

Toronto Trailblazers: Women in Canadian Publishing by Ruth Panofsky

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Toronto Trailblazers *Women in Canadian Publishing*

By Ruth Panofsky

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019. 280 pages. \$29.95
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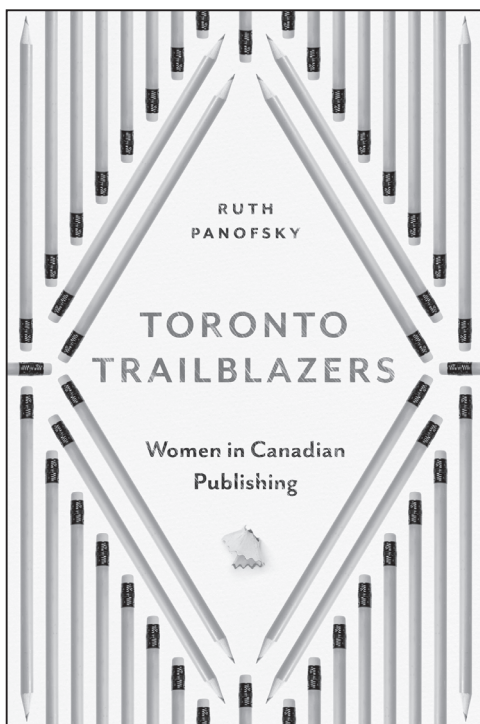
As a woman who works in publishing it's hard to imagine a world where the book industry isn't predominantly female. Women in Canada have had long and successful careers in the book industry yet there is little in terms of firsthand accounts for scholars and those in the book industry to reference. One can find books on the male greats and so Panofsky seeks to fill a gap in the scholarly and public record for their female counterparts. This book profiles seven key women who not only succeeded in publishing but revolutionized it. *Toronto Trailblazers* is a fascinating look at publishing in the twentieth century in Toronto and the women who helped make it what it is today: "as cultural workers, whose orientation I have interpreted as broadly feminist, these women publishers, editors, executives, and literary agents were catalysts for change: their own interventions helped transform the practice of publishing and the concomitant culture of authorship in Canada." (193)

These seven pioneers: Irene Clarke, Eleanor Harman,

Frances Halpenny, Sybil Hutchinson, Claire Pratt, Anna Porter and Bella Pomer started their careers in a world where most women left the work force once they married. Marital status, motherhood, and gender bias were (and sadly continue to be, albeit, in subtler ways) hurdles in their professional lives. They worked as publishers, scholarly and trade editors and literary agents asserting their agency in the male dominated publishing houses in the city of Toronto; all seven of these women worked tirelessly to establish a woman's place in publishing in this country. Panofsky explains that "through their cultural work—

expressly their vision and method—they became agents of change who helped transform publishing practices in Canada." (18) The author uses the records of authors and publishers, interviews, and archival records to write detailed biographies of each woman in her own chapter, and the result is exhaustive life stories of these trailblazing women.

The Canadian publishing industry has gone through massive upheavals



in the twentieth century. From the government of Ontario eliminating textbook grants and educational and library budgets constantly being slashed to the invention of Amazon and big box bookstores and the subsequent death of many Canadian publishers and brick and mortar stores. Technology has revolutionized the way editors and agents communicate with their authors and how publishers promote and advertise their books. These seven women worked hard through these major shifts to keep their businesses successful and to contribute to the cultural works of Canada. This was on top of the common misogyny of their everyday work lives. Similarly, the industry is seeing rapid cultural changes today that are affecting the publishing world in ways we can't yet anticipate. For anyone currently working in the publishing industry or interested in book studies it is critical to know what these and other trailblazers had to endure through their victories and setbacks. While Panofsky's research is impressive, the real highlight is how each of the subjects are humanized through each of their journeys. Unfortunately, publishing is a profession that is often romanticized and it's important to identify the challenges and

root issues within this sphere.

This book is an excellent look at the history of Canadian publishing and should be essential reading for all media students and publishing interns. It examines what Canadian publishing means in today's context, especially in light of all the mergers and acquisition in the past decade alone. It's interesting to wonder what someone like Irene Clarke, co-founder of Clarke, Irwin in 1930 would think of the Globe & Mail bestseller list today. But it's also important to use a critical lens with this work. The term 'nationalist publishing' is used throughout this text to mean, presumably, Canadian. But for me, nationalism is a slippery slope and it's worrisome to think that what some want when they bemoan the lack of Canadian authors are more white voices. Canadian publishing is still young and should be open to the multicultural viewpoints from all across the country and Turtle Island. We are still building our identity and it's important to know where we came from.

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Pulpit, Press, and Politics

Methodists and the Market for Books in Upper Canada

By Scott McLaren

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019. 264 pages. \$65.00 hardcover.

ISBN: 978-1-44264-923-1 (utorontopress.com)

For all Methodism's reputation for kill-joy earnestness, its historiography has had moments of excitement. In the 1960s, for instance, the great Marxist historian E.P. Thompson took a run at Britain's

Wesleyan movement, memorably declaring that its main impact on the kingdom's common people during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries could be understood in terms of psychic mastur-