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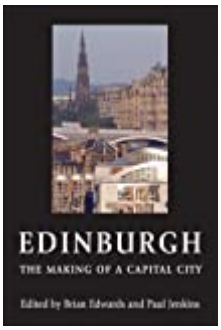

Brian Edwards, Paul Jenkins, eds. *Edinburgh: The Making of a Capital City.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006. xiii + 255 pp. $35.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7486-1868-2.

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A Tale of (More Than) Two Cities

In her 2002 review of Richard Rodger's definitive study of Victorian Edinburgh, *The Transformation of Edinburgh*, Stana Nenadic vividly captures the city's three main popular images: its castle, which dominates the skyline; its New Town, the eighteenth-century planned suburb influenced by the Enlightenment ideals of civility embodied within its classical architecture; and its reputation as Festival City, home to international arts festivals and Hogmanay celebrations that draw visitors in their thousands to the city.[1] These three images feature prominently in this lavishly illustrated collection of essays edited by Brian Edwards and Paul Jenkins, two architects based, respectively, at the Edinburgh College of Art and Heriot-Watt University. The collection critically celebrates Edinburgh's image as a dynamic northern European capital that has remade itself over its eight hundred years of existence. However, this book recognizes that there is more to Edinburgh than these three carefully packaged images: there is also the ecological footprint left by the natural landscape, which has given the city a unique topography; the ubiquity of tenements, which give shape and identity to the city's multitudinous residential districts; the physical legacy of the city's industrial past, evident in the shaping of industrial suburbs around its manufactories; and the uneasy relationship between the central city and its suburban edge, the product of growing pressure for scarce land to enable the city to compete in a global marketplace. Edinburgh is a city that revels in its ability to capture the imagination, to take on different meanings to different people. It is, as the editors contend, a city that thrives on "fostering self-consciousness and creativity" (p. 241).

For a city that has attracted its share of historical attention–ranging (not least) from A. J. Youngson's classic study to Irene Maver's anticipated urban biography–there is much in this book of interest for urban historians, geographers, and planners.[2] The book is aimed at a broad audience of "students, teachers, urban developers, professionals, local government and voluntary bodies" (p. 241). The editors hope that by learning about the city's past, the book will stimulate ideas and debate about Edinburgh's future. This is a bold vision, and the book will probably not be read by all of their desired audience, yet it does signify the editors' faith in the maxim "learning by doing" (p. 240). Urban historians have never

shied away from the interdependence of past and present within the built environment: it is a relationship that ascribes complexity to the city; one that encapsulates, in the case of Edinburgh, the contrasts between the planned and organic city, between order and the picturesque, and between landscape and cityscape. It is a relationship that poses questions to policy-makers about the scope of urban development, about the need to balance conservation with redevelopment–enshrined in Edinburgh's securing of UNESCO World Heritage Site status for its Old and New Towns in 1995–and about the ways in which Edinburgh has represented its changing political status over the centuries. These questions are posed by the editors in a lively introduction that introduces the themes of the book, the chief one being "the stresses between expansion, conservation and re-creation" (p. 2), and the influence of topographical factors on the built form.

The book is then divided into four (unfortunately unequal) parts. The first, subtitled "The Athens of the North," boldly examines Edinburgh's development from its origins several hundred million years ago to the early nineteenth century in three chapters. Ian Campbell and Margaret Stewart have the difficult task of tracing the evolution of the medieval and Renaissance city. Identifying strong continental influences in its street pattern, the authors effectively argue that medieval Edinburgh developed as a microcosm of the Scottish nation, one that followed an alternative trajectory to its adversary south of the Border. Thus the main topographical features of Edinburgh–its castle, Arthur's Seat, the Nor' Loch and Calton Hill–neatly encapsulated Scotland's macrocosm: its lochs, castles, and mountains. Clearly then, from an early point in its history, Edinburgh's built environment was intrinsically shaped by the interactions between its natural and man-made landscape.

Following chronologically, Charles McKean's chapter on the planning and construction of the Georgian New Town during the eighteenth century captures the constraints on the city's development and examines the competing visions for modernization and improvement between the Old and New Towns. McKean's mastery of the city's architectural history injects this chapter with a clear purpose: he demonstrates how the development of the New Town must be examined in relation to its older twin, which faced the problems of woeful sanitation, lack of privacy, and inaccessibility. In the most readable chapter in the collection, McKean traces the movement to create a new orderly residential space in which the sanctity of privacy would be guarded, and the threat posed to the Old Town's sustainability by this "substitute city" (p. 59). Ultimately, however, the physical and social split between the twins acted equally against their economic potential and locked the city council's regulatory powers into a balancing act between conservation and redevelopment. The third chapter, by John Stuart-Murray, wrestles with the methodological challenge of tracing the city's evolution within the constraints and cleavages of the natural landscape, its geology, geomorphology, and hydrology. On a fascinating subject, Stuart-Murray takes the reader on a brief, but tumultuous, journey through the city's relationship with the forces of rock and water. Drainage of its inland lochs and floodplains was key to Edinburgh's expansion during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most notably in the draining and bridging of the Nor' Loch (now known as the Princes Street Gardens) between the Old and New Towns. Paradoxically, the capital's expansion and sustainability ever since has been shaped by the catchment of plentiful supplies of water to meet growing industrial and domestic demands from, first, the artificial lochs around the city from the late eighteenth century and, second, the tapping of the upper Tweed valley during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Part 2, "The City in the Industrial Age," is the shortest section, consisting of only two chapters. However, the chapters make a strong connection between Edinburgh's industrial expansion and its effect on residential development. Richard Rodger's original chapter, "Landscapes of Capital," is particularly strong, not least because we know so little about Edinburgh's industrial history. Drawing on rich detail, Rodger paints a new picture of modern Edinburgh: one comprised of the chimney, warehouse, mill, and malt house usually associated with its close neighbor, Glasgow. From 1861 to 1951, approximately half of the city's male workforce was employed in industry, with some 30 to 40 percent engaged in manufacturing itself. Clearly the conventional view that Edinburgh's landscape was dominated by the symbols of court, kirk, and castle was misguided. Edinburgh was an industrial city; and specialization in printing, brewing, distilling, and the furniture trades gave the city an industrial base that defined the Victorian landscape through, first, the pollution of the Water of Leith by noxious effluents and, second, by the migration of manufacturers to the urban fringes from the 1860s, around which the industrial suburbs of Dalry, Slateford, and Granton, among others, were developed.

Peter Robinson's chapter on Edinburgh's evolution as "a tenement city" (p. 103) takes a long-term perspective, noting how the constraints of the city's to-

pography and the existence of the feuing system, which ensured perpetual income generation for proprietors, drove construction upwards, while subdivision culminated in the ubiquitous tenement flat that has dominated Edinburgh's living experience. Moreover, by tracing the aesthetic nuances of Edinburgh's middle-class, artisanal, and semi-skilled working-class tenements, Robinson makes a strong case for heterogeneity in the city's housing stock, contrasting the room-and-kitchen flats in Dalry and Easter Road with the cottage-flats of Pilrig and Abbeyhill, to the more spatially generous suburban flats on the Warrender estate. Notwithstanding this rich tapestry of architectural design and internal configuration, the coherence of Edinburgh's tenements conveys order, and collectively creates a "uniform matrix that holds the town together" (p. 124).

Whereas parts 1 and 2 are a little short, parts 3 and 4 could have been combined to produce a single section on Edinburgh's development during the twentieth century. Part 3, "Urban Management in the Early Twentieth Century," comprises three chapters: Lou Rosenburg and Jim Johnson on "conservative surgery" in Old Edinburgh, 1880-1940; Miles Glendinning on housing and suburbanization; and Cliff Hague on the relationship between planning and the built form. Part 4, "The City in the Post-Industrial and Post-Modern Age," includes three chapters which position Edinburgh within the late twentieth-century shifts in global capital (Cliff Hague), new approaches to urban design and conservation (Paul Jenkins and Julian Holder), and the threat posed by the fragmentation of Edinburgh's image within a global marketplace (Cliff Hague and Paul Jenkins). Two overlapping chapters stand out in these two sections: Rosenburg and Johnson's sensitive treatment of Patrick Geddes's legacy on the Old Town, and Hague's study of the constraints on Edinburgh's planning strategy before and after the Second World War. Unlike the experience of many British cities, any changes to Edinburgh's built form during the twentieth century have had to be sensitive to the city's heritage and, like Geddes's well-known "conservative surgery" approach (the act of making small-scale changes within the existing street pattern) evident in developments like Ramsay Garden, have eschewed large-scale redevelopment for piecemeal adaptation.

There is slight repetition in detail between the chapters in part 4, some of this material is also covered in Stuart-Murray's earlier chapter. Although interesting in itself, only so much intellectual capital can be made out of how Edinburgh responds to the constraints and cleavages offered by its historic past in a post-industrial world dominated by the global trade in services and the growth of international travel. Notwithstanding this criticism, Kerr examines three case studies–The Exchange, Edinburgh Park, and the regeneration of Leith waterfront–to show how the city council has prepared for the twenty-first century by tapping private sector investment to develop new sites for attracting business and tourism. Edinburgh Park, for instance, combines a business park and shopping center, and is connected to the city and beyond by a railway station and proximity to the City Bypass and Edinburgh Airport. This edge-of-town complex might not yet satisfy all of Joel Garreau's criteria to be considered an "edge city" of the type of Tysons Corner, Virginia, but it symbolizes the shifting focus of the capital's development in response to the planning constraints of the congested core.[3] However, one wonders why Kerr's informative paper was not left as a stand-alone contribution, especially as the editors' conclusion draws together many of the themes explored in this section.

In all, this book vividly captures the multifaceted image of Edinburgh: the organic and inorganic, the Old and New Towns, the city and its suburbs, the historic city and edge city. The book's strongest feature lies in its examination of the reciprocal relationship between the built and natural environments: how people, ideas, and buildings have impacted on the natural landscape; and the effect of natural resources on the built form. What is equally striking, though, is that the authors are all passionate about Edinburgh; Edinburgh is their city. They celebrate its "unique blend of space, landscape and topography" (p. 231), its creative self-image, its dynamic culture, and its diverse economic base. More often than not, the reader is (willingly) carried along by this tidal wave of praise. Yet to get the most out of this book, the reader should probably have more than a passing knowledge of the city, one created by fleeting visits to the annual festivals in the historic core. Edinburgh truly is a city that ought to be experienced; and for all the delights of the Old and New Towns, it is a city that ought to be experienced in its entirety–including its ugly parts–in order to fully understand its intrigue and beauty.

Notes

[1]. Stana Nenadic, "Review of Richard Rodger, *The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)," http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.cgi?path+235471036740395.

[2]. Irene Maver, *Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh

University Press, 2006); and A. J. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966).

[3]. Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992).