

Norah L. Lewis, ed. — *Freedom to Play: We Made Our Own Fun*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002. Pp. xiii, 210.

Norah L. Lewis's *Freedom to Play* is a collection of childhood letters, modern-day reminiscences, and articles about children's play in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century. Through these sources the author chronicles the games, activities, and amusements that were part of Canadian childhood culture in the years before the emergence of television. Lewis uses the mid-century as the cut-off point to demonstrate that children were capable of creating their own amusement and that they had full and productive play time before the introduction of the electronic medium.

The author divides the book into two distinct parts. In the introduction she lists the benefits of play, explains the different aspects of play covered in the book, and reaches some tentative conclusions. In the remainder of the book Lewis lets the contributors tell their stories without further explanation or analysis.

Lewis begins by explaining the merits of childhood play, and one assumes by association the intellectual benefit of studying it. Citing Friedrich Froebel, founder of the kindergarten movement, kinesiologist Glynn A. Leyshon, and Neil Sutherland, a historian of Canadian childhood, Lewis argues that play gives children the opportunity to explore cause and effect linkages, to develop reasoning and creative skills, and to test those skills both in co-operation with others and as individuals acting alone (p. 1).

Lewis refers to a variety of circumstances and situations to show how children developed social and creative skills through play before television became omnipresent in Canadian homes. The ball is set rolling as she recounts the demand of teachers and parents alike to "get outside and play" (p. 5). Children forced to play outdoors explored their local environment, although, as Lewis points out, rural children had different play areas than urban children, and Native children and children interned for the duration of the Second World War had severely circumscribed play areas.

From the very informal exploration of the local environment, Lewis moves to the interaction of children with one another through games. Here the author identifies both continuity and change over time. Games may have become more complicated, but, as Lewis argues, basic ingredients such as jumping, throwing, running, and hiding have survived the test of time. Weather, too, remains a factor that helps determine the type of activity. In sporting terms, children played baseball in summer and hockey in winter. Baseball and hockey were predominately played by boys, as Lewis points out. The two major Canadian sports were indicative of the gender divide present in children's play.

Children often played sports with only rudimentary equipment. As Lewis shows, though, this was not an impediment to play. Children repaired bats and balls, skates and sticks so that games continued with little interruption. When equipment or toys

were not available, children improvised or made their own. Girls made dresses for their dolls and boys constructed soapbox racers with friends or with the assistance of their fathers.

After a brief aside to explore the interaction of children and their pets, Lewis returns to the link between children and adults first explored in the section on the construction and maintenance of toys and games. Children celebrated Valentine's Day and Hallowe'en at school under the tutelage of the teacher. Teachers were also responsible for organizing the school field day and the Christmas concert. Outside school children became increasingly involved in youth organizations such as the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. Lewis argues that the aim of these and similar groups was to teach children particular cultural values. While children may have internalized the message of God, King, and Country, many enjoyed themselves in the process. It is to the subject of fun that Lewis returns to as she concludes her introduction.

Lewis reasons that those who were children in the pre-television twentieth century tend to recollect that fun was easy to generate. Boredom was a stranger. Lewis is not certain that the older generation had more fun than children do today, though. While TV-era children may be more "sophisticated and knowledgeable" (p. 23) than their grandparents, they too create their own fun, she argues. Lewis reaches her tentative conclusion based on intuitive reasoning and primary historical research presented in the remainder of the book. Unfortunately, because the author does not present information from the television era, the comparative analysis is weak. Today's children may be as creative in producing their own fun as older generations, but Lewis provides little evidence to prove her point.

Lewis is on firmer ground describing the various ways children played before the advent of television, and the remainder of the book is devoted to this task. Using letters written to the children's pages of five weekly rural newspapers, written contributions or interviews with diverse people, and selections of work by nine Canadian authors, Lewis gives concrete examples of the way children interacted with their social and physical environment during play. Lewis includes contributions from both girls and boys and from all English-speaking regions of Canada, although there is no gender or interprovincial analysis. Similarly, the author produces information on play during wartime, peacetime, and the Depression, but comparative analysis is not forthcoming. One assumes that time and space did not permit a comparative analysis of play. What is less easy to understand is the author's decision to focus primarily on rural childhood play. The absence of urban sources limits the opportunity for class analysis, as most contributors seem to be from relatively poor farm backgrounds. Use of urban-based newspapers would have helped counteract the rural bias in the book.

Norah L. Lewis has produced a book that is more than a pleasant reflection on childhood play during the pre-television era. Lewis shows how children generated their own excitement in social and cultural surroundings very different from those of today. The author is also sensitive to the ways teachers and parents limited and influenced games and sports. Demographic and regional analysis is absent, but addressing that omission may well be the starting point for future research.

Colin Dodds
Dalhousie University

Shenwen Li — *Stratégies missionnaires des jésuites français en Nouvelle-France et en Chine au XVII^e siècle*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval; Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001, ii, 379 p.

Au Canada, l'activité apostolique et ethnographique des jésuites reste un sujet historique d'importance primordiale. Nous savons que les jésuites ont été aussi très actifs en Chine. Pourtant personne, jusqu'à présent, n'avait osé étudier, en même temps, le Canada et la Chine, sans doute parce que personne ne maîtrisait suffisamment les langues nécessaires à une entreprise comparative d'envergure. Voici enfin un livre qui réalise cette étude comparée, celui de Shenwen Li, jeune chercheur d'expérience, qui connaît la langue et l'histoire de son pays d'origine, la Chine, ainsi que la langue et l'histoire de son pays d'adoption, le Canada français.

Comme la thèse de doctorat qui en est à l'origine (Université Laval, 1998), le livre est très clairement structuré. L'introduction, qui présente l'état de la question, est suivie d'une reconstitution historique et de l'analyse du fonctionnement de la Compagnie de Jésus en France – son établissement, le recrutement de ses membres, leurs études, leur préparation au travail missionnaire (première partie). La deuxième partie du livre est consacrée à l'étude des jésuites dans le « monde amérindien », aux croyances et aux pratiques religieuses autochtones, puis aux stratégies et aux moyens de la conversion des autochtones. L'auteur se penche, dans la troisième partie, sur la « civilisation chinoise », sur sa population, sur son organisation administrative et politique, sur ses religions et ses philosophies, ainsi que sur les stratégies et les moyens de conversion. La quatrième et dernière partie analyse les réactions des missionnés, autochtones et chinois (ch. 8); la profondeur des conversions et leur portée (ch. 9, 11); les phénomènes syncrétiques (ch. 10); et les conversions accomplies (ch. 11). Le livre se termine avec une conclusion (qui n'est en effet qu'un résumé du livre), une bibliographie, un index et un glossaire chinois. On note avec plaisir l'absence de coquilles typographiques, l'utilisation de beaux caractères d'impression et une présentation graphique agréable à l'exception des marges trop étroites.

L'objectif premier de l'auteur est la comparaison entre « la large gamme de stratégies mises en oeuvre par les jésuites en Nouvelle-France » et « leur action missionnaire en Chine » (p. 9, 14). Il ne s'agit donc pas d'une histoire de deux expériences, mais d'une étude comparée des « actions missionnaires » et des « réactions amérindiennes et chinoises » (p. 25). La comparaison est possible, premièrement, parce qu'il ne traite que des Jésuites français. Deuxièmement, parce que les deux périodes de l'activité missionnaire des jésuites se recoupent : 1611 à 1701 (90 ans) pour le Canada, 1656 à 1717 (61 ans) pour la Chine (p. 2, 17). Nous sommes d'accord sur ce point. Cependant, le nombre des missionnaires employés nous paraît moins comparable. Li présente, dans son répertoire biographique des jésuites établis en Chine,