as social actresses and the questioning of the definition of old age. Relying on her current study of Montreal hospitals (1940-1980), the author suggests stretching the concept of work to include not only salaried work but also free work, such as that done by nuns and volunteers. This way, more women are included in studies and one sees how the definition of old age, established by and for the world of salaried work, overflows into other spheres of free and volunteer women's work in the 1960s.

**Women in Front of and Behind the Cameras : the Case of the National Film Board of Canada, 1941-1945**

Jocelyne Denault

Writing the history of women in cinema could take two approaches : a history of the cinematic image of women or a history of women filmmakers. Taking the National Film Board of Canada as a case study, the author sees these two dimensions as limited and argues for an inverted point of departure. She proposes to take women as the center of interest instead of cinema, to evaluate the importance and impact of film in women's lives, and to analyze the importance of women in the advent and existence of cinema as a social phenomenon. This approach is to her the next challenge in research about women and film.