

guerre, que l'acceptation de cette féminité toute victorienne fera l'objet de contestations et de réaménagements. De l'infirmière compétente parce que asexuée, on passe lentement à l'infirmière compétente parce qu'elle sait faire valoir ses attributs (hétéro)sexuels. Cette "modernisation" de l'image de l'infirmière, que McPherson analyse au chapitre 5, se traduit par un assouplissement des règles de conduite pour les élèves-infirmières, par des changements apportés à l'uniforme et par l'acceptation des infirmières mariées et d'origines ethniques et raciales plus diversifiées. En fait, nous dit McPherson, il s'agissait, dans un contexte de pénurie de main-d'oeuvre dans les hôpitaux et de plus grande ouverture du marché de l'emploi pour les femmes, de s'assurer que le travail infirmier continuerait de les attirer et demeurerait un travail féminin. La nouvelle image de l'infirmière qui associe, entre autres, connaissances scientifiques et expertise sexuelle, est fortement imprégnée d'une féminité hétérosexuelle qui est loin de représenter une libération; elle complique plutôt les rapports entre l'infirmière, les médecins et les patients masculins, car tout en les incitant à afficher leur hétérosexualité (l'homosexualité est évidemment exclue), les nouvelles normes culturelles exigent tout de même que les infirmières évitent toute promiscuité.

Ces trois thèmes, luttes et culture organisationnelles, rapport à la science et construction d'une féminité particulière, ne représentent que quelques-uns des aspects de cette étude fascinante. En fait, il est difficile de rendre justice au travail de McPherson dans un espace restreint. La place manque pour faire état de la richesse des thèmes abordés, de l'ensemble des liens qu'elle établit entre les différents phénomènes qu'elle aborde et des nuances qu'elle apporte tout au long de son analyse. Solidement argumenté et fondé sur une exploitation intelligente de sources écrites et orales, ce livre deviendra sûrement un classique de l'histoire du nursing pour le Canada anglais. Espérons qu'une aussi bonne synthèse traitera, dans un avenir rapproché, des infirmières franco-québécoises.

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James Cameron. *For The People: A History of St. Francis Xavier University*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996. Pp. xx, 551

When reviewing an official university history, one has an overriding concern: Will this study be an opportunity for hagiography or will it offer an analysis of the institution that sets its evolution in the wider historical context and accounts for its unique development? Clearly James Cameron is fully aware of the risks that await the university historian. As he makes clear in his preface, this first full-scale history of St. Francis Xavier University (St. F.X.) "is not a promotional

piece, adorned with hagiography—the celebration of great presidents, world-renowned faculty, and famous alumni.” “On the contrary, it is about real human beings, largely eastern Nova Scotia Roman Catholics of modest means and mostly average capabilities, and their efforts from 1853 to 1970 to provide themselves with adequate opportunities in higher education.”

I would argue that Cameron has nevertheless written an essentially celebratory history of St. F.X., conveying all the while the daunting challenges and accomplishments of people involved in the university’s development. Cameron is clearly convinced that the motor for change at the university has resided in individuals. Faithful to this conviction, he devotes more time to discussing the background and personalities of the various individuals involved in the University’s development than to the social circumstances that may have had as much to do with the paths taken at St. F.X.

True to his objectives, Cameron does not deal with only Presidents. We are exposed to the initiatives and priorities of a wide range of university administrators and faculty. It remains that the spotlight is on high administrators. Thus, in his view, in the early twentieth century, Vice-President Tompkins (1902–1922) “was plainly the main driving force behind the soaring ambitions of the college” to modernize and upgrade its faculty and academic standards. Cameron indicates that “St. F.X. was aware of the growing influence of the German research ideal at the major American and Canadian universities” (142) but Tompkins’s influence is central. Cameron’s argument for Tompkins’s influence would have been more convincing had the author shown how other Catholic colleges in the region responded to the German influence. How distinctive were this Vice-President’s reactions? And were St. F.X.’s reactions unique?

Discussing the roots of the Department of Extension during the late 1920s, the author briefly mentions the Depression as a contributing factor, but in his view “Dr. Coady and A.B. Macdonald . . . were likewise critical to the movement’s spread” (229). In fact, by their involvement, “they altered the character of the college” (234). Cameron provides convincing evidence that the Extension Department at St. F.X. and the Antigonish movement to which it gave birth, were of great significance, but the nature of his evidence does not allow us to appreciate fully the innovative, if not radical, impact of this enterprise. The Department’s approach, and the knowledge that other countries were invited to participate in the program eventually through the Coady International Institute, leaves us wondering about the program’s impact on the students’ lives and the surrounding community it aimed to serve. And more specifically, how did people in this “movement” alter the character of the college?

The author’s emphasis on individual personalities leads him to find positive character traits in these people. Some of these qualities he discovered through interviews with alumni; elsewhere, they are the result of his own cheerful outlook. Speaking of Coady, he writes: “He would leave a defining mark on the institution and on grassroots eastern Nova Scotia unequalled before and since”

(199). As for Rector MacPherson (1906–1936), “His tall, stately figure, fascinating nervous habits, and human warmth were fixed in the memories of generations of St. F.X. alumni” (196). President Nicholson (1944–1954) was “a zealous, tireless worker” (304). This is not to say that Cameron shies away from making a few unflattering comments when describing the individuals involved, but such comments are clearly the exception. In effect, each chapter ends with a positive balance sheet summing up the various accomplishments of all concerned, which leaves the reader with a sense that the “Xaverian family” was largely composed of exceptional people and that the university was on an ascending road leading to improvement.

The author’s optimism also comes out when he discusses the place of women at St. F.X. Not surprisingly, female students and faculty were not treated as were their male counterparts throughout the university’s history. Whereas the first men to receive a B.A. from the Catholic college did so in the 1850s, women had to wait until 1897. Unequal treatment continued elsewhere as well. Yet when the author discusses women, it is to mention the “improvements” to the unequal treatment they received. In fact, the author adopts a conciliatory if not triumphant tone to note the institution’s gradual progress in treatment of its female students. Thus, for instance, the author informs us that when St. Bernard’s Academy in affiliation with St. F.X. confers a B.A. on the female graduating class, the Academy “rightly won a certain distinction with this first; two more years would pass before another Catholic college in North America conferred the B.A. on female graduates” (97). (In a footnote, he specifies that Mount Allison had given a B.A. to a young woman twenty-two years before.) It would have been interesting to explore more fully this distinction. Why did this particular Catholic college take such a notable step?

Cameron does not convey the frustration of the pioneering female students or their successors faced with the slow pace of change to improve the status of women on campus. Cameron explains that “Overall, St. F.X. students appeared contented with their circumstances and scholarly challenges” (37). Historical studies of the attitudes of female university students on other Canadian campuses throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries show that women normally expressed frustration, or felt embattled. It would be surprising if women at St. F.X. were exceptional in this respect and if so, this issue deserves considerably more attention.

This study is meticulously researched. The 137 pages of endnotes are but one manifestation. The author has examined all the relevant documentary sources and conducted productive interviews with alumni. His careful archival research is impressive, for example, when it comes to presenting the reader with a continuous portrait of the financial affairs of the institution over time. He provides all relevant information on fund-raising ventures, deficits, and spending. In effect, one can follow the financial health of the institution from its early days to 1970 and appreciate how precarious was this institution before massive govern-

ment funding. The author also has devoted attention to institutions that became affiliated with St. F.X. Thus, we follow the genesis and development of the Xavier Junior College, which eventually became the University College of Cape Breton. Cameron thus encompasses a wide range of institutions of importance to Eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton.

This study devotes considerable space to student life at each stage in the institution's development. Cameron proves himself effective at relating the experience of a majority male population to their changing expectations and priorities. Students at St. F.X. were not notably exceptional, yet Cameron's discussion makes an important contribution to historians of youth. Clearly the institution's religious affiliation did not influence students' central attitudes and priorities. Knowing the distinctiveness of St. F.X. as a Catholic college in the Maritimes leads us to qualify our view of the impact of religion and region on the behaviour of youth.

Although Cameron's study does not wholly succeed in avoiding the pitfalls of an institutional history, it is nonetheless a valuable contribution to the field.

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