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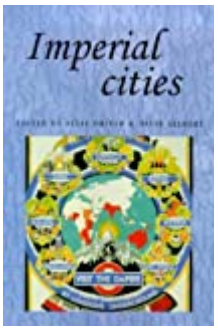

Felix Driver, David Gilbert, eds. *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity.* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999. xviii + 283 pp. $69.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7190-5413-6.

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Out of the multi-disciplinary stew of "post-colonial studies" has emerged a consensus that the influence of imperialism on modern Europe has been overlooked. As John M. Mackenzie puts in his contribution to this volume, "It is now a commonplace that imperialism should be analyzed in centripetal as well as centrifugal terms" (p. 220). The book at hand, which grew out of a 1997 conference, examines some ways the possession of empire left its mark on European cities.

The editors have chosen to define "empire" broadly, including contributions on Austria-Hungary's central European territories, Spain's long imperial history, and even the influence of the ancient Roman Empire on modern Rome. The center of attention, however, remains London (subject of nearly half the contributions) and the early twentieth century. That, in other words, is the imperial era (when Britain's empire was the largest one) that frames this book. In their introduction, the editors argue that their topic has hitherto been neglected, that "post-colonial critics have concentrated their attention on written texts, especially the canonical works of European literature" (p. 7). Here they certainly have in mind Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, [1] perhaps the best-known work in the field. Several essays cite Jane M. Jacobs's *Edge of Empire* [2] as one of the few works to place post-colonial studies in the contemporary city. *Imperial Cities* is a collection of historical essays on projects and events that left traces of imperialism in European urban space.

After the introduction (and before a brief but vivid afterword by Bill Schwarz) the thirteen essays are grouped into three sections. Those in the first group examine urban design and perceptions of it. They include Tori Smith's study of the planning of the Victoria Memorial in London; an essay on the use of ancient imperial imagery in the planning of modern Rome (by David Atkinson, Denis Cosgrove, and Anna Notaro); Iain Black's study of the early-twentieth-century reconstruction of the Bank of England; and two essays that draw mainly on tourist images: Claire Hancock's on Second Empire Paris and Jill Steward's on late imperial Vienna. The essays in the second section focus on visual display and major events: one on the 1911 Pageant of London, by Deborah S. Ryan; Yael Simpson Fletcher's interpretation of the 1922 National Colonial Exposition in Marseille; Anthony Gristwood on the 1929 Iberoamerican Fair and 1992 World's Fair in Seville; Andrew Hassam's essay linking the Sydenham Crystal Palace, hothouses, and portable iron architecture; and Rebecca Preston's essay on exotic plants in nineteenth-century British gardens. The third section comprises three essays that focus less on particular spaces: John M. Mackenzie's wide-ranging examination

of Glasgow; Christopher Breward on men's clothing in London; and Jonathan Schneer on the Pan-African Conference of 1900.

The contributors come from several disciplines, but most are geographers or historians. Most essays are empirical rather than theoretical, focusing in detail on particular examples and evidence. The advantage of this approach is that the essays offer original material and mostly avoid the fog of cultural-studies jargon. The problem is that their conclusions often fall short of the editors' ambitions for a reinterpretation of European urban space. It would be difficult to identify common themes beyond the obvious point that the empire left its traces in the metropole. However, the essays offer evocative examples of the myriad ways in which imperial cities mixed the exotic and the familiar-not only in gardens, but in architectural ornament, celebratory pageants, and tourist spectacles.

In some of the places and events examined here we see self-conscious attempts to package the empire for domestic consumption. The examples of the Victoria memorial and the Bank of England in London, the modern Italian monarchy, and the Seville fair reveal struggles to create a visual style for an imperial city. In other cases the authors present us with the views of participants and tourists who took in exotic sights without intentionally imposing any political categories on them. The gardeners studied by Rebecca Preston, for example, do not seem to have been guided by any desire to reproduce the particular geography of the British empire in their domestic gardens. Thus one can read much of the material in this book as evidence less of imperial influence than of growing links with the rest of the world and of the subsequent creation of exotic spectacles in many forms. The book serves to remind us, however, that much of this globalization took place under imperial control and that even (or perhaps especially) tourists absorbed an increasingly packaged set of urban images. The editors point out, moreover, that too much recent literature on the globalization of trade and culture ignores its historical roots altogether and pretends that globalization is something entirely new. Thus this collection can perhaps enrich the study of "global cities."

Projections of imperialism onto urban space raise more particular questions about relationships between center and periphery in cities and in empires. The bounties of empire – iconography, customs, goods, and even people – enriched the homeland, but in what sense were they to be included in the homeland? This question of uniformity and differentiation in space arises in many of the contributions, and is particularly central to Yael Simpson Fletcher's essay on the Marseille colonial exposition. She illustrates the problematic identity of Marseille as imperial port city (and, more generally, the "elusive and imagined nature of boundaries between metropole and empire" [p. 151]) by examining the physical relationship between the exposition and the city as well as the interactions among native French, urban immigrant workers, and colonial peoples put on display at the exposition. Tensions between mobility and stability similarly inform Andrew Hassam's eclectic discussion of temporary architecture, tropical climates, and fears of instability in London.

Central to the book, therefore, is the question of how empire reshaped urban identity. However, few of the essays confront that question directly. An exception is Mackenzie's piece on Glasgow, which is more synthetic and less based on primary research than the others. (Schneer also does so, with very specific reference to London anti-imperialists; a broader treatment of empire and urban identity is his new book on London. [3]) Mackenzie surveys several ways in which Glasgow's identity was shaped by empire, whether through architecture, exhibitions, trade and industry, or immigration and labor. With reference to Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism, [4] he suggests that "we surely need more analysis of cities as imagined communities" (p. 221). The reference to Anderson should also remind us that the enormous literature on national identity, little cited in this volume, needs to be drawn into (and perhaps revised by) the discussion of empire and urban space.

This modest book does not presume to answer the central question that it raises: What has been the influence of empire on modern European cities? The book's importance will depend on the answer to another question: How essential is that influence to our understanding of European cities? That is a question readers of this book can bring to bear on other works or urban history that have neglected the imperial legacy.

Notes

[1]. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

[2]. Jane M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

[3]. Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale Uni-

versity Press, 1999).

[4]. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

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