

foreign-born women.

It would have strengthened the book to include more women of color, particularly those with more seniority. The editors acknowledge this point, but the fact remains that as a chronicle of the lives of women historians this is an incomplete story. The book also has an inconsistent thematic focus; some essays are largely an institutional history while others barely touch on the CCWHP at all. These minor criticisms aside, this book is a valuable text for women's history and women's studies courses at all levels.

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***Suitable for the Wilds: Letters from Northern Alberta, 1929-1931.*** Mary Percy Jackson, edited by Janice Dickin McGinnis. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995; ISBN 0-8020-7187-2; 264 pp.; \$18.95.

***Companions of the Peace: Diaries and Letters of Monica Storrs, 1931-1939.*** Monica Storrs, edited by Vera Fast. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999; ISBN 0802082548; 246 pp.; \$19.95.

I was privileged to read both these books in a snowstorm on one of the Gulf Islands. It forced me to stay inside, waist high snow preventing more than short forays to the woodpile. The books were so gripping that I hardly regretted my quiet isolation. The first person accounts, in letters and diaries, so intensely conveyed their authors' lives, daily exigencies, and perceptions, that it was easy, seventy years later, to imagine myself their neighbor, perhaps their friend. Certainly, I liked both these women. They were smart, creative, energetic, adventurous, and brave. Does this sound like the beginning of an adulatory children's encyclopedia article? Perhaps. Both women knew what it took to be admired. They each created a persona, clever and competent, befitting an educated English woman who knew how to tell and to live her appropriate women's narratives, who could bring all her resources to the northern Canadian frontier, Storrs a missionary to the Peace

River country of British Columbia, Jackson a doctor to the Peace River country of Alberta. Only rarely did either evince another self, one less witty and cheery, one occasionally doubting herself, a self lonely and sad - but this self rapidly receded and the self-made bravery and competence reappeared.

They certainly needed those qualities to survive well on that frontier; and they did. Storrs came to the north with an Anglican organization called Companions of the Peace, commissioned to perform church services, to establish Sunday schools, and especially to create connections among the women in the Peace, so isolated that some of them had never seen another woman for years. Jackson came as a doctor, ministering largely to pregnant and laboring women, and seeing a lot of tuberculosis and accidents. Their good humor allowed each of them to travel long distances in temperatures sometimes lower than 40° below; sometimes eighty miles in two days on horseback; sometimes in cars that fell through the ice. Both were so dedicated to the mission they had defined for themselves, and to the capable characters they had created as personae, that they were able to do their work with great good humor.

They were both enabled in their goals, however, by the freedom, the autonomy, and the strong sense of self they derived from leaving England, for a socially acceptable purpose, arriving in a frontier where smart women were appreciated and where there was plenty for them to do. They got adventure in a good cause. In 1932 Storrs wrote that "Brother Wolf is away till Holy Week. That gives me five Sundays in St. John's Church and I am trying with great trepidation to speak on some of the fundamental questions...." (51). Jackson later recalled that "the freedom to be an independent woman... was largely the result of the isolation in Alberta that I could not have had in England" (39). In 1929 she wrote home that she was glad of her brother's going to South Africa, "but I *should* have been envious if I'd been still stuck in England. I am seeing life, you know. Sometimes I can hardly believe that this is me!"(93).

What liberation! These women's freedom was both possible for themselves and acceptable to their neighbors because of their obvious middle class status; their privilege exempted them from certain judgements. For one thing, the people of the district understood that the work they had to do, and

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*