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Harold Kalman's *Concise History of Canadian Architecture* is an outstanding achievement in recent scholarship. It enriches traditional approaches in architectural history with complex and multiple perspectives, including ethnography, regionalism, the vernacular, urbanism, and landscape design, all drawn against the backdrop of the nation's growth and development. Indeed, this work might more properly be described as a history of Canada as seen through the lens of the nation's built environment. Urbanists, often in the forefront of heritage preservation activities, will find this work a particularly valuable tool, as it provides meaning and context to so much of our built heritage. An abridgement of Kalman's earlier 2-volume *A History of Canadian Architecture* (Oxford University Press, 1994), this work is a thoughtful synthesis of his own and of existing scholarship in the field. As such, Kalman's work stands as the crowning achievement of a century's work in the study of Canada's built environment. This history, therefore, provokes us to reflect upon the trends and accomplishments in the field of Canadian architectural history in our times and to speculate upon future directions.¹

The close connection between the heritage movement and scholarship in the field of Canadian architectural history was established in the first half of the 20th century and continues to the present. The purposes of the two areas are intertwined and many of the protagonists are the same (Kalman himself is a highly respected heritage activist as well as scholar) and so any review of the literature of the field will inevitably reflect activities in heritage preservation. Before World War II, very little was undertaken in the field. Most active were a few architects and university professors who sought specifically Canadian imagery in historic architecture in order to identify and perpetuate national architectural traditions into the historical revival styles of the early 20th century. Others were talented amateur historians (such as Katharine Hale) who laid the foundations of the Canadian heritage movement by focussing attention on built heritage. In both cases, the emphasis was on inventorying individual buildings and observing their physical features. Descriptions were poetic and anecdotal, impressionistic rather than analytical.

The post-World-War-II building boom doomed much of Canada's built heritage to destruction, but this very destruction also galvanized both the heritage movement and scholarship. While it is true that many wonderful buildings and even whole neighbourhoods and landscapes were severely damaged by the anti-historicism of the post-War era, respect for the past percolated quietly and manifested itself in many constructive ways. Even as some schools of architecture ceased to teach courses in the history of architecture, others did not succumb to such anti-historicist extremism. Other developments, both national and international, stimulated both scholarship and preservation. The Massey-Lévesque Commission (1949) identified threats to Canadian culture and inspired action. The work of a national program of historic designation (begun in 1919) was bolstered with the

passage of the *Historic Sites and Monuments Board Act* of 1953. At the same time, several provinces enacted heritage legislation and many non-governmental bodies arose to contribute to safeguarding our built past. International standards and conventions put the study of Canadian architecture and its safeguard within the context of the greater heritage movement. A parallel development to this search for national identity was the struggle to maintain the quality of urban life. The social nirvana promised by modern architecture failed to materialize, as many modern projects fell far short of expectations from the day they opened their doors. The disappointment of expensive, American-style public housing projects such as Toronto's Regent's Park contrasted vividly with successful urban gentrification in nearby Cabbagetown. The success of such urban renewal campaigns flew in the face of contemporary planning philosophy and encouraged the thoughtful to realize that the past did indeed have something to teach us.

What was the nature of this architectural past? The key work of this early era was Alan Gowans' *Looking at Architecture in Canada* (Oxford University Press, 1958), followed by his 1966 work, *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life*, appearing in a timely fashion the year before the Canadian centennial and its stimulus to nationalism. For all its limitations, the very appearance of Gowans' work was a tremendous achievement. He threw down the gauntlet, as it were, and challenged scholars and heritage professionals to examine Canada's built heritage with a more informed and critical eye. His book was a landmark, less for what it said and more for what it provoked.² Subsequent generations of authors responded to his challenge.

Traditional Perspectives on the Built Environment

Biography, formalism, functionalism, material studies, bibliographic works, and photographic surveys have dominated post-war scholarship in Canadian architectural history as elsewhere, largely because these types of studies provide the solid foundations upon which all credible scholarship and heritage preservation work are built. Biographies present a particular challenge to the architectural historian, for the architect expresses himself through brick and stone, not words. Biographers, therefore, must unite precise documentary research with keen visual analysis in order to extract meaning from the accomplishments of a lifetime. Outstanding biographies include Susan Wagg's study of teacher, architect, and nationalist, Percy Erskine Nobbs (*Percy Erskine Nobbs, architect, artist, craftsman*, McGill-Queen's, 1982); France Gagnon-Pratte's profile of society architects, the Maxwell brothers (*Maisons de campagne des Montréalais 1892-1924: les frères Maxwell*, Méridien, 1987); Christina Cameron's meticulous portrait of architect and engineer Charles Baillairgé (*Charles Baillairgé: Architect and Engineer*, McGill-Queen's, 1989); Martin Seggar's luscious work on Samuel Maclure (*The Buildings of Samuel Maclure: In Search of Appropriate Form*, Sono Nis, 1987); and Robert Tuck's tiny gem on William Critchlow Harris (*Gothic Dreams: The Life and Times of a Canadian Architect, William Critchlow Harris, 1854-1913*, Dundurn, 1978). These and other biographies concentrate on the turn of the century, that golden age of the individual architect-as-artist, just before the rise of the corporate architect. The

rise of corporate firms of architects and in-house design units within other corporate bodies (such as the banks, railway companies, and many other 20th-century corporations) challenges future scholars to probe the nature of corporate design, whose work dominates the Canadian urban setting. So far the only corporate body extensively studied is the federal Department of Public Works, examined by Douglas Owsram (*Construire pour les Canadiens: Histoire des Travaux publics 1840–1960*, Travaux publics, 1979); Margaret Archibald (*By Federal Design: the Chief Architect's Branch of the Department of Public Works 1881–1914*, Parks Canada, 1983); and Janet Wright (*Crown Assets: the Architecture of the Department of Public Works 1867–1967*, University of Toronto Press, 1997). Despite the rise of corporate design, we are still wedded to the notion of architecture as the expression of inspired individualism. Curiously, there is only one study on the architectural profession itself, Kelly Crossman's brilliant *Architecture in Transition: from Art to Practice, 1885–1906*, McGill Queen's, 1987, which focusses on the early years of the profession's emergence in Canada. The field begs for an expanded study of the architectural profession, as well as studies of its sister disciplines, engineering, urban planning, and landscape design. Author Robert Hill's forthcoming biographical dictionary will no doubt stimulate work in these areas.

Analysis of the formal qualities of architecture runs as a thread through modern scholarship (including Kalman's). Since book publication in this country is aimed substantially at the general public and heritage activists (rather than scholars), formal analyses are generally free of the rhetorical density that tends to limit architectural analysis to academic circles in other countries. Several focussed studies of individual architectural styles were produced by the National Historic Sites Directorate of Parks Canada (Cameron and Wright's *The Second Empire in Canadian Architecture* (1983); Brosseau's *Le style néo-gothique dans l'architecture au Canada* (1980), Wright's *Architecture of the Picturesque in Canada*; Clerk's *Le style palladien dans l'architecture au Canada* (1984), and Maitland's *The Queen Anne Revival in Canadian Architecture* (1990) and *Neoclassicism in Canadian Architecture* (1983). Other style guides purposefully demystify stylistic analysis, such as Blumenson's *Ontario Architecture: A Guide to the Styles and Building Terms, 1784 to the Present* (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1990); and Maitland, Hucker and Ricketts' *A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles* (Broadview, 1992), and so they have become perennial favourites with teachers, heritage activists, and civic planners. More complex studies of formalism find voice in architectural journals (*AI*, the *Society for the Study of Architecture Journal*, etc), and it is here that scholars push the envelope of analysis in their ongoing dialogue with each other.

Great monuments are often deemed to be so because of their exceptional formal qualities. There are surprisingly few studies of individual monuments, and most are journal articles rather than monographs. While most urban settings are dominated by the average rather than the exceptional, we should not lose sight of the role that landmark buildings play as determinants in the evolution of urban settings. A few great monuments are influential beyond their own contexts: Douglas Richardson's engaging

and poetic *A Not Unobtrusive Building: University College and Its History* (University College, 1990) establishes the influence exerted by University College in Toronto far beyond its immediate surroundings, inspiring architects in other parts of the country to attempt works of equal quality and import.

Functional studies examine ways in which buildings respond to individual and societal needs. For fine scholarship and an excellent profile of the purpose of a building type there are the Parks Canada studies on town halls (*Town Halls of Canada*, 1987) and courthouses (Margaret Carter, et al, *Early Canadian Court Houses* 1983). Eric Arthur's *The Barn: A Vanishing Landmark in North America* (McClelland and Stewart, 1972) has yet to be matched for its remarkable thoroughness and emotive charm. Religious architecture has inspired some fine works, including Marion McRae's *Hallowed Walls: Church Architecture in Upper Canada*, Clarke Irwin, 1975); Elizabeth Pacey's *More Stately Mansions: Churches of Nova Scotia 1830–1910* (Lancelot, 1983); and H. Scott Smith's *The Historic Churches of Prince Edward Island* (Boston Mills, 1986). As in studies of formalism, functional studies in Canada have been dominated so far by inventory and catalogue. More of this kind of work is necessary, but there is also a need to grow beyond the inventory stage and look at style and function as manifestations of social meaning.

Regional studies at both the provincial and municipal levels account for some of the best and most thorough analysis and research. Eric Arthur and Stephen A. Otto's several editions of *Toronto: No Mean City* (University of Toronto Press, several dates), is the definitive work on that city. Luc Noppen's many writings on Quebec City – so numerous they cannot be cited here – place scholarship on Quebec's architecture head and shoulders above scholarship done on any other location in Canada.

Rarest of all are the studies of building materials. Perhaps it is thought that this subject would have too limited an audience, but surely John Rempel's *Building with Wood and other aspects of Nineteenth Century Building in Central Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 1980) and Mary Cullen's *Slate Roofing in Canada* (Parks Canada, 1990) have found enough of an audience to justify more works that are material specific. The modern heritage movement desperately needs more information on modern materials, and this kind of information tends to appear in technical journals, such as the *Journal of the Association for Preservation Technology*. John Ritchie's *Canada Builds 1867–1967* (University of Toronto Press, 1967) is still the only comprehensive study of building technology.

The unsung heroes of research are the bibliographies, anthologies, biographical dictionaries, and document studies. They are often neglected but works such as Claude Bergeron's *Index des périodiques d'architecture canadiens 1940–1980* (Université Laval, 1986) and Loren R. Lerner and Mary F. Williamson's *Art and Architecture in Canada: A Bibliography and Guide to the Literature to 1981* (University of Toronto Press, 1991) are the backbone of all credible research. Everyone in the field owes a debt of gratitude to Robert Hill, who has been unfailingly generous with his research notes for his as-yet-to-be-published biographical dictionary of Canadian architects. There is apparently a

great deal of Canadian material in Macmillan's *Dictionary of Art* but this work is so expensive that no Canadian institution that I know of has a copy. Hurtig's *Canadian Encyclopaedia* includes a great deal of material on architecture, urbanism, and other aspects of the built environment, reflecting an acknowledged understanding of the importance of this field to the lay reader. The Blackader Library at McGill University has made the turn-of-the-century journal *Canadian Architect and Builder* available on line, and more of this kind of e-publishing has to happen, especially for updatable and unprofitable research tools such as bibliographies, indices and the like.

Let us not forget the eye candy of built heritage – picture books. It is fashionable in academic circles to turn up one's nose at "coffee table" books, but our obsession with the word often blinds us to the story that physical objects long to tell us. Like music, there is a point at which one can have too much analysis and not enough enjoyment. Superior photographic surveys inspire us to see the beauty of the built environment and they are often effective at convincing those who make decisions that this or that site is worth saving. Not a few of us were lured into this field by images whose beauty make one gasp. In this regard, we must congratulate Kalman and Oxford University Press for not skimping on the number and quality of the images. Anyone who has ever looked at a breathtakingly beautiful construction as captured by a photographer's discerning eye – be it Toronto City Hall or an abandoned Ukrainian prairie home – and has not been moved, has no poetry in his soul and should find another line of work.

Architecture as social history: regionalism, vernacular, urbanism

Alongside these traditional viewpoints on architecture are the new perspectives that have enriched the field, as they have enriched studies in the humanities generally. These new perspectives have, in some cases, a rather exploratory quality, and so we find them articulated either in scholarly journals or integrated into monographs of a more traditional bent, such as Kalman's.

An emerging awareness of urbanism as a new discipline appears in the 1970s. On one hand are the print-oriented studies of urbanism, pioneered by Stetler, Artibise, and others. Visually oriented municipal studies tend to come in the form of building-by-building guides and walking tours, and the sense of urban context in these guides varies depending upon the interests of the individual authors. This bifurcation between print-oriented and visually oriented history is nowhere more obvious than in studies of urbanism, and only the Lorimer series on Canadian cities stands out for its thoughtful union of physical and textual documentation. While urbanists may lament the fact that Kalman's *Concise History* omits the chapter on Urbanism that appeared in the 2-volume work, look closely: he has integrated much of this material in the ongoing text, so that there is a more illuminating understanding of buildings and the patterns that they form in the urban landscape.

Vernacular architecture does not admit of easy definition: definitions vary, and they often say more about the definer than the subject. Examining architecture for its expression of ethnocultu-

ral, gender, or Aboriginal qualities is a new path fraught with pitfalls for the unwary. The best monograph on Aboriginal architecture in Canada is Peter Nabokov's *Native American Architecture* (Oxford University Press, 1989); the few articles on historic Aboriginal architecture are anthropological in nature, while the contemporary renaissance of Aboriginal architecture receives little mention beyond unqualified applause for anything produced by Douglas Cardinal. Authors feel some comfort level identifying traditional architectural forms of groups like the Ontario Mennonites or of regions of the country before the late 19th century, but the definition of the vernacular within the context of the 20th century will need some work.

Which leads us to a discussion of "modern" in architecture, an interdisciplinary discussion (and often full-blown public debate) if ever there was one. Modernism and post-modernism are of course among the more challenging aspects of architecture to understand. To date there is no single monograph on the architecture of the 20th century, but there are some excellent regionally based studies, especially Ruth Cawker's *Viewpoints: One Hundred years of Architecture in Ontario 1889–1989* (Ontario Association of Architects, 1989); Trevor Boddy's tiny gem, *Modern Architecture in Alberta* (Alberta Culture, 1987); and Claude Bergeron's inspiring, *Architectures du XX^e siècle au Québec* (Méridien, 1989); as well as ongoing debate in the scholarly press and in newspapers and magazines. Kalman offers an expanded chapter on 20th-century architecture in his *Concise History*, and here he reverts to a solid, aesthetic analysis of great monuments, with some interpretation of regionalism. He doesn't attempt to address 20th-century vernacular or urbanism, which is a shame since he covers these two topics well in the other eras covered by the book. Kalman's benchmark chapter on modern architecture will challenge future scholars in this field, in much the same way that Gowans' 1958 book challenged his successors. Urbanists need to follow debate on the modern for their voices have been much too soft to date. Public commentary greets every new building that appears within the fabric of our cities, and urbanists need to enter into these debates more often and more forcefully if these debates are to be well-grounded and thoughtful.

Kalman's book is also as surely a product of activist literature as of the scholarly, beginning with Ann Falkner's *Without our Past?* (University of Toronto Press, 1977), followed by works by Holdsworth, Fram and others, including Kalman's own publications on the processes of heritage preservation. In this field, articles in newspapers and popular journals (*The Beaver*, *Heritage*, *Canadian Geographic*, *Continuité*) have been enormously influential. These works built on foundations laid by activist organizations in which urbanists have played an important role, including Heritage Canada; ICOMOS Canada (International Council on Monuments and Sites); APT (Association for Preservation Technology); SSAC (Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada); as well as numerous local and provincial bodies and centres of scholarship such as the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal; the Canadian Architecture Archives at the University of Calgary; the Blackader Library of McGill University; the National Historic Sites Directorate of Parks Canada; and the Heritage Conservation Programme of Public Works and Government Serv-

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ices Canada. It is a healthy sign that the private sector finds a place in heritage conservation, as witnessed by the rise of consulting firms like Kalman's, that serve as constructive interface between corporate, government, and community groups.

As this work is a synthesis, the gaps in Kalman's book are the gaps in the field and they challenge us to launch new work from the various departure points suggested by his engaging narrative. Although Kalman hears the Aboriginal voice clearly in modern architecture, a more expansive survey is required to bring our understanding of Aboriginal peoples' architecture beyond the anthropological. While Kalman does well at listening to Aboriginal voices as well as those of varied cultural origins, there is no women's voice. Kalman's last chapter on modern and post-modern architecture will serve as the standard against which future overviews will be compared: his categorizations of the 20th century will be challenged for some time to come, but there are many different ways of shuffling the modern deck. While Kalman's coverage of modern is generally enlightening, there is little on the modern in Atlantic Canada, little on the near-north (Prince George, Noranda, Sudbury, etc.) and nothing on the Canadian military, the biggest builder of new communities in 20th-century Canada. Scholars researching company towns, corporate patrons, and 20th-century urban planning will find plenty to write about. Kalman alerts the reader to sites that are in part the product of conservation efforts, such as the Halifax waterfront and Louisbourg, and in doing so he alerts us to the need for a critical examination of heritage conservation, for it is often through this lens that many Canadians experience their own history.

The common thread throughout scholarship on Canadian architectural history and which emerges in Kalman's work is the ongoing obsession with national identity. The search for the master narrative is increasingly challenged by post-modern discourse and deconstructionist scholarship. What is characteristic about the architecture found in the northern half of this continent, and what does it say about the people who built it? It is interesting to see that Kalman himself has grown beyond his own fairly narrowly stylistic identification of late-medieval Chateau as a national' style, to examine more abstract qualities of national personality – compromise, restraint, lack of extremism. Readers seeking writing that confronts the master narrative need to look in journals and attend conferences. The strength of Kalman's work is that he throws a broad enough mantel over the subject to accommodate both the master narrative and challenges to it

and in so doing he illuminates patterns of meaning and value, so that one finishes Kalman's book with a sense of resolution and clarity, confident that architecture truly is the expression of a particular people.

While Kalman's *Concise History* should satisfy as a textbook and for general reading, scholars and heritage professionals will need to refer to the two-volume version because of the lack of notes in the *Concise History*. "Concise" is a bit of a misnomer as this work is too large and too expensive for the general pocket-book. This is a shame, considering that this is the only recently published general history of Canada available to the public, and for this reason it is too important a work to serve only as a textbook. One hesitates to suggest cutting such a fine work, but perhaps contracting the intense focus on settlement eras, or collapsing a couple of chapters together (4 and 5, e.g.) might have put this work into a tidy enough package so that it could find its rightful place in every household. Perhaps something of the size and price of Dennis Reid's *Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Oxford University Press, 1988) might have been the model to emulate. In any case, the appearance of this concise work extrapolated upon its original two-volume version offers the opportunity to praise the unsung heroes of publishing, in this case editor William Toyne, who has been a long-time friend of architectural history in Canada.

There was a time when the study of architectural history was something of a hothouse discipline, a creed of connoisseurship practised by a few cognoscenti. But the physical degradation of our surroundings has made activists of us all. Harold Kalman's exceptional work is a testament to the enriched meaning of architectural history and its ongoing value to our society. His book is a challenge to urbanists and architectural historians alike to improve and broaden the links between the disciplines, for the sake of the future quality of our urban environments.

Notes

1. This is an overview of recent literature focussing on monographs. It does not deal substantially with journal articles, nor does it treat works whose focus is not buildings.
2. Pierre Mayrand and John Bland produced one other general book of the times, *Three Centuries of Architecture in Canada/Trois siècles d'architecture au Canada* (Federal Publications, 1971), also provocative for what it left unsaid.