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Artibise, Alan F.J. and Paul-André Linteau. *The Evolution of Urban Canada: An Analysis of Approaches and Interpretations*. Report No. 4. Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg, 1984. Pp. v, 46. Illustrations. $8.00 paper

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Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

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Though it bears a sweeping title that might seem inappropriate for a slim booklet of less than fifty pages, this report by Alan F.J. Artibise and Paul-André Linteau lives up to its billing, and is worth considerably more attention than its brevity might suggest. In a form at once concise and amply-illustrated the authors present a highly useful overview of the development and current state of Canadian urban history.

They succeed, moreover, in the difficult task of combining historiographical and historical analysis. They identify and comment on the particular forces and factors at work in the shaping of Canadian urban history, and they discuss as well the related but quite distinguishable dynamics shaping the *study* of urban history in Canada. To do both of these insightfully and well; to cover, moreover, both French and English Canada (and their relationship) as factors central to both urban history and historiography; and to provide, in addition, a wealth of useful references as a guide to further study — these are big accomplishments for a small booklet. By virtue of its compactness and thematic clarity, it may prove far more accessible and useful, in and out of Canada, than the more encyclopedic historiographies so common of late.

That the vantage is successfully gained is not to say that the revealed view itself is necessarily satisfying in every, or even many, respects. The authors do not hesitate to cite major weaknesses and blind spots in the record to date, and they link these to a more general critique of some of the directions urban history has taken. Nevertheless, they are basically enthusiastic about the accomplishments of Canadian urban historians in recent decades, and within the terms of this survey an outside observor finds few grounds to disagree.

At the same time, there are inevitable limits to an overview written by figures so much at the centre of the very work they are surveying. Thus it falls to an outsider to suggest that beyond the issues examined, their work itself exemplifies some important problems in recent urban historiography generally, and perhaps Canadian historiography more particularly. It will be easier to bring these out if the main outline of the authors' survey is first sketched.

From an initial position of "dependency" on both French and British historiographical models, the authors show, Canadians developed an approach to urban history distinct from these, and especially from American models, particularly in its grounding in geography and the study of the physical environment. As the field became institutionalized in the 1970s, work developed in reference to chronologies and typologies reflective of the Canadian experience, both in terms of economic development and political economy — thus the characteristic interest in metropolitan/hinterland relationships and regionalism. Also characteristic, the authors argue, has been an aversion to theory and generalization, and even to middle-order conceptualization: only in part a "stage" in development, they suggest, this reflects a perhaps unnecessarily defensive response to the pull of ascendant American work and powerful European theoretical concerns.

Having sketched these general historigraphical trends, the authors turn to a more detailed review of the literature, sorting it out in terms of four themes seen as axes defining the terrain of Canadian work: 1) analysis of urban/metropolitan/regional systems; 2) the organization of space, including the political economy of growth, social divisions, and the built environment; 3) the control of the city, ranging from local/provincial/federal politics to issues of reform and administration; 4) population and society, which is to say the influence of social history in all its contemporary forms, from demography to ethnicity to Marxist class analysis.

The review suggests the great diversity of Canadian work, and also some general patterns, with the distinctive political and critical thrust of French-Canadian work in political economy and class/ethnic analysis the most striking to this reader. But in the final analysis, the authors conclude, all corners of the field share similar problems, particularism being chief among them: the report concludes with a call for clearer conceptual focus, more generalization and theory, and broader, more inclusive, and comparative analytic models.

There is something unconvincing about this appeal, however. Invocation cannot call forth such qualities, as if they were waiting, shyly, in the wings. Such intellectual qualities, rather, generally arrive on their own, driven before questions of pressing interest and importance, and force themselves on their audiences, shaping historiography and sometimes even history in the process. If that is not happening in Canada (as it is not happening elsewhere) the failure is perhaps more complex than the authors allow. Indeed, it is reflected in the form of their essay itself, and the implicit understanding of historiography it suggests.

The essay begins and ends by focusing on the field of urban history as a development whose evolution, strengths, weaknesses, and prognosis are the central object of concern.

This structure generates an unfortunate reification of urban history as an "it" that is born, grows, develops, has direction, problems, accomplishments, and failures; particular historical works are then measured in terms of their "contributions" to "its" progress. This is not necessarily the most helpful or accurate way to understand the dynamics of historiography, much less its particular direction at any given point. Consider the following examples, which fairly capture the tone of historiographical pronouncement in the report:

> "Questions are being formulated that will, it is hoped, lead to new plateaus in the development of the field" (p. 11).
>
> "The field of history has been influenced to a great extent by social history and its methods. . . . This interest parallels labour and women's history, two relatively new fields of study that have also been strongly influenced by social history" (p. 16).
>
> "This problem has begun to be addressed by urban political scientists, and while no general framework has yet been developed, concern has been expressed and research goals established. The task of specifying what is distinctive and what is commonplace about Canadian [urban] politics is now underway. Progress should be fairly rapid" (p. 28.)
>
> "The numerous studies of labour historians . . . turned more and more to examinations of the working class and working-class culture. These studies . . . did provide a significant indirect contribution to urban history" (p.31).

In such usages, the notion of the shared "field" functions as a kind of controlling fiction conferring a comforting sense of common purpose over historical energies that are, in reality, far more diverse and conflictive — concerned with advancing often mutually exclusive views of reality, rather than filling in the numbers on some presumptive big picture. Within such a self-conscious historiographical orientation, it is especially hard to detect and record, much less amplify, the intellectual and political dynamics out of which the sought-for theory, generalization, and conceptualization actually arise.

This development-of-the-field orientation, in fact, tends to obscure more fundamental conflicts over definition and direction that have animated much recent work, such as the work on Montreal by Linteau and others; Palmer and Kealey's studies in urban labour history; and the broad synthesis by Katz, Doucet, and Stern based on their Hamilton studies — all of which are less concerned with "contributions" to urban history than with forcing us to understand the basic processes and dynamics of change, particularly urban change, in fundamentally new and different ways. Ironically, then, the authors may have been led by scrupulous attention to their historiographical subject into underestimating some of what is most exciting and portentous about current work in Canadian urban history.

Perhaps it is only a matter of semantics or emphasis. But I wonder how different such a survey would have been had it begun not with the genealogy of "the field" as an institution and with broad historiographical generalizations, but rather with the works themselves, summarizing the most important questions they ask and the answers they begin to provide, and on this basis moving on to assess the most pressing intellectual issues and the agenda for future work. For after all, the study of history presumes a relentless, open-ended search for a widened power of explanation, regardless of often arbitrary sub-disciplinary lines or received frames of analysis and organization. From this vantage, for many who find Canadian urban history an object of intense curiosity and a fit subject for exploration, there are surely more important issues than whether or not, in this report's revealing closing phrase, "the study of the urban past has a secure future in Canada" (p. 36).

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Careless, J.M.S. *Toronto to 1918, An Illustrated History.* Toronto: James Lorimer & Company and National Museum of Man, 1984. Pp. 223. Illustrations $24.95 cloth.

Toronto to 1918, An Illustrated History is in many ways a successful and enjoyable contribution to the *History of Canadian Cities Series*, itself a highly welcome project. It is very readable, well organized, beautifully produced, bountifully illustrated with photographs, maps, charts, cartoons and reproductions of drawings and paintings. There are bonuses for the reader including interesting historical statistical series, careful and thorough documentation, a generous bibliography and useful annotated "Suggestions for Further Reading and Research."

After establishing site characteristics, the history takes us through a chronologically organized journey from gestation to birth to emergence as "The Nearly National Metropolis" by the 1918 period. J.M.S. Careless characterizes each period with general and imaginative interpretations such as "government village," "railways and regional hub," leading to the grand metropole finale. Within these major historical themes he proceeds to explore growth and economic, social, cultural and demographic changes, urban landscape, and urban political and service variables.

The writing of histories of cities cannot be a task easily undertaken even for expert practitioners such as J.M.S. Careless. Cities are an unending complex of humans and nature; they may have physical boundaries but beyond a few related formalities these are misleading, constraining identities in modernizing and modern world (e.g., the "urban