SCHOLARLY PASSION:
TWO PERSONS WHO CAUGHT IT

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This paper is dedicated to the memory of Marta Danylewycz, who was a passionate scholar, a committed teacher, and a much-loved friend.

Academic women are increasingly aware of two facts. One is the fact of our collectively tenuous position in the world of higher education, a position that, in spite of the contemporary women’s movement, has in many respects improved only very slowly. A second is the fact of a long history of struggle, by our scholarly-minded foremothers, to gain even the relatively feeble foothold that we together enjoy as women instructors in contemporary institutions of higher learning. The tale differs in different national and cultural contexts. But, whatever the context, the status of university or college “professor” is not one that has been conferred easily or always sits comfortably on women.

The contemporary situation of academic women in Canada is beginning to be examined. Some of us are starting to analyze our own working lives as scholarly women, and more general studies of collective career paths also proceed apace. A fascinating Quebec film has even probed beneath the surface in a disturbingly intimate portrayal of university women—and men—in a variety of roles, from professor to chargée de cours, graduate student, and academic wife.

But we know little about the scholarly women who preceded us. So far, our explorations into the history of women’s access to academic life in Canada have focussed almost exclusively on the history of women’s admission to colleges and universities, the development of institutions of higher learning for women, and women’s experience as students in these institutions. Apart from Judith Fingard’s eye-opening examination of women faculty at Dalhousie in the first half of the twentieth century, we have few historical studies that deal extensively with the Canadian woman scholar or the women who have taught in Canadian universities.

The subject is made complex by problems of definition. How are we to define either the "scholarly life" or "institutions of higher learning" in the disparate and rapidly changing educational milieux that have existed over the years in Canada? Perhaps questions of definition—and the position of the woman scholar as well—are particularly difficult in a country whose academic institutions have existed somewhat uneasily on the margins of several overlapping political, economic, and intellectual empires. One answer to the dilemma posed by definition, and the one that I have chosen for this preliminary study, is the biographical answer. By looking closely at the lives of individual women who
pursued what they defined as important roles in the world of higher learning, we can begin to illuminate the themes that might inform more complex examinations of the place of women in Canadian scholarly life.

Two Ontario women appear to fit the bill. The first, Mary Electa Adams, was a well-known "lady principal" associated with a number of important academies and colleges for women in the nineteenth century. The second, Mossie May Kirkwood, was an early twentieth-century teacher of English and dean of women at the University of Toronto. By examining these women's lives, I hope to show how the aspirations and teaching careers of two very different scholarly women evolved. The life histories of women like Kirkwood and Adams, I argue, illuminate not just the history of Canadian women's education, but must be taken into account in any more general history of higher education in Canada.

I

The quest of Mary Electa Adams for a role in higher education must be understood in several contexts. One was the context of developing educational opportunities for nineteenth-century women, but in a country where neither the patterns that worked in the United States or in Great Britain were fully viable. Another was the context of higher education in nineteenth-century English Canada. Students of early and mid-nineteenth-century formal schooling are aware of just how blurred were the borders between different categories of institutional education before the late 1800s. For most of the century, the boundaries that existed were determined more by social class than by the ages of the students or even the levels of the studies offered. Common schools were for young people pursuing basic learning, while grammar schools, academies, and "select" schools offered the same and more to young men and women who were better off and, in some cases, had aspirations to stay in school longer or do more advanced work. To begin with, universities were strictly for young men preparing to enter the learned professions. A complex set of interacting forces altered this situation, producing the three-tiered, largely coeducational, and public educational systems that only gradually emerged during the course of the nineteenth century. Among these forces were a developing commercial and nascent industrial economy that altered work, paid employment, and marriage patterns for most people, male and female alike; the growth of the professions and of the sciences; denominational and institutional competition, coupled with a mood of Christian reformism; and the interests of a state that was also a colony.

If these were the larger forces, a particular one that affected the life of Mary Electa Adams was women's growing quest for useful and remunerative employment, as household economies changed, and as both men and women delayed marriage or embraced the single state permanently. The quest was supported by a women's movement that focussed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, on improving educational opportunities for girls in the light of these trends.

It was in the midst of such forces that men and women like Adams created
the women's select schools, seminaries, academies, and convent schools that, until recently, have remained so firmly on the margins of most mainstream Canadian educational history. Why have they been on the margins? The answer is that such institutions fell between the cracks. They did not really seem to belong to the story of the rise of public school systems; nor, it was thought, did they belong to the history of higher education, since they were for women, were eventually relegated to oblivion, or, if they somehow survived, to the status of private "secondary" schools. Only universities in this scheme of things emerged as public and as sufficiently advanced to qualify as institutions of higher learning. The result was that the Canadian women's academies and colleges of the nineteenth century belonged to no one's past. This is a not uncommon discovery in women's history where we often find that women and their institutions don't fit the categories and frameworks that historians have established as important. The point, we have learned, is to stop challenging the women and their works and to start challenging the categories. It is the latter that are unsatisfactory.

Mary Electa herself has perhaps seemed a somewhat unsatisfactory subject for intensive historical investigation. The founder of no permanent academy or college, she was a woman whose teaching career took her to no less than one American and six different Canadian educational institutions, only two of which have survived to the present day. The records of her life are few. She was a diarist, but all but one of the volumes of her diary appear to have been lost. Apart from this one volume, the best source for Adams' life remains an article published in 1949 by another fascinating but little-known woman scholar, Elsie Pomeroy. Pomeroy's account is particularly important because she had then in her possession, and was able to draw upon, a more complete body of personal materials than can presently be located.

From Pomeroy's brief study we learn that Adams was born to Loyalist parents in Lower Canada in 1823 and came with her family to Upper Canada two years later. She and her two brothers and two sisters were taught at home by their parents. In 1840, at the age of 17, Adams went to Montpelier Academy in Vermont, a school that her mother had attended, and there she was admitted to the study of the classics and advanced mathematics. She returned to Canada a year later and finished her formal studies at the Cobourg Ladies' Seminary. Duly graduated as a "Mistress of Liberal Arts," Adams did not leave the institutional setting but settled in as a member of the staff, eventually moving with the school's conductors, Mr. and Mrs. Hurlburt, to Toronto, where she taught at their new Adelaide Academy.

That Adams enjoyed from the beginning of her teaching career a connection to the early movement for higher education for women there can be no doubt. For one thing, the Hurlburts had been associated with the Methodist and coeducational Upper Canada Academy in Cobourg, the short-lived forerunner of Victoria College; Professor Hurlburt had continued on the staff for a brief period after the academy had been turned into a college for boys only. One could also dwell on the choice of the word "seminary" for the Hurlburts' first attempt at an
independent institution for young women. The American historian Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz argues that in this period the term "connoted a certain seriousness" and the possibility of professional goals which, in the case of women, meant training for careers in teaching. Finally, Pomeroy tells us that Adams continued her "advanced studies" while teaching for the Hurlburts, already hoping that she might eventually assist in "breaking down the barriers which prohibited women from taking university training." Whether or not she would have put it in exactly those words, Adams certainly appears to have gravitated to girls' schools that, at the very least, had ambitions. Her path in this regard was not without major interruptions, however. By the late 1840s she had already been made principal of an academy for girls in Picton, but within a very short time she retired from the position, possibly frustrated that this school could not meet the goals she had in mind for it, but also because she was ill. A vacation in Michigan soon brought a new challenge and Adams was appointed "Preceptress of the Female Department" at Albion Seminary, a large and relatively well-established American institution where—again using Pomeroy's words—some students achieved a measure of "university training." In 1854, however, Adams was drawn back to British North America to undertake a similar job in the women's department of Mount Allison Academy, in Sackville, New Brunswick. There she was joined by her sister Augusta and is credited with establishing, in three short years, a programme that favoured the academic over the ornamental.

Thus far, Adams' path as a ladies' academy mistress was a more or less continuous one. The death of her father altered the pattern, however, and for the next four years our wandering scholar was occupied at home with her widowed mother and Augusta. Adams was in her late 30s when, in 1861, she became the lady principal of the Wesleyan Female College in Hamilton, a school where, once more, her sister Augusta Adams also found employment. At this point, Mary Electa Adams' interest in higher education for women prompted exploratory visits to several women's colleges in Britain, which were made during the summer of 1862. Yet, once again, when their mother died in 1868, both Mary Electa and Augusta Adams resigned their positions. There followed another four-year interlude which the sisters devoted to family life and travel in Europe.

The early 1870s found Mary Electa Adams back in Cobourg, living with Augusta and with three nephews of whom they were evidently now in charge. The Adams sisters' aim was to superintend the education of their nephews and prepare them for Victoria College. But 1872 also saw them embarking on the major educational enterprise of their lives: the opening of a new school of their own. Brookhurst Academy was, according to Mary Electa Adams, intended first to be "a home"; secondly to offer a college course "with graduation in the university for those who wish it"; and, thirdly, with "superior advantages for those pursuing Fine Arts and Modern Languages." The extant volume of Adams' diary starts soon after the decision to open Brookhurst had been taken in 1872, and thus allows us to catch a glimpse of the Brookhurst years and gain some insight into its principal's image of herself as a scholar and a teacher.
The diary begins, not with Brookhurst’s founding, but with texts copied from journals and books, revealing the diarist’s interests, if not her thoughts or feelings. The interests were wide. One passage concerns Ruskin’s views on the impossibility of altering the "mental rank" one is born with; another quotes Hawthorne on the relationship between free thought and tolerance, and the separation of church and state in the ancient world. Later there is a passage, evidently copied from Westminster Magazine, on the political disabilities of women, and another, from Dublin University Magazine, on the character of Englishmen. From an unnamed source there are rhapsodic descriptions of Sappho’s poetry and a lament that most of it has been lost, followed by comments on the intellectual and social equality with men that the women of Lesbos enjoyed.17

The Brookhurst years must have been busy and were possibly particularly happy ones. There are no further entries in the diary from the spring or summer of 1872 to September, 1879, when the visit of the Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne to the academy was recorded by a clipping and an appreciative comment. Thereafter, the diary changes character. Adams went on to use its remaining pages chiefly for reflections on her age and its fatigues (she was now in her middle 50s), on the difficult decision to close Brookhurst, and on the anxieties precipitated by her first years at the Ontario Ladies’ College at Whitby, her last academy principalship.

An important impression that emerges from Adams’ diary is that its principal wanted Brookhurst to be small and that, wherever she was, she valued close relationships with her students. Yet she clearly also had ambitions for the young women who studied with her that went beyond the usual goal of "ladylike cultivation." The formation of "character," as well as "polish," were among Brookhurst’s aims. But there were academic ambitions too. Brookhurst tried to be "more advanced in its curriculum" than most Canadian ladies’ colleges and, as Adams put it, its conductors very much hoped that their academy would grow "into university characteristics, with university privileges."18

There is a sense in which Mary Electa Adams belonged to the first of three periods in nineteenth-century education for women in the United States that Patricia Palmieri has put forward. The "romantic" period, which Palmieri dates from 1820 to 1860, was the era of Troy Female and Mount Holyoke Seminaries with their great emphasis on religious formation and the training of Christian mothers and teachers.19 Yet the romantic aura surrounding the concept of what Palmieri and others have called "republican motherhood" was absent, or was at least extremely muted, in Adams. She clearly saw herself as a mentor and moral guide to her students; but, just as clearly, she was no republican. One feels, too, that strictly academic or scholarly goals attracted her interest as much as character training. The former may have grown in importance because Adams’ working life extended across the second period identified by Palmieri, the reformist era which she dates from 1860 to 1890. In the United States, these decades saw the founding of women’s colleges like Wellesley, Smith, and Vassar, and the development of a new model for the higher education of women. Such colleges
aimed to give their charges as prestigious and demanding a schooling as young men received at a Harvard or a Yale. "Respectable spinsterhood," moreover, joined republican motherhood as an ideal for educated women. Physical settings too were different as the single large building typical of the seminary gave way to a variety of more complex arrangements designed to house larger numbers of students and faculty on campus. We have no evidence that Adams entered the increasingly polarized and acrimonious debate on women's ability to cope with higher education that characterized this period in both Canada and the United States, but it is obvious on which side she stood. She wanted a "solid" education for her young ladies as well as one that encompassed religious principles. The emphasis would be on modern languages and the arts but neighbouring Victoria College, having "laid open all its privileges" to Brookhurst, was in a position to supply the other components of the complete university course.

The difficulty was that these arrangements did not come cheaply and the competition for students was fierce.

Our scheme seemed feasible & it has prospered. But lo! Whitby and a great house, & rich men...put forth a mighty effort to house a great school. Oshawa with a sort of manual labour arrangement gathers up...many who want education cheap. Brantford picks up the Presbyterian element & Ottawa is omnivorous & all these spring into existence within a year of our commencement.

Clearly, the Adams sisters' intention was to create an educational institution that was academically on a higher level than these rival schools. They may have seen Brookhurst as similar to the American women's colleges that were also emerging at this time, but the proximity to Victoria suggests another model. Certainly by the late 1870s when the academy's future as an independent institution seemed seriously in doubt, discussion of a scheme "to affiliate with Victoria" was increasingly on its founders' minds. Indeed, at this point the diary implies that this may have been what the Adams sisters had wanted from the beginning. The idea was also, Mary Electa Adams believed, a novel one for Canada. "If it can be carried out," she confided to her diary, "it will be the first in Canada & we should like to have a hand in it."

Later remarks in fact indicate clearly that Adams took her model from England, rather than from the United States. By May of 1880 she was talking about "our plan of a 'university class' for ladies, of Resident matriculants under protection" and describing the arrangement she wanted as "something like Girton." The idea's time had not quite come, however. According to the diary, the faculty of Victoria approved, but opposition had appeared among people who had power. The decision was therefore made to give up Brookhurst. "It causes me no little feeling," Adams reported when the closing papers were finally signed. As patronage for "university purposes" seemed just around the corner, she
wondered if she and Augusta should not have held out just a little longer.\textsuperscript{25}

The partnership with Augusta, an alliance that makes Mary Electa Adams such a typical nineteenth-century woman educator,\textsuperscript{26} may well have been a factor in the decision to close Brookhurst. Augusta, always frail, was feeling unwell. In addition, the nephews for whom the sisters had been responsible were now educated and moving away from Cobourg. Indeed a strong note of ambivalence about her role and responsibilities emerges in the diary when these matters are discussed. An "establishment," Mary Electa wrote, "is exacting & confining."

We are in straits at the cross-purposes that affect us....We have fulfilled our engagement here—all our nephews will be away....Augusta is not well & needs some change. We could break up if we wished but find a sentimental clinging to what we have struggled for, for nine years....

The decision to abandon Brookhurst, then, was not solely a financial or political one. Family needs and the wish to travel had drawn Mary Electa Adams away from her academy life more than once; there was clearly a strong element of this in the breaking up of the academy in the spring of 1880. Only Augusta and the nephews went on their travels, however. Mary Electa, after much soul-searching, reluctantly accepted yet another new principalship, this time at the Ontario Ladies’ College, in Whitby. Her ambivalent feelings about her career were now extreme. Like Catharine Beecher, one of Adams’ goals had always been to create an intimate home in the schools she inhabited. She was not fond of wandering, she confessed to her diary. And from the beginning, she found the "palatial buildings" of the Ontario Ladies’ College a somewhat overpowering environment for a home.\textsuperscript{28}

Far more alienating than the physical setting for this last stage of her career was Adams’ uneasy relationship with the Rev. J.J. Hare, a clergyman who appears to have been listed in the college circular not only as the titular head of the College, but also as the supervisor of its lady principal. One of Adams’ first acts on her arrival at the college was to insist that subsequent circulars be amended, for she had never intended to accept a subordinate position. The removal of the offending words did not make the partnership a comfortable one, however, and Hare remained a thorn in Adams’ side. He interfered, but refused to take responsibility, leaving most of the onerous daily work to Adams, along with the blame if anything went wrong—at the same time taking credit for whatever went well. The contests with Hare, and there were many, were painful for another reason. As Adams wrote in her diary after their first confrontation, "self-assertion is hateful to me."

The early years at Ontario Ladies’ College were thus not altogether happy ones. Adams was pleased to know that families sent daughters to the school because she was there, but regretted more than once the lost opportunity to be involved in the "university class" for women which Victoria was clearly in the process of establishing. "When the end comes," she wrote during one of her
lowest moments, "I often fear that life will seem a great failure to me." Mired in endless detail in the running of the school, and always at cross-purposes with Hare, she felt that the Ontario Ladies' College was managed with "hopeless irregularity."

Yet if disappointment and frustration plagued Adams in the early 1880s, she believed that she was not alone. Few people achieved "the particular things...that they aimed at," she noted in the journal. And she was not without solace. The diary ends in 1883, but there was already talk of leaving and going to stay with Augusta who, with one of the nephews, had taken up cattle ranching in the Northwest. Helena Coleman, a niece who became the music mistress at the college, was an important companion of the 1880s. And Adams had the satisfaction of seeing Arthur Coleman, a nephew that she had educated, follow his stint as an art instructor at Victoria and Brookhurst with studies in Germany, and the winning of a permanent professorship at Victoria in Natural History and Geology. Things may also have improved for Adams at the Ontario Ladies' College. According to Pomeroy, it was not until 1892 that she finally retired and made her move to the Northwest to be with Augusta.

And what of her goal to create a class for women at Victoria College? The exact situation for women at Victoria at this time is not easy to decipher, but a few women do seem to have been admitted, from some point in the middle 1870s. The first of these was in fact a Brookhurst student, who was awarded an M.E.L. or Mistress of English Literature by the college. It is also true that Victoria faculty members lectured at Brookhurst in the late 1870s—one of them, the instructor in fine arts, Arthur Coleman. In the 1880s more women students were admitted, and by the time the college affiliated with the University of Toronto in 1889, and its move to Toronto in 1892, women's presence was an established fact.34 In addition, in the mid-1880s long-distance affiliation arrangements had been made between Victoria and a number of Ontario's Methodist women's colleges, affirming the university status of the work that some students did in these institutions and thus the status and credentials of their teachers. But the Ontario Ladies' College, it would appear, was not among them. As she had predicted, women would gain "university privileges" in her time, but Mary Electa Adams was excluded from playing a significant continuing role in this triumph.

II

Was it properly a triumph? This brings us to a consideration of a woman who aspired to the scholarly life in early twentieth-century Ontario, Mossie May Waddington Kirkwood. Waddington Kirkwood's necessary setting was the coeducational university, rather than a college or colleges created solely for women, for the period of reform that had produced such institutions in the United States did not do so in Canada. Distinguished private and public secondary schools provided employment for academically-inclined women but, in Ontario especially, women's colleges with higher aspirations appear eventually to have
either given up their university affiliations and curricula or fallen by the wayside altogether by the first decades of the twentieth century. The preferred Canadian approach seems to have been to found women’s classes or departments within the men’s universities. The models were perhaps to be found in Great Britain; but the women’s departments in Canadian universities typically had far less autonomy than the women’s colleges of an Oxford or a Cambridge. Moreover, they initially engaged very few women instructors.36

Mossie May Waddington Kirkwood was one of a very small group of Canadian women who nevertheless achieved university teaching positions early in the twentieth century. Born in the last decade of the nineteenth century, she attended St. Clement’s School and the University of Toronto’s Anglican Trinity College, receiving her B.A. from the latter in 1911. In a recorded interview in which she reminisced about her life and subsequent career at the university, Kirkwood recalled that she had been encouraged to study for an advanced degree by a professor of English, but that Philosophy had been at first her chosen area. Professor Brett, the philosopher with whom she worked, was “surprised” but not unwilling to take her on. Kirkwood’s M.A. is dated 1913; she completed her Ph.D in 1919.

The flavour of the times is conveyed by the elderly Kirkwood’s memory of her graduate instruction which, she recalled, amounted to visiting Professor Brett weekly at his home. Sent away from her first oral defence to learn more about Hegel, she finally produced a satisfactory dissertation on the development of British thought in the nineteenth century, with special reference to German influences, a work that was published the same year that she received the doctoral degree.38 While she was doing her M.A. and starting her doctorate, Mossie May Waddington taught for at least some of the time at St. Clement’s. But the year after she completed her master’s, staff shortages arising from the war produced a unique opportunity for the young graduate to instruct at the university level. Trinity College offered to employ her to teach “Divinity Greek” and, later on, English as well.

Waddington evidently taught for the college during most of the war but, as it drew to a close, recognized that there was little likelihood that her post at Trinity could continue. Without waiting to be released, she tackled the subject head on with her employers. Discovering that, indeed, her job would end with the war, Waddington wasted no time in landing another one, this time at the university’s non-denominational University College, with English Professor William John Alexander. Looking back on this second opportunity, Kirkwood remembered Alexander as a “wise and experienced man” who was “very interesting” on the subject of women teaching at University College. He told her that it was “perfectly correct to have women on the staff, particularly in the field of literature.” In literature, at least, he (and clearly she) believed the woman instructor to be somehow “normal.”39

The years following Waddington’s move to University College must have been busy ones. The doctoral thesis was completed and defended and the book
published. Presiding over a women’s residence from 1919, in 1922 Waddington was officially made University College’s dean of women. And in 1923, ten years after the granting of her master’s degree, she married Trinity Professor William Kirkwood. The latter event presented a major dilemma for it was apparent that most people, including the new Mrs Kirkwood, thought she should now resign her deanship. But, according to her reminiscences, when the college council met to consider her replacement, its members could not agree on any of the recommended candidates and, after lengthy deliberations, finally asked the newly married Kirkwood if she could carry on. The incumbent dean not only agreed to do so but gained a new assistant as part of the bargain and, for the next six years, Missie May Kirkwood continued as both dean of women at University College and a college instructor of English. She also became the mother of three children.

Kirkwood’s career at the University of Toronto was a lengthy one, continuing well beyond the Second World War, but it was not without changes and adjustments. At University College, she joined with others to fight for better women’s residences and won. She also tried to stamp them with her own idea of what a women’s residence ought to be. As she described it later, this was a small community of students, led by an older scholar or don, who was there to inspire and encourage, not just to monitor the social lives of the young. The presence of the older scholar was crucial for, in Kirkwood’s view, the intellectual spark could not exist in a social void. "Scholarly passion," as Kirkwood put it, "is caught by persons from persons." Her own mentors, she recalled, had been Professors Brett and Alexander, as well as her husband. As these men had inspired her own efforts, so she hoped that all university students would remember some person or persons who impressed them as being "shot through with the love of truth." Clearly, the context for this discussion implied, it would be helpful for women students to have at least some mentors who were also women.

In September of 1929, Missie May Kirkwood resigned as Dean of Women at University College, ostensibly "to devote all her time to her work in English." This was the reason she gave publicly, but a further reason emerges in the reminiscences. A woman in the dean’s office, Kirkwood recalled, now objected strongly to the continued employment of a married woman in the post. Afraid that the issue would split the college, the dean felt it better to bow out of her administrative role and leave it to someone who was single. Since this was soon after the birth of her third child, family reasons may also have played a part, but Kirkwood’s withdrawal from university administration was shortlived. In 1936, on the retirement of Mabel Cartwright as Trinity College’s dean of women and principal of St. Hilda’s, Kirkwood took up these positions at her old college.

As she had at University College, Kirkwood quickly became involved in a successful drive for better residential accommodation for Trinity women. That accomplished, she once again settled into her dual roles as teacher and administrator. The latter she took as seriously as the former, acting in her public capacity as model, rulemaker, and restraining influence, but also providing private counselling, encouragement, or even intervention on a student’s behalf,
if these seemed called for.

Mossie May Kirkwood’s daughter has portrayed her mother as a woman who "sought broader intellectual and professional opportunities for women, equal chance and reward in employment," but at the same time emphasized "the importance of marriage and family life" for both society’s good and women’s happiness. That there might be conflict between these two goals was muted perhaps, but not denied. The university was a haven not only of antagonisms and jealousies, she believed, but of even more serious contradictory influences on individuals. Kirkwood later identified these as the "warring" influences of "academic effort" and "sexual activity." Indeed, so concerned was she about this conflict and the general position of women in society by the late 1930s, that Kirkwood began to speak about them in public. Earlier talks to women’s groups outside the university had focussed on literary subjects, and particularly on women writers.43 Now she began to focus on questions like the purposes of education for women, women’s right to paid employment, and the nature of the university experience for women.

In a small book entitled For College Women—and Men, Kirkwood outlined her beliefs about scholarship and teaching. The best teachers at university were at the same time passionate students, she argued. But they must not be expected to starve. The university depended on the power and intellectual vitality of its academics. Using the male pronoun, she went on to describe the scholar’s need to live reasonably, to travel, and to have access to "original sources" for his research. Did Kirkwood mean to exclude women from this discussion of "university teachers and scientific workers"? Unfortunately, the language is obscure. But the agenda for students of either sex, whatever the sex of the instructor, was clear. The goal of university study for both women and men was to find out what life was for, and then to live it with passion and purpose.

Kirkwood saw three possible and overlapping futures for girls approaching the end of school. They would be mothers and would need to understand "the needs of human beings." They would be students and, as such, should throw themselves "into the passionate search for a little more light and knowledge." Finally, they would be workers. As workers, they ought to devote themselves to understanding "the relation between [their] occupation[s] and the whole interests of society." Importantly, women had a need and a right to work.

To suggest that merely to be a woman is enough, unless the relationships of wifehood and motherhood make enough demands on the woman’s powers for her to use her energies and give herself fully, is a mistaken idea.

Kirkwood pointed to a Toronto YWCA study of 1505 employed women, showing that fully 17 percent of these women were supporting individuals who were totally dependent; 42 percent contributed their earnings to their households; and 25 percent contributed to the support of dependents in other households. A
United States Department of Labour survey of 751 employed single women showed that 33 percent supported their mothers; of 490 married women, 14 percent supported dependent husbands. Kirkwood deplored the "back to the kitchen" or "back to the home" movements at that time being promoted in fascist Germany and Italy; indeed she deplored them anywhere they were to be found and denounced the idea that all girls should study domestic science. She stated, moreover, her belief in women's right to equal pay for equal work.

In admitting that feminism has gone to violent lengths at times and degenerated into the "me too" position, it is not necessary to go back on the essential truth of the feminist case. Women must eat to live.

Mossie May Kirkwood was unwilling, perhaps, to carry the case to absolute equality for women in the workplace. Women as childbearers were different from men. They must work to eat, but should not be distracted by "the sight of worldly prizes" or the challenge to prove that they were "as good as men in their avocations." Women, in fact, had other goals: to use their special insights to fight against the destruction of life, and to fight against war. "Life and better life" were women's work.

In a published speech that she entitled "Women of the Machine Age," Kirkwood took a slightly different approach to the right to work. Women's need to work was not just material. Money, she argued, meant power but it was not just the power to satisfy the needs of the body. It was also the power to satisfy the needs of the spirit. Women who did not wish to trade dependence on a father for dependence on a husband now had the opportunity to seek, in a profession, "a life of purpose and accomplishment." Women's need for and right to meaningful employment and to power over their own lives had to be recognized and accepted.52

What did this mean for women in university teaching? As far as can be ascertained, Kirkwood did not tackle the subject of the academic woman directly. She had managed to gain entry into work that she loved, and to some extent recognized her good fortune in not having had to struggle for the privilege. Not only had several professors encouraged her, she had also had an uncle (only a decade or so older than herself) who was a professor at the university. His presence there surely assisted her progress. She was also able to remain at home and to support her studies with her teaching.

Yet when asked to describe the position of women in university teaching in her time, the elderly Kirkwood had little to say. She recognized that she was probably paid less than comparable men. She also recognized that women were, by and large, excluded from most university teaching and administrative jobs. Household Science, of course, employed only women. In languages, she recalled, there were also women candidates.

But when you say were they discriminated against, they just weren't
appointed, that’s all. It was thought that they should teach in the secondary schools. For one thing, most [women] didn’t have the money to do graduate work.

Kirkwood also admitted that there was outright opposition to the employment of women scholars at the university, particularly in the case of married women, and especially following the first world war. Not all male university professors or administrators were hostile and she herself had not been “turned off.” But some women had been, she agreed, because of the prejudice of powerful men against them.

III

In a recent book which they entitle Unequal Colleagues, Penina Migdal Glazer and Miriam Slater have analyzed the strategies adopted by American women who pioneered in the professions at the turn of the century. They focus on four: separatism, superperformance, subordination, and innovation. Some of the new professional women were able to make their way because of the protection of entirely separate women’s institutions like the women’s colleges; others did the work of three to gain a place in their profession. Still others found they could only survive by accepting subordinate positions or, alternately, by creating new and innovative roles for themselves. Mary Electa Adams chose separate institutions for most of her working life. But at the Ontario Ladies’ College and, indeed, in her other principalships, she was to some extent in a subordinate position. This, in part, was the meaning of the term “lady principal” with its implication that there might also lurk somewhere a male governing presence—as indeed was the case at the Ontario Ladies’ College. Adams’ innovative attempt to take charge in her own Brookhurst Academy and, later, to forge a partnership between Brookhurst and Victoria College might have altered this status, but came too early in the history of higher education in Ontario to work to her own permanent advantage. Mossie May Kirkwood relied, at various times, on all four of the strategies outlined by Glazer and Slater. Although they were neither as separate or as independent as either the American or the British women’s colleges, the women’s residences that Kirkwood helped to create at the University of Toronto did provide some measure of autonomy and, at the very least, a separate space for the dean of women. Certainly, Kirkwood worked hard, combining the roles of dean, English instructor, faculty wife, and mother. At the same time it is also clear that, in the larger university, she accepted a subordinate position—both to individual men and to men’s expressed interests. On the other hand, Kirkwood boldly found new jobs and created important roles for herself in the women’s deanships. In the end, she managed to hang on to a position in the university, if not the same position, for some 40-odd years.

Far more successful in her quest for the scholarly life than Mary Electa
Adams, Kirkwood was the inheritor of the former's struggles. When told that she had been lucky, she replied with great emphasis that she had also been good. Assured in her ability as a teacher, she had had no qualms about pursuing her goal to continue in university teaching once she had been given a taste of it. But Kirkwood's circumstances had also been very favourable: a start at Trinity because of the first world war, a supportive network of male relatives and mentors, and financial and domestic support both before and after her marriage and the birth of the children.  

What late nineteenth and early twentieth-century academic women were unable to do, Glazer and Slater suggest, was to reproduce themselves. Their immediate tasks were too many and their resources too few. It took all of Mary Electa Adams' energy to get women involved in higher education; after 1880, she was forced to abandon both her own institutional creation and the possibility of sharing in the provision of higher learning for women at Victoria College. Kirkwood's achievements were considerable: her own admission to university teaching, the creation of better residences for women, and the publication of her books. She was also determined that the undergraduates over whom she presided would have female as well as male mentors — women who could transmit to them the intellectual passion that makes a life of scholarship possible. But if there were women who "caught" the "scholarly passion" from academic women like herself, the numbers who were able to translate their passion into university jobs remained low. The proportion of full-time university faculty who were women in Canada reached a peak of 19 percent in 1931, but then began to drop and has remained below that figure ever since.  

Why did Kirkwood's vision fail to produce an expanding new generation of women scholars and teachers in Canadian universities? Part of the answer is in the relative powerlessness of women like herself. Even Kirkwood seemed to accept the idea that women should be steered into secondary school teaching in the interwar years and the fact that few had the money to go to graduate school. University teachers of this era typically came from a privileged network of men, often men who had the opportunity to go to Europe to study, like Adams' nephew, Arthur Coleman, or who migrated to Canada from the British Isles or continental Europe in the first place. Although Kirkwood had managed to get into this charmed circle, her own position was so tenuous that she had little if any power to promote the admission of other women. And for the generation immediately after hers, we must also take into account the changed character of the university. As Patricia Graham and others have noted for the United States, larger, more "professional," and bureaucratic institutions of higher learning were less welcoming and easy environments for women than they were for career-minded and wife-supported men.  

A major source of both Adams' and Kirkwood's weakness was a growing mood of hostility towards women in scholarly life, a feeling that Palmieri argues intensified after 1890. For Adams, the hostility was principally encountered in the opposition of Methodist clergymen like J.J. Hare or the "powerful men" who
opposed her plans to take charge of the women entering Victoria College in 1880. There is also a very faint suggestion, if not of outright conflict, at least of a differing agenda from that of her sister Augusta who perhaps preferred retirement to pressing the claims of Brookhurst. For Kirkwood, the conflict was also often muted. But there is absolutely no doubt that she faced significant opposition, not just from men returning from war, but also from at least one woman who felt that married women had fewer rights than the unmarried to certain paid roles in the university. As women who loved women—and men—Kirkwood and Adams (perhaps especially Adams) were also women who could only carry direct conflict so far. Adams admitted to her diary that self-assertion was "hateful" to her; Kirkwood was perhaps bolder in some circumstances, but often shifted the territory of the battle rather than engage in open conflict with the forces opposed to her.

IV

The physicist David Bohm has suggested that, in the experimental sciences, if one gets down to individual cases things become not simpler, but more complex. The lives of Mary Electa Adams and Mossie May Kirkwood reveal the same truth. If we attempt to pinpoint the variables that affected their academic careers, we begin to recognize a very complex as well as a rather contemporary scenario. Certainly the fact of gender was the crucial factor that limited what these women did. Privileged class backgrounds, on the other hand, meant opportunities that were denied to most women—and to many men. Three other factors, however, were also important. One was age: perhaps a younger woman might have succeeded where Adams failed, to secure a permanent alliance between Brookhurst and Victoria. A second, certainly, was marital status: witness the problems Kirkwood encountered in 1923 and again in 1929. Finally, there was something that the married and the single could share, as Adams’ and Kirkwood’s careers both proved: extended family responsibilities beyond those typically undertaken by comparable men.

Another important variable was Canada’s colonial situation. Caught between several models of higher education for women that emanated from the United States and Great Britain, Canadian women who were in a different economic, demographic, and political environment from either, seemed to be struggling for a Canadian compromise—one that the country could afford, as well as one that suited women’s needs. How tempting the models of a Vassar or a Girton must have been—yet how remote, evidently, in a colonial state existing under the shadow of two competing powers whose resources were so much greater than Canada’s.

Adams and Kirkwood, other women like them, and the men who supported them, got women into men’s universities and showed that women could live on the margins of men’s scholarly world. Yet however effectively they operated in
these special environments, neither was able to make women fully equal partners in Canadian scholarly life, as it was defined then or now. Surely, then, we have to call into question the definitions. What was or is the scholarly life? Does one have to be a member of a university faculty to participate? Finally, is not the exclusion of senior or scholarly women from universities, or their marginality or invisibility in institutions of higher learning, a central fact in the history of higher education? These questions are currently the subjects of intense concern and investigation by scholars whose practice is in the area of women’s studies or who identify themselves as feminists. The third question will certainly be answered in the affirmative. We are only beginning to investigate the social construction of masculinity and the relationships between the sciences, the professions, and men’s education and educational work. But it is already obvious that an institution that has been predominantly male and that, until recently, has been run almost entirely by men alone, cannot be understood in isolation from the central fact of women’s marginality to its functioning, or subordination within its governing structures. Nor can the university be understood apart from the fact of women’s roles educating and/or sustaining scholarly men, as their mothers and wives, or even as their aunts—witness the case of the Adams sisters and their nephew, Professor Arthur Coleman.

The problem that we continue to face is the one that Adams could barely contemplate and that Kirkwood and her generation did not manage to solve: the reproduction of the next generation of women scholars and their integration as equal partners in Canadian institutions of higher learning. Following the schema of Glazer and Slater, it’s clear that an innovative separatist strategy has been enormously productive for our generation. We have relied to a significant extent on the havens that we have created in women’s and feminist studies. The question is whether, from the strength and knowledge gained in these studies, we feminist women—and men—can now achieve the equal partnership between scholarly women and men that seems so obviously necessary and desirable.

The gifts we have to offer are several. Among others, there is the central gift of feminist scholarship itself—which we believe has the power to revolutionize all scholarship, as well as to question the academic structures that contain it. Like both Mary Electa Adams and Mossie May Kirkwood, many of us remain ambivalent and even uncomfortable in our relationship to institutions of higher learning. But scholars we insist on being nevertheless—and, furthermore, scholars who are paid for their work. For, as Mossie May Kirkwood pointed out, women must eat to live. Finally, we also insist on the right to hand on to a new generation of women—and men—our gift of a feminist vision. For we know, as did Kirkwood, that “scholarly passion is caught by persons from persons.”

NOTES

1. I wish to thank Paul Axelrod, Jo LaPierre, Alison Mackinnon, Pavla Miller, Johanne Pelletier, Jim Prentice, Marjorie Theobald, Sylvia Van Kirk, and Ailsa Zainu’ddin for
careful readings of "Loving Our Enemies: Women and the Scholarly Life," the CHEA paper of which this article is the revised version. Their insights and suggestions did much to clarify my thinking, as well as many factual details, and I am grateful for their help.

2. A variety of sources show how slowly the percentage of full-time Canadian university faculty who are women has grown over the decades. See, for example, Jill McCalla Vickers and June Adam, *But Can You Type? Canadian Universities and the Status of Women* (Ottawa: Canadian Association of University Teachers, 1977) and Anne Innis Dagg and Patricia J. Thompson, *Miseducation: Women & Canadian Universities* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1988), 65-6. Similarly slow growth, but higher proportions, are shown for the United States in Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 133.

3. See, for example, some of the informally published papers from the Popular Feminism Lecture Series, Centre for Women's Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Education, 1985/89. A detailed examination of individual women (and men) faculty who have been involved in women's and feminist studies is currently under way: Margrit Eichler et al., *A Profile of Canadian Women's Studies/Feminist Professors*; and the Canadian Historical Association has recently undertaken to follow up an earlier survey of women in the historical profession in Canada with a new study, to be conducted by Linda Kealey, Memorial University.


Research Association, 1983).
8. My search for information on these two women has, over the years, captured the interest of several OISE students. I am indebted to the enthusiasm, detective work, and research skills of Glenys Huws, Nancy Kiefer, Marie Hammond, Johanna Selles-Roney, Johanne Pelletier, and Jo LaPierre, who helped to track down—or nail down—much of the documentation for this paper.
11. Elsie Pomeroy, "Mary Electa Adams: A Pioneer Educator," Ontario History XLI, 3 (1949). There is clear evidence both in the one diary remaining and in Pomeroy's account that there were other diaries, although the historian did not identify them in footnotes. The diary and a volume of essays and poems were donated to the archives of Mount Allison University by Pomeroy in the 1950s. I am indebted to Cheryl Emmart of the university archives for creating a microfilm of the diary and allowing me to borrow it. Mary Electa Adams Diary, 1872 and 1879-83, Mount Allison University Archives, Elsie Pomeroy Papers, 5001/11.
17. Adams Diary, June (probably) 1872, 32-37.
18. Ibid., 1 January 1880, 45.
20. Ibid., 53-56.
21. In Alma Mater, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz explores the various arrangements that were developed and the social ideologies behind them.
22. Adams Diary, 1 January 1880, 44-50.
23. Adams Diary, 1 January 1880, 46-47. The "great house" and "great school" in Whitby
must have referred to the Ontario Ladies' College.
24. Ibid., 22 March 1880, 63.
25. Ibid., 23 May 1880, 64.
26. For a discussion of the importance of sisterly relationships to nineteenth-century women generally, see Carol Lasser, "Let Us Be Sisters Forever": The Sororal Model of Nineteenth-Century Female Friendship, Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 14, 1 (Autumn 1988). Marjorie Theobald refers to sisters among the various family teams that ran nineteenth-century academies. See her "Mere Accomplishments" and "Scottish Schoolmistresses," also Houston and Prentice, Schooling and Scholars, chapters 2 and 3.
29. Adams Diary, 5 August 1880, 84.
30. Ibid., 4 October 1880, 94-95.
31. Ibid., 24 October 1880, 104-5 and November 1880, 113.
32. Ibid., 9 April 1882, 206.
34. The process of gradually admitting women is described in Anne Rochon Ford, A Path Not Strewn with Roses: One Hundred Years of Women at the University of Toronto, 1884-1984 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 25-27. Ford does not include the Brookhurst student in her account, or the role of Adams in pressing for the admission of women, however. This information comes from Pomeroy, who relies on Nathaniel Burwash in addition to the private papers she had in her possession. Burwash, The History of Victoria College (Toronto, 1927), esp. 257. See, in addition, Ronish, "Sweet Girl Graduates," 56-61, in which Adams' role is acknowledged, and women students who attended Victoria in the 1870s and 1880s are briefly described.
36. Two twentieth-century Catholic institutions for women may have been, at least for a time, exceptions to this rule. Mount Saint Vincent, an academy for girls in Halifax, became a women's college (associated with Dalhousie for degree-granting purposes) in 1915. The Collège Marguerite Bourgeoys, founded in 1908, may also have enjoyed a slightly larger degree of independence than the women's departments that were physically located inside the English-Canadian coeducational universities.
41. Kirkwood Interview, p. 38.
42. University of Toronto Archives, Department of Graduate Records, A 73-0026/488 (41), Waddington, Mossie May. Clippings. Varsity, September 27, 1929.
44. Kirkwood Interview, pp. 47-48 and 56.
45. UTA, A 73-0026/488 (41), Waddington, Mossie May. Clippings. World, 9/12/20; Mail, 1/17/23.
47. Ibid., 25.
50. Ibid., 70-71, 75-77.
51. Ibid., 78-81.
54. Ibid., pp. 29-31.
56. In a study of several cohorts of graduates from a Swedish normal school for women, Inga Elggqvist-Salzman and her colleagues have found that the interwar generation of women teachers may have managed marriage and child-rearing more easily than subsequent generations. For the interwar group, domestic help was both more readily available and a more acceptable option. In addition, Elggqvist-Salzman suggests, the psychological pressures of mothering were perhaps not so severe for that generation. See "Life Patterns and Cultural Encounters of the Women Teachers at Rostad," paper presented to the 10th Session of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education, Joensuu, Finland, July 1988.
57. Glazer and Slater, Unequal Colleagues, esp. 231-35.
58. In addition to her thesis and the small volumes of the 1930s, she published a book on the philosopher Santayana after her retirement as dean of women: Santayana: Saint of the Imagination (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961).
59. Dagg and Thompson, MisEducation, table 7-1, p. 65.
63. I add the term "senior women" here to cover wives, women administrators, lab technicians, cleaning staff, mature students—indeed all adult women who are not students, but who play vital roles although they have little official visibility or power in the university.
64. It would be interesting to trace the career of the Adams' niece, the music mistress