

spots and Karras herself concludes that the economic explanation by itself is inadequate to solve the problem of slavery's end.

Karras' own explanation is worth quoting — "In Scandinavia, slavery ended because those who created the cultural categories stopped classifying people as unfree" (153-154). Or, "Slavery was no longer conceptually necessary when society and law developed to the point that they recognized distinctions within the free group.... The social leaders had someone to look down on without the slave" (160). For Karras, the absence of serfdom in Scandinavia is decisive; tenant farmers and household servants, technically free, provided enough of a new conceptual hierarchy to satisfy the presumably innate desire of social leaders to have somebody literally to despise. Readers will weigh this explanation for themselves and should consult the book for the full case. Yet as bad as the evidence is on the economy, it seems stronger than sources on conceptual and cultural categories. The law stopped mentioning slaves, this much is certain and must reflect some change in social realities. But why tenants replaced slaves must have something to do with the price of slaves, the cost of subsistence and wage rates in Scandinavia. Karras has no evidence on these issues.

This book is a carefully and documented study of slavery, and at the same time provides the reader with the challenge of a sustained argument. As Karras herself noted, medievalists have the burden of poor sources, and the author has provided a model of how thoughtful questions and insights can compensate for this difficulty.

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Kathleen E. McCrone — *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women, 1870-1914*. London and New-York: Routledge, 1988. Pp. 310.

Kathleen E. McCrone's study of the role of sports in the lives of late-Victorian and Edwardian middle-class women provides a fresh and insightful approach for understanding the changing lifestyles and status of women in the decades before World War I. There has been a multitude of recent excellent books on the struggles for women's emancipation, but these studies have for the most part concentrated on legal and political rights, access to higher education and professions, and issues of sexuality. McCrone argues convincingly that the development of women's sports provided a form of emancipation from the constraints of Victorian ladyhood that was as important as the campaign for women's suffrage. Her examination of the changes in middle-class women's physical activity is a contribution not only to the scholarship on English women's history but also to the history of Victorian sports, which has hitherto been predominantly androcentric.

The book begins with an examination of sports in the new women's colleges at Cambridge and Oxford. In that one of the major arguments against female higher education was the fear that women, considered as naturally weak, would become even more enfeebled by too much intellectual activity; physical exercise was from the beginning included as an important part of the university regimen. Exercise would strengthen women physically, even as it provided an antidote to possible mental overstrain. Walking, as the major form of female exercise, was soon supplemented

with the new game of lawn tennis and by the team sports of hockey, lacrosse and cricket. Informal games gave way to organized contests, with intercollegiate and then inter-university matches. Although athletics did not achieve the same importance in women's colleges as they did in men's colleges at that time, and women remained handicapped by the requirement that they remain "feminine" even in physical exertion, sports did provide a sense of freedom and self-command that women could carry over into other areas of their lives.

Probably the most liberating and certainly the most discussed physical activity enjoyed by collegiate and other women was cycling. McCrone adds to the already extensive scholarship on female cycling by detailing the regulations Oxbridge women students had to follow when they cycled. The governing council of Newnham, for example, decreed in 1894 that students must pass a proficiency test administered by dons before receiving permission to cycle. The test included corner-turning and mounting and dismounting gracefully. Students at Newnham were not permitted to cycle to lectures until 1910.

Sports also became an important part of the curriculum in girls' secondary schools, where they were seen as valuable for improving the health of young women in preparation for their biological role as mothers. This is in contrast, McCrone points out, to the character-building mission of sports in boys' public schools. Despite traditional role expectations, sports did give girls greater knowledge and sense control over their bodies, especially after the introduction of Swedish gymnastics into the more progressive girls' schools. As physical education became regularized and made more scientific, there was in turn a need for trained teachers. This led to the establishment of such specialized teaching colleges as the Chelsea College for Physical Training, founded in 1898.

McCrone also discusses the sporting activities of adult women, which consisted mainly of individual sports such as tennis, golf, cricket and of course cycling. There were some amateur leagues for women's team sports, such as the Hockey Association, founded in 1886, and the Ladies Lacrosse Association, founded in 1912. There was even a professional women's cricket team, the "Original English Lady Cricketers". The All-England Croquet and Tennis Club at Wimbledon, holding its first men's championship in 1877, added a women's championship in 1884. The one major area of female sports participation which McCrone does not consider in this otherwise comprehensive survey was the Olympics, resurrected in 1896 and open to women in 1900.

The emancipating effects of sports were not only physical and psychological but also sartorial, in that female participation in athletic activities necessitated a transformation in women's clothing away from the heavy constricting garb of the conventional Victorian lady. McCrone laments that the change was not more radical, in that social pressures forced sportswomen to continue to overdress with long skirts and sleeves, hats and sometimes even corsets, at the expense of athletic performance and pleasure. Nevertheless, as she illustrates with descriptions of costumes for various sports, athletic clothing did become more utilitarian and comfortable, which paved the way for social acceptance of more rational regular dress.

The greatest weakness in this generally admirable book is McCrone's failure to explore sufficiently the fears underlying the strong often very emotional opposition to female participation in sports and physical activities. Scattered throughout the book

are quotes from opponents and there is a short chapter on the medical and scientific debate, but there is no sustained analysis. There are, for example, repeated quotes about the fear of “mannishness” in sportswomen, but little discussion of why that was so threatening. Another area of controversy was over women’s involvement in competitive activities. Conventional Victorian ideology assigned the trait of cooperation to women and competition to men, but McCrone does not consider the conflict aroused by and in women who competed in sports contests, even if only with their own sex.

Underlying much of the opposition to women’s sports was the Victorian anxiety about female sexuality, a theme not even suggested by McCrone. When men and women protested against the idea of women running, panting, sweating, hitting balls, getting flushed and physically excited, it was not only because such behavior was unladylike, but also surely because opponents intuited the sensations aroused by physical exertion. This awareness was most apparent in the controversy over women on horseback riding astride, the opposition to which McCrone refers only obliquely and without comment in several quotes.

Another factor in the opposition to women’s sports related to anxiety about female sexuality was the Victorian sanction of respectable women’s display of themselves, whether through sport, the stage, or other public acts. McCrone’s failure to discuss such issues is perhaps in part because, researching exhaustively in school and sports association archives and sporting magazines, she consulted only several popular periodicals: *Nineteenth Century*, *Fortnightly Review*, the cartoons in *Punch* (many of which are reprinted in this book) and some women’s magazines. She therefore missed much rich material on women’s sports in the popular and literary periodicals that would have deepened her understanding of Victorian public opinion. She also barely used novels, except for girls’ school fiction, as sources for information about attitudes towards women’s sports.

Other minor faults in the book include its organization; McCrone proceeds school by school, sport by sport, which involves much repetition. She makes no mention of blood sports such as hunting, which many women from landed classes participated in and which aroused great opposition especially from women opposed to the needless slaughter of animal life. Not even attempting to discuss working-class women’s physical exercise, she dismisses the subject by saying that they did not have the time or opportunity for sports.

Nevertheless, McCrone has succeeded in presenting a lucid account of the development of women’s sports and in arguing persuasively for the importance of sports in the emancipation of middle-class women. She rightly points out that women’s involvement in sports was not necessarily a feminist cause, in that many anti-feminists urged the physical improvement of women so they could better perform their role as mothers. Many feminists criticized sports in general, which they considered as part of the masculinist power structure (which is why militant suffragettes so often damaged property such as golf courses and tennis courts). Most sportswomen were not interested in or even supportive of issues of women’s rights such as suffrage or marriage reform. Their physical emancipation was moreover limited by persistent repressive ideals of femininity. Women’s involvement in sports did, however, offer a powerful challenge to patriarchy, because sportswomen, McCrone concludes:

actively effected change by creating new roles for women, albeit within socially acceptable limits. Simply by 'playing the game', they transformed and redefined expectations of women; their trespassing on activities identified culturally as male provided an important element of social discontinuity that successfully challenged the stereotypes and system which restricted the potential of their sex (286).

McCrone's book should therefore rank as required reading for all who hope to understand the diverse and multidimensional aspects of women's emancipation from the stultifying passivity of Victorian ladyhood to a freer, healthier, more self-determined womanhood.

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Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren — *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986. Pp. 186.

Part of McClelland and Stewart's Canadian Social History Series, *The Bedroom and the State* is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the lives of everyday Canadian men and women in the past. The McLarens make an important contribution to the very sketchy literature on birth control in Canada by showing that reformers on the left, rather than middle class philanthropists or the cautious and conservative medical profession, initiated the birth control movement in Canada. Through its analysis of letters written by Canadian women to the prominent British and American birth control advocates, Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger, the book also provides a rare glimpse into the lives of ordinary Canadian women whose voice is so seldom heard.

Using a diverse selection of both qualitative and quantitative sources, *The Bedroom and the State* successfully brings the history of reproductive policies, as formulated by political, medical and religious authorities, together with a portrayal of reproductive decision-making by ordinary Canadians. This balanced approach helps to illuminate the relationship between ideology and social practice.

Canadians began to restrict their fertility in the 1870s, yet contraceptive technology was not officially de-criminalized until 1969. Presumably ignoring the pronatalist rhetoric of elites, and subverting an unpopular law, Canadians responded to economic and social factors which made large families undesirable. These included compulsory education, restrictions on child labour, the rise in non-domestic work for women, and a transition in the idealized family from the patriarchal to the companionate (12).

Nonetheless, birth control was both risky and unreliable, due to the use of traditional methods and the clandestine nature of the market in contraceptive products. Not surprisingly, abortion became an integral part of reproductive control, used increasingly as a back-up measure by couples whose contraceptive measures had failed. Abortion related deaths — the inevitable consequence of the operation's