

with the public perception reflected in laws prohibiting both the sale of contraceptives and the provision of birth control information. However, the evidence provided by fertility rates shows that Canadians were indeed limiting their family size and "ironically, so were physicians, since they were among the groups with the smallest families in Canada" (p. 149) though whether this resulted from using the devices Mitchinson lists is uncertain.

The real strength of the book lies in the next six chapters dealing with childbirth, gynæcology and insanity. In two chapters Mitchinson describes how doctors displaced midwives as the birth attendant of choice, by offering "an alternative portrayed as safe and scientific," and she argues that by their intervention "physicians, not patients, were defining the meaning of childbirth." Her use of hospital records in these and the following chapters provides the basis for original investigation into the development of operative obstetrics and gynæcological surgery in Canada and the role of the hospital as the changing site of medical activity. Ironically, given her argument that doctors' attitudes about women's "frailty" ignored reality, the cases she cites of women suffering birth injuries and debilitating gynæcological disorders and her remark that "One woman in five who married and started a family did not survive to the end of her child-bearing years" (p. 229) go some way to explain doctors' perceptions of women as being especially vulnerable to ill health.

In common with other historians, Mitchinson argues that technology enabled gynæcology and operative obstetrics to develop as medical specialities; suggesting the importance of technology are two photographs of mid-nineteenth century instruments immediately following the preface. Her discussion of the doctors' own criticism of their peers' apparent overuse of instruments and the rationale accompanying increased surgical intervention provides a valuable interpretive context for material culture specialists. However, not being an historian of technology, she is unable to set the development of this instrumentation within a wider context where we find in the nineteenth century that not only women's bodies but men's too were being "invaded" and "visualized." But she perceptively recognizes the results of

increased intervention and use of instruments: a changing patient-doctor relationship, more power to specialists, increasing use of the hospital. She skillfully delineates the complexity of medical practice and attitudes that add considerably to our understanding of practice at this time.

In the last two chapters dealing with the experiences of insane women, Mitchinson is most clearly able to show how their medical treatment was influenced by their doctors' cultural attitudes to women. Insanity affects both men and women but women were supposed to be more susceptible because of the "close relationship that was thought to exist between a woman's reproductive system and her mind" (p. 310). She describes how R. M. Bucke at the London Asylum was able to institute gynæcological surgery such as hysterectomy and ovariectomy to cure insanity, despite opposition from his more conservative peers, and dubious success.

By implication Mitchinson aligns herself with those historians who strive for a balanced approach to the history of women patients and their male doctors, remarking "doctors themselves were among the most vocal critics of the medical treatment of women. In fact it would be difficult to criticize the medical profession in any way that some of its members had not already done" (p. 361). She gives a sense of a profession scrambling to establish its role, of professional rivalry, of men ignorant yet willing to pontificate, of practice both experimental and swayed by fashion. However, if doctors are not the villains, women are certainly the heroes "who despite severe ailments, carried on with their daily responsibilities because they simply had no alternative" (p. 363). These glimpses into the reality of women's actual health problems together with the analysis of what medical treatment actually consisted of would also be of great value to museologists responsible for interpreting the lives of nineteenth-century women in our living history sites.

This study, which is a welcome addition to historiography of Canadian medical history, will undoubtedly stimulate further research and be referred to as the standard work on the subject for many years.

Witold Rybczynski, *Waiting for the Weekend*

HALLIE E. BOND

Rybczynski, Witold. *Waiting for the Weekend*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1991. 260 pp. Cloth \$25.99, ISBN 0-670-83001-1.

Witold Rybczynski's *Waiting for the Weekend* is so wide ranging, geographically as well as chronologically, that at first glance it seems of little direct application to the material culture with which most of us in North America deal. The broad perspective it offers, however, is precisely what gives it its value for us. It is not, perhaps, the first book one should read in beginning a project in the history of leisure and recreation, but once one has the basic outline of one's story in mind and a familiarity with the material culture involved, it can prompt one to ask more questions of the evidence.

Rybczynski presents as his purpose an examination of how the weekend has become "the chief temporal institution of the modern age" and how this has affected the nature of leisure. From the younger Pliny to Eliade, from psychiatry to philosophy, from Japan to St. Andrews by the Sea, Rybczynski pulls observations on free time – how regular periods of it came about and what people do with it. His chapters on the evolution of the planetary week, the appearance of a regular special day, and the weekend as it evolved all over the Western world are of only peripheral interest to a student of material culture in North America, but do suit the essay nature of his book. More useful are his chapters on weekend retreats, weekend pastimes and, in particular, an exploration of popular urban leisure.

Perhaps the most appropriate chapter for the student of the history of leisure and recreation is "Sunday in the Park," the importance of which is emphasized by selection of Seurat's "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte" for the dust cover illustration. In it Rybczynski presents in brief but comprehensible summary the major trends in popular culture that should form the basis of most studies of leisure and recreation in industrialized North America: the increasing democratization of leisure and the subsequent attempts of the better-off to distance themselves from the hoi polloi, the beginnings of an emphasis on

outdoor pursuits for leisure activities, the increasing commercial, public, and communal nature of urban leisure, and the separation of leisure and recreation from the workaday world, both in time and place.

Some of Rybczynski's theses are easier to test with material evidence than others. Take, for example, the trend towards the democratization of leisure. By turning to the collection at my institution, the Adirondack Museum, I might look for the following sorts of evidence: What is available in camping equipment and when was it widely available? What are the relative prices of such equipment? How does recreational dress for women evolve? An important piece of camping equipment in this area is the canoe. When were cheap canoes available and when did they out-distance the indigenous Adirondack guideboat as the preferred boat? What were the modifications in design of canoes to suit novices out for pleasure paddling, as contrasted with design suited to wilderness transportation?

Some of Rybczynski's other themes cannot be verified so easily by material evidence, and indeed seem to have shaky underpinnings as history. Several of them are discussed in his concluding chapter, "The Problem of Leisure." Rybczynski begins the chapter by referring to a 1919 study by a Hungarian psychiatrist suggesting that certain neuroses were caused by the weekend freedom from normal patterns of behavior. It is a convenient peg on which to hang the chapter, but is significant historically only if we know if such "holiday neuroses" were very widespread. Rybczynski doesn't tell us. He then dips into Eliade for an explanation of sacred times and spaces, illustrating it with the example of the Navajo hogan, and suggests that the appeal of the weekend is due to "a resonance with some ancient inclination, buried deep in the human psyche." This seems unconvincing to me; perhaps it is because I can think of no way to test it using the material culture and historical documents with which I am familiar.

But Rybczynski did not set out to write a work of history. As he himself acknowledges in his "Notes on Sources" (and it is a pity he

didn't use footnotes), the book is more in the nature of an extended essay than a work of research. It is very much written with the attitude of the 1990s and the author often seems to select historical facts to accord with his observations of late twentieth century people

rather than letting the facts dictate his conclusions. Nevertheless, testing his conclusions against historical evidence, both documentary and material, can give one a fresh perspective on the past.

**Peter Corley-Smith,
*The Ring of Time:
The Story of the British Columbia Provincial Museum and
White Bears and Other Curiosities:
The First 100 Years of the Royal British Columbia Museum***

DAVID RICHESON

Corley-Smith, Peter. *The Ring of Time: The Story of the British Columbia Provincial Museum*. Victoria: Special Publication No. 8, British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1985. 106 pp., 58 illus. Paper \$12.95, ISBN 0-7718-8428-1. *White Bears and Other Curiosities: The First 100 Years of the Royal British Columbia Museum*. Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1989. 148 pp., 143 illus. Paper \$12.95, ISBN 0-7718-8740-X.

The two books by Peter Corley-Smith deal in tandem with the history of the first 100 years of the British Columbia Provincial Museum (now the Royal British Columbia Museum). *White Bears and Other Curiosities: The First 100 Years of the Royal British Columbia Museum* covers the history of the museum between 1886 and 1968 as seen through a selection of incidents from the professional lives of the museum's first three curators and directors. *The Ring of Time: The Story of the British Columbia Provincial Museum* describes the 1968-1985 exhibit creation process that led to the impressive galleries in the new building. It also describes in lesser detail various aspects of the museum in and around the Heritage Court. Both books are gracefully written and lavishly illustrated with contemporary photographs or interesting illustrations. *The Ring of Time* concludes with a two-page chronology of the museum's history, but it lacks the index added to *White Bears*. Neither book includes a bibliography or citations of sources for the fre-

quent quotations from original documents used to illustrate the books' major premises.

Despite the combined presentation of a 100-year period the two books are based on entirely different approaches. *White Bears* presents the history of the evolution of the museum as a function of the personalities of the earliest curators and directors. It highlights their relationships with special interest groups, and the Provincial Government and details conflicts with other staff, while focusing on a few colourful episodes such as the pursuit of the illusive white bears of British Columbia from which the book's title is drawn. The author departs from this approach at the end of the 1950s because "the staff had grown to 14 and a separate book would be required to record all their activities." *The Ring of Time* differs entirely in that it describes the intellectual process within the museum that led to the selection and creation of exhibit themes and final exhibit gallery layout. References are made to personalities involved only by position title, and not a single individual is mentioned by name. The result is an abrupt contrast between two books linked in time and in general subject, but not in approach.

Assessed independently, one book has appeal for bringing into focus the human side of museum work, and the other for attempting to provide insight into the process through which museum collections, museum research, artistic creativity and funds are brought together to produce museum galleries. Museum curators,