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Tausky, Nancy A. and Lynne D. Distefano. *Victorian Architecture in London and Southwestern Ontario: Symbols of Aspiration.* Photographs by Ian MacEachern. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986. 225 black and white photographs, maps and architectural drawings, index, bibliography, glossary. $34.95 cloth

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This volume is the product of that happy thought. It is an initial gathering together of the rather scattered material on municipal administration. The volume is, in fact, both a bibliographical guide and a bibliography. The former part includes sections on associations and specialized reviews concerned with municipal affairs, a section on bibliographic resources, and a list of sources actually consulted in preparing the bibliography.

The bibliography itself comprises some 1,600 references, most published between 1976 and 1986 (though with some important earlier works). The bulk of citations are from Quebec, Canada, France, Great Britain and the United States. Few articles are featured: the focus is on books.

While the printed bibliography can be easily searched by reference to its 24 thematic categories, it can also be purchased on discettes, using the "Pro-cite" program, and searched electronically.

Though it is an admirable initial effort, even the authors concede it is not perfect and look to their readers for comment. Missing items are not difficult to spot: *Planning Perspectives;* material from the National Capital Commission; various provincial royal commissions and inquiries; *City Politics in Canada;* Perloff and Wingo, and Wilbur Thompson in urban economics; the data bases of the Institute for Scientific Information; etc.

From the "sources consulted" it appears that a great deal of reliance was placed on data bases that can be searched electronically. While they have improved by orders of magnitude in the past decade, they continue to leave much to chance. The American ones also tend to be the strongest and the *Guide* reflects that strength.

Copies of the *Guide* and further information can be obtained from M. Robert Petrelli, Professeur, Département d'études urbaines, UQAM, C.P. 8888, Succ. A, Montréal H3C 3P8.

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Tausky, Nancy A. and Lynne D. Distefano. *Victorian Architecture in London and Southwestern Ontario: Symbols of Aspiration.* Photographs by Ian MacEachern. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986. 225 black and white photographs, maps and architectural drawings, index, bibliography, glossary. $34.95 cloth.

The title is misleading; the substantive field of the book is the architectural output of five individuals, William Robinson, Thomas H. Tracy, George F. Durand, John M. Moore, and Fred Henry who were successively the principals of one architectural practice in the town and, later, city of London, Ontario. The practice began with Robinson as part-time city engineer. Durand and Moore, who were particularly interested in drains, achieved province-wide status within the newly forming profession of architecture. The theoretical framework of the book is not the victorian architecture of southwestern Ontario, but the much broader and richer field of literary, allusionistic nineteenth century revivalist, eclectic architecture.

During my architectural training in the 1950s I was repeatedly advised that this period represented a lamentable lapse in architecture. Eclecticism, whereby full blown classical interiors might lurk within vaguely Gothic outer sobriety, was nothing more than a lack of real conviction, the absence of true principals, and rampant moral turpitude. Since nearly all historic architecture in Canada comes from this period, it was quite easy, in the 1950s, to condemn all premodern work out of hand, and to see the mission of modern architecture as that of replacing the bad old with the good new. Worst of all, victorian architecture was based on literature, not on construction, and therefore was unscientific, antiprogressive, sentimental garbage.

The irony of this mid-twentieth century position is pinpointed by the number of times that victorian buildings in Ontario have been demolished only to be replaced by "greatly inferior architecture," as happened to Durand's Canadian Savings and Loan Company, built in 1889, and torn down in the 1960s. In their account of London's cultural history, interdigitated between the careers of the five architects, Tausky and Distefano repeatedly cite citizens' and journalists' pride in the developing architecture of the city, both in public buildings and private houses. Clearly these people expected that good architecture would make a tangible contribution to urban life and they had confidence that their local architects could produce it. By the latter half of the twentieth century such sentiments have almost totally ceased to exist. The attempt to gain quality in the urban environment has now become a drive to keep the architects out and to preserve the good old buildings. Quality urban environment now equates with victorian architecture, and there is very little sense of confidence that modern architects can come up with anything of comparable value.

The buildings erected by these five victorian architects run the gamut from modest cottages to large hospitals, opera houses and civic monuments. They include a large number of churches and these in particular are most eloquent. Buildings like Moore's Dorchester Presbyterian church of 1889 seem like an Ontario vernacular, springing fully formed out of the very topsoil, not something concocted by an unprincipled (eclectic) architect intent on his own professional advancement. Moore, in any case, was a man of the greatest rectitude.

Tausky and Distefano, architectural historian and English Professor, provide a substantive account of the theoretical framework that produced these masterpieces of cultural complicity, and coincidentally outline the ideas that formed our twentieth century outlook; the theory of the Gothic Revival, concern for the most up to date materials and methods, a preoccupation with scientific progressive (modern) thought. But at the same time, it is very clear that for the victorian there was always an easy way to distinguish between architecture and mere building. Architecture employed elements drawn from historic traditions of architecture; mere building did not. Therefore, even the most original, progressive and scientific of architects necessarily pursued his innovative ideals within a framework of historically derived forms. This did not make architecture unoriginal or immoral; quite the contrary. The works described are often quite fresh and individual, even when they are at the same time most familiar even to anyone who has never been anywhere near the city of London, Ontario.

Finally, the literary connection. This is obviously a vein that could be much more heavily worked. Architects engaged in professional practice, and clients concerned with their investment, do not tend to frolic around with literary allusions. Exactly how it was that late victorian architecture incorporated this kind of content is still a question worth pursuing. Tausky and Distefano draw some parallels between literature and architecture but do not really engage the question very deeply; it requires a separate work with this specific focus. But what is perhaps of greatest interest, is how meaningful cultural values are developed in ordinary practice, not just in outstanding works. The real argument may be that architecture must embody content that goes beyond the immediate circumstances of function and construction if it is to have real cultural significance. The victorian architecture presented in this book certainly did have this, and indeed still does. We need it badly.

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Malcolmson, Patricia E. *English Laundresses: A Social History, 1850-1930.* Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press. Pp. xv, 220. Illustrations. $26.95 cloth (U.S.).

Patricia Malcolmson's book focuses on the work, health, life-style, family attitudes, and habits of English laundresses, the way their trade changed under the impact of technological, social, and market forces, and the relationship between unpaid domestic work and paid professional labour. In addition, *English Laundresses* is designed as a case study for the exploration of important themes in economic, labour, social, and women's history: for example, the connection between home and workplace, the household economies of the poor, the growth of the service sector, the transformation of a hand industry into a mechanized industrial process, the formulation of public policy and introduction of government regulation, and women's employment issues and the reaction to them by feminists, trade unionists, and other reformers.

Following an introduction exploring the structure of the laundry trade and its importance in the Victorian economy, Malcolmson examines the women who dominated it, and the way their work fitted into the general circumstances of their lives. In the process, she provides a real sense of the disruption which boiling water, making soap, removing stains, washing, bleaching, starching, rinsing, drying, mangling, and ironing caused to working-class family life. Most laundry workers, she notes, were married or widowed women of limited means, who, despite low wages and back-breaking work in unpleasant conditions, considered laundering a desirable occupation because of its adaptability to domestic responsibilities and the ease with which it could be entered and pursued with few skills or expensive tools.

Malcolmson goes on to discuss the long, complicated process of regulating the trade, placing it within a broad spectrum of social amelioration which saw a tortuous struggle between the forces of reform and reaction, and ultimately the passage of an array of experimental social legislation. In considerable detail, she explains how the laundry industry was changed by legislation, how the legislation was administered, amended, and expanded, and how the issues of concern in the industry altered as time passed with shifts in general social policy, the impact of war, and changes in the central concerns of reformers, feminists, and laundresses themselves.

Laundry workers, Malcolmson argues, tried with varying degrees of success to influence the conditions under which they worked, as individuals, as members of unions, and as uneasy supporters of middle-class reformers. "By the 1920s," she concludes, "the self-help of laundry workers and the sisterly help of union organizers, other unionized women, and middle-class supporters had combined — aided by wartime experience, the impetus of the Trade Board, and the stimulus of press attention — to increase worker solidarity and confidence and to produce measurable benefits in many a workplace" (p. 122). But she notes at the same time, with particular reference to the actions of middle-class social feminists, that while they contributed substantially to bringing about factory inspection, industrial legislation, minimum wages, and laundry unions, their conviction that women's primary place was in the home as wives and mothers meant a lack of interest in effecting a significant reorientation of women's place in the industrial system. Malcolmson believes that in some ways the reformers actually impeded laundresses' pursuit of a better life.