

for which they were grateful, required their mobility. For another, they were able to travel fearlessly about the countryside on their missions, apparently certain that they were immune to the dangers that men could visit upon young, single, poor women. Their professional standing and their status rendered them untouchable, not unlike the pure virgin eastern schoolteacher of the western film. Their competence and self-assurance allowed Storrs and Jackson to be both compassionate toward and judgmental of settlers who shared neither their English nor their class status. Storrs admired women who manifested "pluck," "gentle dignity," "self control," and "radiance," leaving her readers no doubt that these were the kinds of Christian, English qualities that would allow northern British Columbia to thrive. At the same time, she empathized with the desperate poverty of some of her parishioners: a family with four children and a pregnant mother had only half a bag of flour in the house. She gave them food, and was happy "to invite the expecting mother to our house as soon as possible, so that she may ... not have to make that awful rough journey with the hills and the river to cross, too near her time"(106). Jackson similarly vacillated between condemnation - a Ukrainian drank from her well: "Heaven knows what nasty disease the man may have. And these central Europeans are all dirty"(207) - and pleasure in their company: "There are Norwegians, Germans, Hungarians, Ukrainians and Americans, but they're all of them decent hardworking people"(81). The wonder of the frontier was that both these women could make their way through it as they wished, free to observe, free to create themselves.

Their ambivalence was nowhere more obvious than in their attitudes about Native people of the region. Jackson called them "breeds," and criticized their dishonesty, their treatment of women, their futile attempts to live like white people, their hygiene. She could not, she maintained, teach them about germs. It's no use, she wrote: "They're like children. They remember for an hour or so and then forget till you come again"(203). On the other hand, she deplored the living conditions which brought them such a high incidence of tuberculosis, and decried the loss of their hunting grounds. "I'm sorry for the breeds, though.... to realize how far from white they really are. There's something awfully pathetic about it"

(118). Ironically, on the same page she wrote how warm, how light, and how beautifully beaded, and how well adapted to the geography, her moose-hide coats, gloves, and moccasins were.

Clearly, both women brought a lot of themselves and their cultures with them. How could it be otherwise? Every immigrant does the same, clinging to at least some part of a former identity. Storrs and Jackson were also able to expand their understandings of English ways, alter their ways of relating to the people in their districts, and learn to accept and befriend the heterogeneous populations that surrounded them. Confronting the people and the demanding environment - its wild temperatures, its muskeg all ice and mud, corduroy roads, bolting horses, milk that froze so it had to be cut with a knife, fires to stoke all night long every two hours, mosquitos and black flies, horrible accidents, but also the huge wild raspberries and the Northern lights and the clear water - freed these two women to a new material reality. As their bodies grew accustomed to the demands on them, their spirits expanded to a new generosity. Frontiers, when they worked for women, liberated them to bravery and joy. I put another log into the stove.

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***Charity Alive: Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, Halifax, 1950-1980.*** Sister Mary Olga McKenna, SC PhD. Lanham, MA: University of America Press, 1998. Appendices; photographs; xxiii + 376 pages; ISBN 0-7618-0986-4; \$54.00 US.

In 1956, The Sisters of Charity of Halifax (SC) published, through Ryerson Press, Sister Maura Power SC's *The Sisters of Charity, Halifax*. Forty one years later, Dr. Mary Olga McKenna SC, author of *Charity Alive: Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, Halifax, 1950-1980*, takes up the history of the community where Sister Maura left off. In addition, *Charity Alive* is one of a recent trilogy of works to analyze the contemporary experience of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax. *Rebel, Reformer, Religious Extraordinaire*

(University of Calgary Press, 1997) is the biography of Sister Irene Farmer, (Mother Maria Gertrude Farmer) written by Dr. Geraldine Anthony SC. This book chronicles the life and experience of the general superior who led the community through the major reforms enacted by the Second Vatican Council. Dr. Theresa Corcoran SC traces the history of the community's flagship educational institution in her study entitled *Mount Saint Vincent University: A Vision Unfolding 1873-1988* (University of America Press, 1999). *Charity Alive* is an analysis of the religious community itself. Taken together, these three studies provide a comprehensive picture of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax through an analysis of their community, their institutions and their leadership structures.

*Charity Alive* is a well written, thoroughly documented study of what could be labeled as the most exciting and challenging three decades of the history of the Halifax Charities. McKenna divides the study by decades, a most appropriate organizational choice given the significant events in congregational history which shaped the community's development. This history begins shortly before the disastrous fire of February 1951, a momentous occurrence in the community's life. Not only did the fire level the community's motherhouse, and its post-secondary institution, Mount Saint Vincent College, it also destroyed the material culture, archives and records of the community covering the time from its origin within the Sisters of Charity in New York in 1849 through to its expansion over a century.

McKenna begins her work with two chapters on a century of congregational history, built on the meticulous reconstruction of archival sources which her sisters in community engaged throughout the 1950s. She proceeds with a chronological analysis of the 50s, documenting the expansion of the community in personnel, in geographic area served and in scope of mission, thoroughly investigating the impact which each had on congregational governance. She proceeds to develop, within a section entitled "Cultural Challenges of the 1960s," thirteen chapters which explore the impact of the previous decade's expansion while at the same time integrating the enormous pressures brought about by the changes mandated by Vatican II. The third part details "Religious Challenges of the 1970s" in nine

chapters which assess how decisions were made to cope with the contraction of personnel and role of personal discernment in mission. In a powerful epilogue, McKenna synthesizes the process by which the Sisters of Charity of Halifax set themselves on a path to "stand in the fire of the Gospel values in order to keep charity alive for the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (356).

McKenna is a scholar, an insider and a key observer of historical events. The resulting study reflects these qualities and is a significant contribution to Canadian social, educational and religious history. It is a fine model of the history of an organization and uses a high level of documentary analysis to explore the collective experience of which the author is a part.

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***Spreading the Light: Work and Labour Reform in Late-Nineteenth-Century Toronto.***

Christina Burr. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999; ISBN 0802079083; \$18.95.

***Contracting Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Race in a White-Collar Union, 1944-1994.***

Gillian Creese. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999; ISBN 0195414543; \$19.95.

***Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s.***

Suzanne Morton. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995; ISBN 0802075754; \$17.95.

***Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race.***

Ruth Roach Pierson and Nupur Chaudhuri, eds. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998; ISBN 0253212758; \$19.95 US.

"The personal is the political" - its resonances and referents may have shifted somewhat, but the central slogan of second wave feminism is still a generative force in feminist history. There is in all the works reviewed here a persistent and shared commitment to explaining, and to arguing, and even to insisting that matters