

Himmelfarb, Gertrude. *Poverty and Compassion: The Social Ethic of the Late Victorians*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991. Pp. xii, 466. \$30.00 (U.S.)

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but also to reflect on the purposes of the discipline after contemplating Toker's own comments on how he would revise his approach.

Notre-Dame was the largest building of its time, the first important Gothic Revival building in Canada, and a landmark in Canadian building history. From 1823-29, the project to rebuild the parish church of Montreal brought together the Sulpician order which worshipped there, the Catholic merchant class who ruled the building committee, and New York-based Irish Protestant architect James O'Donnell, who spent five years in Montreal overseeing the construction of his design before his death in 1830.

In nine exceptionally clear chapters, Toker documents the international intellectual currents that influenced the design and extensive later alterations of the building with precision and insight, concluding with an intriguing analysis of Notre-Dame as a French-Canadian church. Reminding us that the French did not share the moralistic and literary sentiment that the English attached to the Gothic Revival, Toker determines that the building had virtually no influence in English Quebec, despite its English and American antecedents, but that it served as a model for the design of hundreds of French churches, including three direct copies, of which Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade (1855-69, Casimir Coursol) is the grandest and best known. Ultimately, O'Donnell reinvigorated the moribund "traditional" style of ecclesiastic architecture by investing the future symbol of Quebec nationalism with an alternative image to the colonial past. That image was made resoundingly appropriate through decades of acculturation by subsequent artists, particularly Victor Bourgeau.

Notre-Dame became the symbolic parish church for French Canada through the accumulation of artistic contributions, historical events, and social recognition.

These factors also create meaningful urban environments, and that is the underlying theme of *Grassroots, Greystones & Glass Towers*, an informative and topical work that offers critical perspectives on contemporary issues in urban development, urban spaces, architecture, heritage, and housing. Following an introduction to policy issues, planning, and general development problems plaguing the city, the contributions focus on the liabilities and occasional flashes of hope represented by Montreal projects, ranging in scale from the Expo islands and Lachine canal to public art, individual buildings, and facade preservation. Criticism of the present frequently generates a tough blueprint for the future. Explicit programmes are laid out by Isabel Corral for master planning, Peter Jacobs for the mountain landscape, David Brown for the underground network, and Ian MacBurnie for downtown housing.

Fortunately, a common critical stance is detectable in the values promoted: the achievement of meaning and diversity through the intelligent integration and rehabilitation of the historic, encouraging mixed uses and active street life; the potential for community-based planning; respect for context; sensitivity to the patrimony; and a call for propriety, the last a powerful approach developed by Ricardo L. Castro in "Significant Buildings of the 1980s." The sense of Montreal as a profoundly important locus of historical patterns and conditions is evoked with particular poignancy in Susan Bronson's lucid "The Three Rs: Restoration, Renovation and Recycling."

In the elucidation of principles and concepts, and exposition by example, nearly every chapter is an articulate introduction to its own subject and a detailed expansion of the section topic. In the excellent last essay, "Housing that belongs on Montreal Streets," Adrian Sheppard ana-

lyzes and illustrates why good projects succeed, and so succinctly summarizes the language and principles of planning and design that this piece could more appropriately open the book than close it.

Beside the superficiality that brevity forces on many of the chapters, the book is marred by the absence of maps and usable plans. Too few of the projects mentioned are illustrated, although most of the images are of sufficient size and well located in relation to the text. Editing has been rigorous, but missed the misspelling of Christopher Lasch's name. Where *Grassroots, Greystones & Glass Towers* is a handbook for education and action, *The Church of Notre-Dame in Montreal* has retained the large format and elegant design by Robert R. Reid of the first edition. Large, clear plates are gathered at the back with four appendices, including a history of art in the church, easily consultable endnotes, and bibliographies. In an extensively cross-referenced book, only plate 56 is incorrectly dated.

Like its subject, Toker's *Notre-Dame* is a lustrous landmark in scholarship undimmed by developments in theory and methodology. Demchinsky's *Grassroots, Greystones & Glass Towers* is particularly valuable for the vision it presents of a city integrated with its history.

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Himmelfarb, Gertrude. *Poverty and Compassion: The Social Ethic of the Late Victorians*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991. Pp. xii, 466. \$30.00 (U.S.).

The most interesting questions are often the most difficult to answer. When Gertrude Himmelfarb asked how the English thought about poverty throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it took nearly a decade and two large vol-

umes to provide her answers. The first volume, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age*, was published in 1984. In it she undertook an extensive review of different perceptions of poverty, focusing upon Adam Smith's treatment of poverty as a branch of moral philosophy and Thomas Malthus' view of it as a part of political economy. The current volume, *Poverty and Compassion: The Social Ethic of the Late Victorians*, continues the study by examining the intellectual origins of the modern welfare state. Both volumes are excellent examples of the historian's craft. Both also reflect Himmelfarb's strong views on social policy and on research technique.

The volumes share several assumptions. In the first place, these are histories of ideas, concerned with perceptions of poverty rather than with the nature, dimension or causes of poverty itself. She thus avoids direct involvement in the hoary "standard of living" debate, though she makes her own optimistic views known nonetheless. Further, she attempts to go past mere opinion or ideology to what she calls the "moral imagination" of English society. Moral imagination is not merely ideology in other clothing. To Himmelfarb it is that level of cognition which so penetrates and defines reality "that reality has no form of shape apart from it," as she puts it in *The Idea of Poverty*. This approach allowed her to assume that the values and perceptions which she detected informed a number of policies and actions, both public and private, which she leaves otherwise unexamined. Again the focus is upon what she thought rather than what was done.

In *Poverty and Compassion*, she mines the written literature of the period, beginning (as she had earlier ended) with Henry Mayhew, moving to Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree, through a number of less obvious philanthropists such as

Thomas Barnardo and Samuel Barnett, to more formal social and moral philosophers such as T. H. Green, Sidney and Beatrice Webb and Alfred Marshall, and to groups such as the Christian Socialists and Fabians. The changes in outlook which she detected were significant. In lieu of concern for the poverty of the few, the conviction emerged that the state was responsible for the welfare of the many. Concern for individual responsibility and morality was separated from questions of social policy. With this, Himmelfarb's argument comes full circle: Adam Smith's treatment of poverty as a dimension of moral philosophy has ultimately succumbed to Malthus' poverty as a dimension solely of political economy.

The welfare state which resulted from this new moral imagination failed, she argues, not only to achieve equality but, less forgivably, to eliminate poverty. The welfare state failed because the premises upon which it was based were one-sided and incomplete. At this point the book most obviously becomes a tract for the author's time. For the reader who overlooked or forgave the often pointed or barbed evaluations and comments scattered thickly throughout the book, Himmelfarb's warning to contemporary America becomes unmistakable.

Just as she warns her fellow citizens, she provides an example to her professional colleagues. On record in other of her essays as a severe and articulate critic of the claims of social historians, or the "new history," to primacy or superiority, she has presented the reader with an exhaustive analysis of largely traditional sources. The literature which she chose to examine was vast—so vast that it overwhelmed both her and her readers. Her insistence upon treating individuals and institutions at length resulted in long passages which were only partly assimilated into the main argument. The object of the

book is too often obscured by her delight in pursuing a myriad of by-ways and interesting diversions.

These points aside, this is a book for those who enjoy being witness to a sharp mind engaged in an on-going debate about the proper structure of society and the purposes for which it exists. It is a passionate book, an intelligent and even an elegant one. It is also one which, for many of its readers, will appear to be wrong-headed and unnecessarily polemical. It is certainly not a book for the passive reader. For these reasons I recommend it.

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Hiss, Tony. *The Experience of Place, a Completely New Way of Looking at and Dealing With Our Radically Changing Cities and Countryside.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc, 1990. Illustrations. \$30.00 (cloth); \$15.00 (paper).

Tony Hiss' book *The Experience of Place* is a thought-provoking examination of how we experience urban and rural places. It maintains that an increased understanding of the perception of place could lead to an improvement of the built environment.

Much of *The Experience of Place* originally appeared in the *New Yorker* magazine, where Hiss has worked since 1963. It is divided into two sections, "Experiencing Cities" and "Encountering the Countryside." In each, the author examines the factors that contribute to that special sense of connectedness engendered by successful urban spaces and unspoiled landscapes. Hiss believes that every human being has a "sixth sense": an ability to sense or experience places that has consistently been ignored in the planning process. He calls this ability "simultaneous perception." Hiss believes that understanding how we per-