

Innis's treatment of communications media as agents of historical causality was to inspire McLuhan. But perhaps even more so was Innis's analogical and elliptical mode of discourse. McLuhan was to take this personal style, elevate it to a form of methodology, and build a career. McLuhan, claiming Innis, James Joyce, and modern physics as his inspirations, sought to shatter what he believed were the linear patterns of thought that were imprinted on the mind by typography but which were becoming outmoded in an age of instantaneous electronic communications. Patterson accepts McLuhan's claim as the heir to Innis, despite obvious differences between Innis's focus on the relation between communications and political power and McLuhan's preoccupation with the effects of technology on the collective psyche.

From Innis, Patterson elaborates an analysis of the 1837 Rebellion through a focus on newspapers and pioneer roads. I'll leave it to experts on Upper Canadian history to judge this endeavour. From McLuhan, Patterson appropriates tools for examining narrative and Whiggish biases in Canadian historiography. It is not clear what Patterson finds so useful here. He specifically applies two concepts that McLuhan was fond of: "figure/ground" relations and the "cliché/archetype." Despite attempts to use the former to discuss contexts for various

historiographical ideas, it is never made clear why figure/ground is superior to more commonplace words like, well, "context." As for cliché/archetype, despite a 27-page essay on the history of these two useful words, Patterson comes no closer than McLuhan did to providing his working definition of either. In fact when Patterson does apply them, in his essay on the ideas of "Family Compact" and "Responsible Government," he conflates them into the single construct, "cliché/archetype." This ambiguity underlines his failure to present compelling reasons for a McLuhan-inspired application of these words or for preferring them to others like "myth," "model" or "paradigm."

As an exercise in intellectual history this book will be, as the polite expression goes, thought provoking. Patterson's idiosyncratic juxtaposition of Marshall McLuhan and Lord Durham may well prove fruitful. Time will tell. To the extent that Patterson has insisted that the study of communications is part of history, and not of some social-pseudo-science, he has also performed a valuable service. But for historians interested in communications and in material history, the book is less satisfying. In this regard, the work of James W. Carey offers a more suitable introduction to and elaboration of the work of Innis and McLuhan.

**Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross,**  
***Formes et modes : le costume à Montréal au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle /***  
***Form and Fashion: Nineteenth-Century Montreal Dress***

**CHRISTINA BATES**

Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross. *Formes et modes : le costume à Montréal au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle / Form and Fashion: Nineteenth-Century Montreal Dress*. Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1992. 95 p., 73 illus. Paper \$29.95, ISBN 1-895615-00-3.

*Form and Fashion* is one in a series of eight handsome catalogues of inaugural exhibitions produced for the May 1992 re-opening of the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal. *Form and Fashion* is also a monograph on the topic of fashion in Montreal in the nine-

teenth century. The book contains both English and French texts.

The catalogue presents sixteen examples of nineteenth-century feminine fashion exhibited on mannequins. The ensembles, all drawn from the splendid McCord costume collection, are remarkably well-documented. Most are of Montreal or Quebec origin, and in several cases the identity of the wearer is known. The author has drawn upon another rich collection in the McCord Museum, the Notman Photographic Archives, to provide a context for the costumes. Each garment is accompanied by

one or more comparable Notman portraits or fashion journal illustrations. These figures are, alas, too small to be very useful. The text calls attention to comparative details that cannot be detected in so small a reproduction.

The presentation of the garments follows an art historical format. The dresses are shown against neutral backgrounds, and except for the occasional prop of fan, umbrella or calling card case, the setting gives no hint of historical context. The descriptions of the garments are meticulously detailed, and the dramatic evolution of the feminine silhouette over the century is well illustrated. An excellent glossary aids the reader with the more technical fashion terms.

The art historical approach is maintained in the author's following essays. She takes a firm stand in the debate among costume historians about the purpose of costume research (see *Dress* 14 [1988]): should costume be studied for its own sake – for its aesthetic and technical qualities – or to illuminate the political, social or economic context in which the costume was used?

In her discussion of Montreal fashion, Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross is clearly in the first camp. Her allegiance goes against recent scholarship, in which the study of costume in its social context prevails. The author feels that costume historians have applied socio-economic influences to fashion too slavishly, and these factors often fail to adequately explain evolution in costume. Her thesis, developed from art historical theory, is that changes in form spring from an internal dynamic within fashion itself, independent of historical events and influences. The process of change is logical and cyclical; fashion constantly repeats itself. Outside influences such as wars or economic depressions may retard or hasten the process, but the pre-ordained pattern will always emerge.

To illustrate this internal dynamic at work, the author has used the garments in the catalogue, as well as the well documented and comprehensive Notman photograph collection. In her essay "Notman Photographs: The Dynamic of a Sleeve," the author presents a test case for her theory of the internal process of fashion change. She examines, through the Notman portraits, a very particular stylistic evolution: the shape of women's sleeves in Montreal in the 1890s.

From the plain, tight sleeve of the late 1880s, a few nascent hints of a puff soon appeared, the beginnings of a greater and greater distortion

of the sleeve shape, which reached its evolutionary limit in the huge gigot or melon form, then collapsed returning to the flat sleeve by the late 1890s. The author observes that when a direction in style has been established, its own momentum will push it along that path to its limits, then it will retreat or change direction.

The last essay in the catalogue, "Collective Taste: Montreal Fashion Plates and Views," is somewhat of a caveat to the argument for internal dynamic. Although fashion is controlled by its own formal laws, understanding and acceptance by its public will also influence the path it takes: "The actual direction of fashion, including changes in stylish forms, shapes or silhouette, is thus dictated to a certain degree by ... collective taste" (p. 69).

Society in nineteenth-century Montreal learned about, and passed judgement on, the latest styles in numerous fashion journals published in Montreal, the United States, France, Britain, and the rest of Europe. By a careful comparison of fashion plates in Montreal and foreign journals, the author establishes that Montreal did not lack for the latest fashion news, and indeed was a fashion capital in North America. The journals borrowed fashion illustrations from one another, and there was a very short time lag between the appearance of a fashion plate in a European journal and its reappearance in a Montreal journal. Indeed Montreal was quicker than the United States in reproducing fashion plates, and sometimes took the lead role, which might be explained by Canada's closer ties to Europe. This analysis of fashion journals is accompanied by four useful appendices listing foreign fashion journals available in Montreal, and a comparison of fashion plates in *The Canadian Illustrated News* and foreign journals.

Montrealers were further exposed to haute couture through the display of fashionable attire worn by the bon ton at the theatre, garrison balls, exhibitions and pleasure parks, of which there were numerous reports and illustrations in the newspapers. The author concludes that fashion journals and public display provided opportunities for the dissemination of fashion. The actual mechanism for the creation of collective taste and the influence that collective taste had on new fashion trends is not addressed in this essay.

Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross maintains that fashion changes originate from an inner source, so that collective taste may influence, but not dictate, the direction fashion eventually takes.

The evidence for an internal dynamic in fashion is convincing, but begs the question "how does it happen?" Sleeves don't change shape of their own accord. This anthropomorphism leaves out the role of the designers, producers and promoters of fashion. Where did they get their ideas, and how much influence did they have?

Any good book will spark many questions and *Form and Fashion* is no exception. As a catalogue, it contains excellent photographs and descriptive information of an important Canadian costume collection. As a monograph, it is thought provoking, and a serious contribution to Canadian material culture.

## **New Brunswick Museum, Music of the Eye: Architectural Drawings of Canada's First City, 1822 to 1914**

**GREGG FINLEY**

New Brunswick Museum, "Music of the Eye: Architectural Drawings of Canada's First City, 1822 to 1914"

Curator: Gary K. Hughes, Chief Curator, New Brunswick Museum

Accompanying publication: Catalogue, Gary K. Hughes, *Music of the Eye: Architectural Drawings of Canada's First City, 1822 to 1914* (Published jointly by the New Brunswick Museum and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, 1992) 136 pp., produced with financial support from the Museums Assistance Programme, Department of Communications.

**Itinerary:**

March 1 – May 1, 1991, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax;

September 6 – October 6, 1991, Nichel Art Museum, University of Calgary;

November 21 – December 31, 1991, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull;

July 1 – September 22, 1992, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.

Saint John, New Brunswick, lays claim to being Canada's first city. A charter of incorporation dating back to 1785 gave legal status to this frontier outpost on the shores of Fundy Bay. The arrival of thousands of British sympathizers following the American War of Independence determined much of the city's Loyalist spirit and Georgian substance. Notwithstanding their bond with Britain, these "loyal" Americans

brought something of the cultural complexion of the thirteen colonies with them to the northern wilderness. Among other things, this meant certain views about architecture and the built environment.

Despite the ravages of time, a series of nineteenth-century fires and a latter-day scheme for urban renewal, it is remarkable that portions of Saint John still retain something of the port city's colonial charm. Successive generations of heritage enthusiasts from near and far have affirmed the significance of the city's private and public buildings. Over the past decade or so, a growing number of commentaries on Saint John's architectural history have appeared in both popular and scholarly publications. Still, until recently, a systematic examination of the city's architects and their work had not appeared.

The New Brunswick Museum's national travelling exhibition, "Music of the Eye: Architectural Drawings of Canada's First City, 1822 to 1914," and the accompanying catalogue bearing the same title, come together to offer important new information on Saint John's cultural landscape. Curated by Gary K. Hughes, the New Brunswick Museum's Chief Curator, the exhibition consists of 42 architectural drawings covering a variety of building projects between 1822 and 1914. The renderings themselves represent both working drawings and more formal presentation drawings prepared for clients. In the 136-page, fully illustrated (including 16 colour plates), and annotated catalogue,