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Flood, Brian. *Saint John: A Sporting Tradition 1785-1985.* Saint John: Neptune Publishing Company Ltd., 1985. Pp. 256. Illustrations. $29.95

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appears only once, and no attempt is made to evaluate the attitude or response of the people themselves to that paternalism.

The tragedy of this poorly-executed study is not just that a proper analysis of the social history of Corner Brook still remains to be written. The book is also a dubious contribution to what had promised to be a welcome new publishing initiative in the field of Newfoundland history. For years, the quality of the literature has been poor as a flood of local publications of questionable value or significance poured onto the market. Breakwater's "Newfoundland History Series," which seemed designed to break away from this pattern, has instead taken a regressive step with Horwood's *Corner Brook*.

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Donald Creighton said that the "historian's first task is the elucidation of character," and his second the "recreation of the circumstances" in which those characters acted. He suggested that thorough research is wasted unless it is used by someone who can vividly portray encounters "between character and circumstance."[1] Recently P.B. Waite has stated that the ability to write well is the first requirement of historians who want people to pay attention to their work.[2] The validity of these observations is borne out by two new publications on the history of sports.

One of these is a book outlining the two hundred year history of sports in Saint John. It seems likely that Brian Flood, the author of the volume, knows more about sports in his city than anyone else does about sports in any other urban centre. He has done an immense amount of research in the relevant primary sources. Moreover, he has tried to answer some important questions, such as which sports were popular in different neighbourhoods or among different classes. However, his efforts have not produced an interesting or enlightening book.

Partly this is because he does not have a thesis. Primarily it is because he just doesn't write well. Only occasionally, as in the section in chapter four on late-nineteenth century boxing, do the words create vivid impressions of people, times and places. Generally they produce drowsiness, as in the following paragraph:

> The first annual meeting of the St. Andrews Curling Club was held at the Scammell's Hotel on November 6, 1856. The following skips for the year were selected: A. Jardine, James MacFarlane, Andrew Scott, Alexander McLelland, James Milligan, and Joseph Arton. The club held its annual New Year's Day bonspiel on Lily Lake in 1857. Sixteen married men and sixteen single men contested for the championship. The team that had the most points was declared the winner. On this occasion, the "benedicts" trounced the youngsters by a margin of eleven shots (p. 29).

In fairness, it should be mentioned that Flood's volume is very handsomely produced, and that it contains excellent photographs, which frequently suggest the evolution of equipment and styles of play. However, the prose is just too listless to engage even those most interested in sports or in Saint John.

Journalist Jim Kearney, author of the second volume considered here, admits that in *Champions: A British Columbia Sports Album*, he has made "no attempt" to write a definitive history (p. 9). Yet he tells us a good deal about what life in general and sports in particular have been like in his province. The reason is that he intuitively understands Creighton's views on historical writing.

His book is full of interesting characters acting in intelligible ways, given their recognizable circumstances. There is Percy Williams, the sprinter who won two gold medals at the 1928 Olympic Games, who later became a bitter, aggressively private man and who, one "grim, grey day" in the fall of 1982, "took his shotgun out of its case" and "blew his head off" (pp. 64-70). There is the clubfooted 1953 world champion weightlifter, Doug Hepburn, who longed for respect from a Canada that, in its attitude toward the handicapped, seems not three decades but light years removed from the one through which Rick Hansen just travelled (pp. 96-97). There is Charles Ramsbottom Fobster, the kind of sportswriter who felt the only thing "worthy of mention" was the game. One day in 1940 he covered a soccer match at which a fire broke out among the spectators. Kearney tells us that Fobster's report "started with the opening kick-off, followed by a play-by-play, description that went on for perhaps a dozen paragraphs before he wrote: 'In the 36th minute an unfortunate incident occurred. The stands burned down. Upon resumption of play . . . ' " (pp. 32-33).

Kearney has not written a masterpiece by any means. His book is based upon superficial research. It possesses whole sentences lifted from Wise and Fisher's *Canada's Sporting Heroes* (see the discussions of Hepburn and of Elaine Tanner in the two volumes). It contains few passages in which developments in sports are explicitly connected with developments in the wider world. However, like Trent Frayne,

Jim Coleman, Eric Whitehead and other journalists, Kearney has used his writing skill, and his ability to identify with particular people in specific situations, to create sports history that is entertaining and instructive. Like all of us who study sports seriously, Brian Flood should learn from Kearney's example.

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NOTES

1. Donald Creighton, "History and Literature," in *Towards the Discovery of Canada: Selected Essays* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1974), 18-19.
2. P.B. Waite, review of *The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier*, by Sandra Gwyn, *Canadian Historical Review* 66 (September 1985): 417-418.

Hohenberg, Paul M., and Lynn Hollen Lees. *The Making of Urban Europe, 1000 – 1950*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985. Pp. xiv, 398. Tables, figures, index. $30.00 (U.S.).

Konvitz, Josef W. *The Urban Millennium: The City-Building Process from the Early Middle Ages to the Present*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985. Pp. xxi, 265. Illustrations, index. $24.95 (U.S.).

Whether it is better to view the historical process from below, a little at a time but closely and carefully, or from above, as a magisterial panorama, is a question to which the authors of both these books have offered a firm answer. Upon first reading, one is reminded of the obvious: that a millennium is a long time and that Europe encompasses a lot of space, especially when it is defined so as to include Russia to the Ural Mountains. One is reminded, too, that devising statements to embrace so complex an entity as a city or so involved a venture as urban growth over so great a span of time and territory is a high-risk activity for professional historians, especially in this modern age of precision-built microhistory. W. O. Aydelotte once defined the term "generalization" to a group of struggling graduate students as a statement somewhat broader than another statement and warned that the higher the power of the generalization the greater the likelihood that essential differences and unique qualities would be lost. A large globular object, in various schemes of things, may be a large and immature navel orange, an orange, a citrus, a fruit or vegetable matter; while each level of magnitude may offer insight, each step up the ladder subsumes and obscures significant qualities of the items below.

The question which these books raise is whether the insights gained by so high an intensity of generalization compensate for the loss of precision inherent in the exercise. More specifically, will the generalizations generated in these studies add significantly to our understanding of a single urban experience? To use the authors' own perspective: in general, only to a limited extent. Both studies leave the reader with broad analytical devices and general observations too imprecise to be useful beyond the introductory level.

To be sure, Hohenberg and Lees are very aware of the risks involved; the book is salted with cautionary reminders: "as in other things, the towns of Europe were both a part of and an exception to the prevailing demographic regime," and, "it is difficult to generalize meaningfully about the extensions of cities and towns, since they took every conceivable turn" (pp. 85, 305). Of greater significance than attempts to put towns both inside and outside regimes or warnings about the number of turns, is the author's attempt to control the inherent weakness of highpowered generalizations by raising theirs to the dignity of formal models. *The Making of Urban Europe* introduces an extended argument that the development of urban society is interdependent with large economic and social processes and that the complex and variegated nature of this interdependence is best understood by concurrently using two models of urban systems analysis: the city as a *central place* and the city as part of a *network* of trade, information and influence. The central place model recognizes the importance of the city as a purveyor of economic, administrative and cultural services; the focus of this analysis is the region, which is the key both to the relationship of town to country and of the hierarchical links among nearby towns. The network model emphasizes the place of cities in an international setting. Both models allow economic, political and cultural dimensions which are extensively explored. The ensuing exposition takes place within a precarious balance of topical analysis and chronological periodization, with emphasis alternately upon grand model-building and single-city examples. The result is, at best, mixed: repetition gives way to striking insight, barren abstraction to forceful specific, meandering reservation to meaningful observation. The book, like its subject and method, is frustrating.

It is almost with relief that one turns to Konvitz's observation that "each city's development can be explained with only minimal reference to general phenomena," and that cities reacted to forces and events "that were experienced most intensely at the local level" (pp. 6-7). This greater willingness to accept the uniqueness of individual city development is, in large part, vitiated by the books spatial and temporal dimensions. Konvitz focuses upon architecture, vernacular construction and planning, and discusses the ways in which they, together, shape the urban environment. He sees a general pattern of development in which cultural factors predominate from the early Middle Ages to the late seventeenth century, economic criteria in the eight-