Sample of Jenny Presnell’s Book Reviews:


The third volume of this excellent series, explores women's position in the socio-economic world of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. This collection of seventeen essays is divided into three sections. *Works and Days* which attempts to describe women's condition through notions of beauty, roles within the family, roles without the family (such as politics), and ideals of womanhood. *So much is said about her*, the middle section, looks at the public voice of women through what has been written about and by them in literature, theater, philosophy, and science/medicine. Finally, the third section, *Dissidences*, provides examples of kinds of women who did not fit the norms. This included journalists, witches, prostitutes, criminals and protesters. The uniqueness of these essays is their use of evidence and ideals that is particular to women. The example of the relationship of beauty to position and power as well as self-image in particularly striking. The section entitled *Intermezzo*, examines images of women through paintings and sculptures, etc. Many of the essays have been translated. This third volume is a first rate piece of scholarship, having wide appeal for just about anyone interested in this time period of history. Highly recommended. Jenny Presnell. Miami University Libraries, Oxford, Ohio 45056.


This set of oral histories, based upon interviews with members of both the National Extension Homemakers Council and the Indiana Extension Homemakers Council, is an ambitious and revealing project. Begun by the Indiana Extension and then adopted by the national organization to celebrate their 50th anniversary, this project collected interviews, primarily with women, concerning the activities of their daily lives in the 20th century. These women were homemakers, whose social contact was primarily through the homemaker's organization. Presentation of the testimony in the volumes is by question and answer in broad categories. The actual women's words are printed after the question. Topics discussed include: food preparation, canning, changes in home technology, childhood responsibilities, illnesses, families, courtship, voting, participation in organizations, and effects of world events. Each volume in the Indiana series is given a short, 3-4 page introduction discussing the significance of the subject covered in that volume. The testimonies are rich and exceptionally exemplary of rural women's lives. Also contained in each volume are multitudes of wonderful photographs. A list of questions asked of all participants is not included and the method of choosing participants is unclear: interviewers were charges with interviewing a small and varied number of individuals in each county or state. The national volume's testimony is equally valuable. However, the introduction is disappointing as it is nearly identical to the Indiana volumes and does not place the testimony in a greater context. Each volume is indexed by interviewer and interviewee. A master index exists, but was not seen by the reviewer. Hopefully, it will provide subject access. Despite criticisms, these volumes are a necessity for every library in the Midwest and larger libraries throughout the United States. They are fun to read and valuable to the researcher. Jenny Presnell, Miami University Libraries, Oxford, Ohio.


Luna Kellie's memoir reveals on woman's homesteading experiences in Nebraska and rise to activism in the Farmers Alliance and the Populist Party. Emotions ranging from hope for a new life and despair over the loss of two children and their homestead, the Kellies blamed the "corporate monopolies" (such as railroad companies for charging exorbitant freight rates and land taxes and unforgiving banks who foreclosed on property in times of plagues and droughts) for causing economic hardship in the prairie. Luna becomes secretary of the Farmers Alliance and printer of a moderate reform newspaper, the Prairie Home. Through her public and private activities we witness an unusual woman. Her populist activities are an example of women's contribution to the farm reform movement. Her relationship with her husband is one of equal and publicly acknowledged respect. Kellie's writing style is engaging and enjoyable. Recommended for all readers. Jenny Presnell, Miami University Libraries, Oxford, Ohio 45056.
bib.  illus.  index??0-8078-2012-1 cloth $39.95, 0-8078-4357-1 paper $14.95.

By using male measures of status, Spain postulates that gender based spatial segregation results in lower status and restricted access to knowledge for women. Based upon non-industrial societies and historical and contemporary America, she contrasts the interior designs of space within the home, the design and access to schools and education and the evolution of physical and symbolic space in the workplace. Her synthesis and examination of current scholarship are truly unique. Because of the industrial/ non-industrial examination, the volume reads a bit disconnected until the final chapter. Too often she strays from her concept of space into the concept of women's sphere. Based largely on secondary sources and excellent primary data on non-industrial societies. Recommended for all academic and large public libraries.  Jenny Presnell, Miami University Libraries, Oxford, Ohio.


Card, professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin and author/editor of four books, including Lesbian Choices (1995) has compiled an excellent set of essays examining the legal, social, and physical relationships in misogynist societies. Her introduction employs Primo Levi’s theory of “gray zones” to demonstrate feminists and women can be both victim and perpetrator in misogynist societies. Following her introduction are 15 essays composed by widely-published scholars that explore such ideas and issues as: the moral failure of revolutionaries, how race, class, and sexual orientation complicate free political environments and communities, the use of violence in misogynist societies, especially rape during the civil war in Yugoslavia and in pornography, the ideals of parenting and the ways of dying. The volume examines unique issues and is a fitting companion to Card’s 1991 collection, Feminist Ethics. See also, Explorations in Feminist Ethics: Theory and Practice (Cole and Coultrap-McQuinn, 1992). A challenging read recommended for advanced students and academic libraries.  Jenny Presnell, Miami University Libraries, Oxford, Ohio.


“There are five square knots on the quilt every two inches apart. They escaped on the fifth knot on the tenth pattern and went to Ontario, Canada. The monkey wrench turns the wagon wheel toward Canada on a bear’s paw trail to the crossroads. Once they got to the crossroads they dug a log cabin on the ground. Shoofly told them to dress up in cotton and satin bow ties and go to the cathedral church, get married and exchange double wedding rings. Flying geese stay on the drunkards path and follow the stars.” Thus is the tale on which Tobin, writer, teacher and author of “The Tao Women”, bases her examination of the role of quilts in the Underground Railroad. Based on Ozella McDaniel Williams' recollections and the expertise African American Quilt scholar, Raymond G. Dobard, this oral history examines the role quilts played in the communication of messages during slaves escape northward to
Canada. For example, if the monkey wrench quilt pattern hung on a fence, the escaping slaves should prepare to go north by wagon. We also learn that knots in the quilts sometimes acted as a topographical map of the plantation and surrounding area. These patterns in the quilts and in Williams' story are be linked to both African and Slave cultures. The galley proofs contained some significant errors which hopefully will be corrected. This volume is a needed and valuable contribution to the literature of African American quilting. Recommended for all libraries. Jenny Presnell, Miami University Libraries, Oxford, OH.


These two collections of oral histories document women's activities in the labor movements of the twentieth century. Both books omit the questions and construct a seamless narrative of the women's words, broken only by short paragraphs of textual explanation or introductory remarks. Both contain remarkable stories. Moore's collection highlights the struggle of women to work in the mines for equal pay and equal respect. Women relate working in the mines (both company and family owned), participation in strikes, family hardships, and union activities. Testimony is drawn from both union members and as union activists; from Whites, African American and Native Americans, and primarily from the Appalachian region. Moore, a former miner and associate editor of the United Mine Worker's Journal, has produced an astounding and broad ranging collection that gives scholar and casual reader alike a view of women's lives. O'Farrell's and Kornbluh's collection is smaller, only 11 women to Moore's 25, and wider ranging, interviewing women activists from such unions as the American Federation of Teachers, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. O'Farrell, senior associate at the Center for Women Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. and Kornbluh, retired from the Labor Studies Center at the University of Michigan, find common themes of women in unions such as the need for education, the need for federal involvement, the importance of women in leadership positions, the importance of cross union solidarity, and the need for women's participation. This collection is a more academic treatment than Moore's volume. If you can afford both volumes, they are highly recommended for all libraries. Jenny Presnell, Miami University Libraries, Oxford, Ohio.