

discipline (she makes the boy practice) against the father's desire not to be bothered with his son's banging on the piano (he makes the boy quit). This is one of the few moments in the book that acknowledges conflict.

Reading together is another lost art of the Victorian home, reports Anne Scott MacLeod. The adults read aloud to children and to each other in the 1890s, and read a diversity of texts, from Homer to Dickens; but professional child experts defined a separate literature that was good for children and not appealing to adults. Alongside the wholesome approved literature, a trash literature of adventure stories and westerns caught children's attention, while adults turned to more realistic fiction, and "the days of reading in the family circle were...over" (p. 122).

This anthology raises the question of whose taste is worth the historian's attention: only

cultures with "good taste" or the diversity of tastes found in American houses across classes? While many of these authors espouse an inclusive posture, nonetheless the essays depend a great deal on middle-class prescriptive literature and evidence. The working class gets few mentions. Likewise, the un-idealized aspects of these arts get little attention: Roell mentions the piano in the speakeasy; what about the racist lithograph or radio show?

Kenneth Ames, in his "Conclusion," believes that "the inner world of the home...evolves at a quieter and more serene rate" than the outside world (p. 185), and that much of the culture described in these essays is still with us, in spite of modernization and mass culture. The home as benign, made homelike by the feminine nurturing hand, may live still in imagination, but does not match up well with women's realities of the 1990s.

Nicole Eaton and Hilary Weston, *At Home in Canada*

JOAN MATTIE

Nicole Eaton and Hilary Weston; photography by Joy von Tiedemann, *At Home in Canada*, Toronto: Viking-Penguin, 1995, 158 pp., illus. Cloth \$55, ISBN 067084988X.

Beautiful in its photographs and layout, but eclectic and intellectually light in its content, *At Home in Canada* will disappoint anyone looking for a meaningful exploration of Canadian homes of a particular genre. The treatment is more like a glossy spread in the "Homes" section of a newspaper or magazine, with upbeat prose about charming owners.

Divided into 23 chapters representing individuals, couples, or groups (in the case of the Cistercian Monks in southwestern Ontario), the book attempts to show a politically-correct and geographically-inclusive spectrum — from the likes of an upper-class Chinese immigrant couple in Vancouver, to Alberta ranchers, a Sioux-Mohawk blended family in Saskatchewan, Blacks and Jews in Toronto, a painter returned to his working-class roots in Quebec, "old money" in New Brunswick, and so on. Not all are extremely wealthy, but most are super-achievers in their chosen fields — and some, such as Alex Colville, Mordecai Richler, and Governor-General Raymond Hnatyshyn, are

decidedly famous. Certainly all have the where-withal to express themselves well, usually with flair or cultivated taste, in their home environments. About half are, in fact, involved in the arts in some way. The authors, whose careers have touched on the fields of theatre and television (Eaton) and exclusive retailing (Weston is deputy chairman of Holt Renfrew), admit that their choices were based on "personal and visual appeal."

The book often suffers from a lack of conceptual focus, however. In a number of instances (perhaps when the homes offered limited photogenic opportunities, or when the photographer had particular luck away from the business at hand), attention is switched almost entirely to some other part of the subject's life or environment — canoeing on Georgian Bay, for example, or fishing in the Cascapedia River, cycling on a windswept beach, tending a cemetery, or preparing cattle for auction. Another of several tangents pursued is food, including gorgeous picnic fare, a splendid Easter feast, a Christmas table setting in a perfectly decorated Victorian home. The seductively artistic presentation of these objects, contexts and activities seems to distract from, rather than add to the exploration of "home."

Beautiful photography is mainly what this book is all about. Photographer Joy von Tiedemann, whose work has graced the likes of *City and Country Home* and *Toronto Life* for over twenty-five years, has, in this 161-page volume, given us a grand compendium of her style. Though she favours the extravagantly posed or at least carefully composed shot, she rarely relies on cliché, opting instead for more imaginative, artistic or playful presentations. Lighting often lends a sumptuous quality — whether natural and seized in fleeting moments, manipulated to bring out the richness or coolness of materials, or used for dramatic effect. And what a wonderful eye for geometry! Through Tiedemann's lens, painter William Pehudoff, working on the floor and surrounded by canvasses bearing his own slashes of colour, becomes an aesthetic accent in a totally angular composition. Elsewhere, colours are played against colours, and shapes against shapes, creating intriguing balances and counter-balances. Other photographer's tricks come into play, from framing techniques, and emphasis on lines that lead the eye into the picture plane, to delightful narrative touches (such as the toddler's dropped tutu by the bathtub), suggestive of small vignettes of life.

But in this book, real life is most often kept at bay. One rarely has the feeling of candidly peering into another's personal domain. Instead, people within these pages appear more like carefully arranged objects than the complex creatures we know our fellow human beings to be. Perhaps this distancing, however, is what has enabled us to have any peek at all into their largely privileged lives. These subjects, looking

their best and endlessly flattered by the photographer and by their own created environments, are in control — a far cry from the underclass subjects that have sometimes been treated in photographic essays or ethnographic studies. In their case, lack of power has often set up an imbalance between the viewers and the viewed, giving us the uneasy feeling we have usurped something private in our lust for more knowledge and experience.

No need to worry here though, except perhaps for ourselves. Why do we take such voyeuristic pleasure in looking upon the homes of the "beautiful people?" Bombarded by countless presentations of designer abodes in the media, do we set ourselves up for "home inferiority complexes," like the countless young women who develop poor body image in our nymph-focussed society? Perhaps we do need more media balance in our presentations on how most people really live. Conversely, perhaps we could all use a photographer like Tiedemann to flatter us and make us believe that we too are beautiful.

Until this perfect world materializes, however, many of us will fully enjoy such books as *At Home in Canada* for the sheer visual pleasure. And if nothing else, we might also expand our perceptions of the broad range of accommodations available to those with money and/or a creative spirit. Future readers, browsing this book as a record of Canadian domestic interiors in the latter part of the twentieth century, should be aware of the many choices, filters and contrivances that have shaped the images. But presumably, that in itself will be revealing of our times.

Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*

GERALD L. POCIUS

Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994, 933 pp., illus., maps, notes, bibliographies, glossary, building index, index. 2 vols. Cloth \$95, ISBN 0-19-540696-6.

Harold Kalman's *A History of Canadian Architecture* has been in the works for a number of years now. It will quickly find a place among those standard works that any researcher starts with when addressing architectural ques-

tions in a national context. This book joins the earlier work by Alan Gowans and the more recent studies such as that by Leslie Maitland, Jacqueline Hucker and Shannon Ricketts (*A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles*, Peterborough: Broadview, 1992) that are introductory studies dealing with the development of Canadian architecture. Kalman's book will obviously be the new standard reference work, but it is important to know what it is and what it is not.