(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 21st 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

personal, private, and notionally feminine have been important parts of a wide variety of politics. The arguments proceed in one, or sometimes both, of two directions. One approach is to contend that politics that are not explicitly about sexuality or domesticity or family are nonetheless somehow about gender. The other is to demonstrate the particular consequences for women, especially in these personal terms, of supposedly ungendered forces. Both kinds of arguments can be linked to the history of feminisms or other kinds of women's agency, and are in fact so linked in these works. While there are relatively new interpretive methodologies put to work in the most recent of these works, the oldest, Morton's *Ideal Surroundings*, holds up well as a contributor to the shared enterprise of exposing and analysing the determining links between public and private life.

But there are nonetheless significant differences in approach. Morton's work deliberately takes us into private life by means that heighten the reader's feeling of having really entered into the personal world of the people she writes about. She does this in three ways. One is by writing about subjects that the working-class Halifax families she is discussing meant to keep private, such as their children's delinquencies.[1] She also accomplishes a personal "feel" to her text by the frequent use of individuals' names and by novelistically rendered concrete detail.[2] Like fiction, this history proceeds in some measure by character development, even if the "characters" being developed are composite mentalities rather than particular individuals. And, most importantly, she interprets the meaning of the facts she assembles by engaging herself and inciting her readers to engage in psychological identification with the people she is studying.[3] Put yourself in these circumstances, she invites us, and imagine how you would have felt. In the book's overarching argument about how class culture helped produce its own engulfment in mass culture, this method encourages us to see the masculine exclusivity of class culture as tragic, an understandable set of commitments that nonetheless made both heterosexual intimacies and class mobilization less than they might have been.

The psychological mechanisms of Morton's method have been deeply important to women's history. Women readers' enjoyment of works such as hers or Gillian Creese's or Aparna Basu's essay on abductions in *Nation, Empire, and Colony*, comes from a response to the invitation to know and to feel some unknown feature of other women's experience in the past. To make our sources speak through the exercise of Morton's style of historical imagination both includes and potentially excludes some people from the circle of implied readers. "How must they have felt?" is a question that assumes some kinds of likeness, not only between an historian and the object of her study, but also between her and the sort of person who will find her interpretations persuasive. She chooses her audience in the answers she offers to that question. Enthusiastic male readers of women's history accept the invitation to move into an identification with an Other, so as to see the world through different eyes.

But Morton's work also invites male readers (and interested women) to engage with the gendered past of working class Halifax through her treatment of men and masculinity. Like all the other books reviewed here, her linking of personal and political is accomplished in part by examining, not only women's lives, but also men's lives in both "spheres." In so doing, she and the other authors register a protest against those readers who have refused the identifications that women's history invites, who have not been able to persuade themselves that they could enjoy (or need to know) women's history. These works' inclusion of men in this way is not just some sort of exhausted capitulation to the notion that women should never be studied except in relation to men. Rather, it is to assert that a feminist view of men as creatures equally of personal life as of the public world needs to be a part of historians' reading of the past.

Like Morton, Christina Burr treats masculinity as one of the constituent parts of class consciousness, examining in her work both the particular case of Toronto skilled trades workers in the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the larger labour reform circles in which so many of these workers moved. Analysing the creative products of reform intellectuals and the labour market control strategies of the skilled workers, she argues that the social subjectivities they produced were masculinist. In other words, these political exercises concerned themselves preferentially with the needs and interests of men and presented political agency exclusively as exercised by men.

Although, from her narrative, we learn about the personal biographies of particular labour intellectuals and the events of particular strikes, her interpretation of them does not invoke the motives of the people involved. Rather, her analysis explains the logic that connects the ideas and images and vocabulary - together, the "language" - of the strikes or the reform publications. The logic of that language, she suggests, produced a kind of social stance or position (a "subjectivity") for the labour reformers and organized workers to occupy, and although nominally it was a class position, the associations that made it cohere linked working-class identity to ethnic and gender qualities. The result was that labour reform politics excluded many members of the working class, were class to be measured simply by income and occupation.

Burr's method of interpretation asks less of the reader emotionally than does Morton's, because it relies for its persuasiveness on demonstrating the existence of almost mathematical relations. If labour reformers depicted drunks as Irish Catholic men, and drunkenness as the enemy of working-class well-being, then they implied that in Protestant women, the opposite social "term," reposed class salvation.[4] Analysing a network of such associations among the common sense cultural binaries of her period is the means by which Burr sustains her case that "class, gender and race had an autonomous but interconnected existence in the politics of nineteenth-century labour reform."[5]

In the process, she considers matters of personal life, such as drunkenness, and links them to public policy debates and alliances. Attention to masculinity is essential to revealing such links. The useful effect is to put beyond doubt the connections between a class political identity and gender and race. This finding consolidates the conclusions of women's historians who have explained women workers' marginalization in nineteenth century labour politics and illuminates the similarities between that marginalization and ethnic ones. But the general outlines of our understanding of this moment in working class history is not much modified by Burr's findings, and the impersonality of the analysis deprives it of one of the pleasures women's history has often afforded - identification. If Burr were to assert more provocatively the entirely plausible claim, implicit throughout this work, that subjectivities, not people, shape politics, the abstractness of her argument would be more clearly justified, and its impersonality would seem a necessary (if perhaps unfortunate) consequence of its focus. But to do that effectively, she would have to show that some historical change in political life could be causally linked to a change in the discursive world she maps. As it is, her analysis is static, and its explanatory significance is somewhat diminished.

Her avoidance of causal claims reflects a tendency some attribute to Foucault.[6] But studying language by means of the sorts of Foucauldian tools Burr uses does not necessarily preclude causal analysis. In *Nation, Empire, and Colony*, Marilyn Lake's treatment of masculinity in Australian history maps out, as Burr does, the logic that linked gender, race, and national identity in a particular historical moment (for Lake, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). However, Lake also argues that the discursive structure she analyses explains the emergence of Australian feminism's particular protectionist and sex-negative character. Moreover, she claims convincingly that the disappearance of one component of the discursive structure (Aboriginal women's images) explains the alteration of another part (specifically, the perspective on women's sexuality) in the 1960s.[7] If the history of feminism can be better explained by scholars who pay attention to cultural representations of masculinity, then both the analytical method that accomplishes this and the attention to masculinity are worthwhile for women's history. Readers who look to women's history for understanding of women's experience need not be concerned that, in such work, attention to men or attention to discourse mean that they will not learn about women.

Nonetheless, the approach that Lake, Burr, and many in *Nation, Empire and Colony* use is one that eschews psychology, and one might reasonably doubt whether this is a good thing, given the enjoyment afforded by the psychological bent of methodologies such as Morton's. Moreover, one might argue from a feminist political standpoint that engaging readers in identification with women in the past is a kind of exercise in solidarity, a means of evoking in historical writing the kinds of mutual understanding and fellow feeling among women that feminists rely on and try to encourage in the present. On the basis of both my own experience

and in my students' remarks, I can see these benefits and am reluctant to forego them. But I would suggest that there are also real attractions for feminist historians of setting psychology aside in some inquiries. These are suggested by Yvette Abrahams in her article on the historiographical and contemporary representations of Sara Bartman, a Khoisan women from southern African who was exhibited as a curiosity of physical anthropology in England and France between 1810 and 1815.

"Naturally," Abrahams writes, "I cannot fathom why people should pay to gawk at a semi-naked woman bereft of home and family; that is, I cannot explain individual motivations. But there is much to be gained from a description of the culture in which these motivations were shaped."[8] Here she both invites her readers to identify with Bartman's likely suffering ("bereft of home and family") and disparages the audience, who "gawk." But I take her also to imply that, for the purpose of her analysis, which is to explain an indirect way in which race subverted feminism in nineteenth century Britain, it is unnecessary to know the feelings of those who wished to look at Sara Bartman. Even more, there is in her turn of phrase a suggestion that we should restrain ourselves from exercising whatever capacity we might have for identifying with those observers. Instead, we should treat them as carriers of a culture. We can learn something useful from analysing the workings of the cultural mechanisms that brought them to gawk. But to do so does not require knowing how they felt.

For me, the attraction of Abrahams's point is that it suggests an approach to studying oppressive behaviour that neither requires forgiving empathy (they meant well, but were tragically ill-equipped to act decently) nor ahistorical outrage (how horrible!). It is an approach that draws on history's tradition as a source from which those who would be politically active can learn strategy. Admittedly, it is somewhat cool emotionally and perhaps a little bloodless. But it provides a way past the twin problems - exculpation or excoriation - that always threaten studies of masculinity or, indeed, studies of our feminist forebears (whose moral flaws are always more visible than our own).

I would apply Abrahams's approach to Gillian Creese's work on labour at B.C. Hydro, for example, by suggesting that Creese's study would lose nothing important if she left out reflections on motivation. She does a fine job at describing the forces that framed the tactical options for the white-collar workers she examines. But she also points out that calling a particular generation of male union leaders "conservative" and locating them within a shared masculinist culture with management is not to "impugn their intentions."[9] Rather than going on to praise these leaders' good will, might she not have said that their motivations were simply irrelevant to the gender privileging effect of their actions? Whether the white male union leaders were motivated by selfishness or generosity, by a sense of justice or by the most hideous greed, they lived in a moment where, as she explains, some options were visible and others not, where the range of possible positions was limited in historically contingent ways. Creese explains this situation well, and explains also its harmful effects on women and non-white workers in B.C. Hydro. She contributes thus very usefully to women's history and to a feminist history of masculinity. But this contribution does not require that we know how the union leaders felt.

The impersonality of the sort of discourse analysis that Burr, Abrahams, Lake and others in *Nation, Empire and Colony* offer is indeed something different than the more humanistic sort of identifications entailed in the methods used by Morton and Creese. But each method links personal life and political life, and all do so with explicitly feminist conviction and a sense of social justice. The advantage of the more psychological method lies in the warmth of the relationship it evokes between the reader and the figures of the past. The coolness of the other method offers its own benefits, though, in dissecting the conceptual networks such as those that made sense of gawking at Sara Bartman. For that sort of subject, I would happily accept being offered an explanation, rather than being invited to understand.

ENDNOTES

1. See her discussion of privacy on 38-9.

2. For example, the discussion of the Wilks family on 117-18.

3. For example, the inference of frustration on 45.

4. Burr, 88-94.

5. Burr, 182.

6. Jeffrey Weeks. "Uses and Abuses of Michel Foucault" in *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality, and Identity.* London: Rivers Oram Press, 1991, pp. 159-60.

7. Pierson and Chaudhuri, 96.

8. Pierson and Chaudhuri, 221.

9. Creese, 141.

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A Female Economy: Women's Work in a Prairie Province 1870-1970. Mary Kinnear. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998; 7 illustrations; xiv + 215 pages; ISBN 0-7735-1735-9; $22.95.

A Female Economy is the result of close to twenty years' labour. As the author notes, "[a] comprehensive social history of women in Manitoba, to include all ethnic groups, all religions, and all economic classes of women -a truly multicultural history -has yet to be written" (xii). This disclaimer notwithstanding, Mary Kinnear's painstaking presentation of a century of women's work in Manitoba is an absolutely rock-solid study of the material bases -and hence, the possibilities - of women' s lives. It is a model for studies waiting to be done documenting women' s lives and labour elsewhere, providing a basis for comparison and foundation for analysis of the lot of those who have the dubious fortune of finding themselves in the category "women."

Kinnear begins her study with four framing chapters which outline the context within which her detailed treatment of four sites of women's work will be understood. Key interpretive terms are defined, followed by an overview of Manitoba's ethnic composition, the ideologies governing women, and the preparation given women for engaging their adult lives. Four chapters address women's work in home-making, farm work, paid labour, and public service, respectively, followed by a conclusion. After reading this book, no one will ever be able to say that women "don't work"! Indeed, it is remarkable that women have survived their lives, given all they have had to do.

This is a significant resource which will complement other studies of women's work, western history, and women's history. Written in a clear, straightforward style which is easily accessible to scholars and the general public alike, *A Female Economy* presents an impressive range of data. While not theoretically neutral, the text has an evenness of tone which actually serves to highlight the disabilities and inequalities visited upon women. Kinnear is careful and not moralistic as she marshals extensive evidence to demonstrate the practical effects of class, race, gender and cultural privilege. She then lets readers draw their own conclusions. Like a television show without a "laugh track," the material here stands on its own.

There are a few slips (Nellie McClung's *In Times Like These* was published in 1915, not 1914; her father-in-law was Rev. J. W. McClung, not "Mark"); these are minor compared with the exhaustive amount of detail presented overall. While some might find the weaving of aboriginal women's experience into the narrative awkward, it may be argued that their special circumstances are thus highlighted. The extent to which a range of women's lives are depicted is this text's commendable achievement. *A Female Economy* makes a significant contribution to the study of women's lives and possibililities, using Manitoba as an example. Our understanding will only be enriched should others take up the task elsewhere.

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Feminist Politics on the Farm: Rural Catholic Women in Southern Quebec and Southwestern France. Naomi Black and Gail Cuthbert Brandt. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999; 295 pages, ISBN 0-7735-1828-2; $65.00.

Women and Political Representation in Canada. Manon Tremblay and Caroline Andrew, eds. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1998; 372 pages, ISBN 0-7766-0451-1; $29.00.