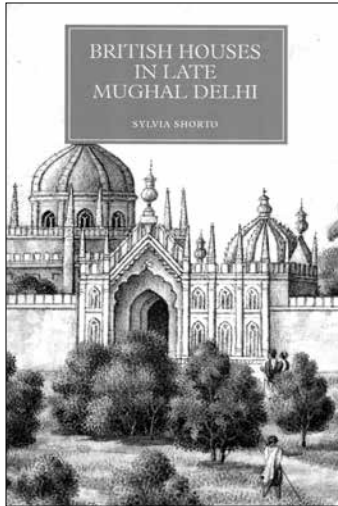


Book Reviews



British Houses in Late Mughal Delhi. By Sylvia Shorto. Woodbridge, Suffolk, U.K.: Boydell Press, 2018. 217 pp.; 9 color photos, 11 b&w photos, and 10 line drawings.

The years between 1803 and 1853 saw a major upturn in the fortunes of the East India Company in South Asia; and once company officials had established a foothold in Delhi, the Mughal capital, they began to build significant buildings in its elite (Mughal) Kashmiri Gate neighborhood. They also indulged in a fashion for country houses beyond the city walls, often choosing locations, buildings, and built remnants with meaningful connections to South Asia's historic landscape as sites for their constructions. These houses straddled the spatial and stylistic worlds of late-Mughal North India and early-nineteenth-century Britain and embodied a range of competing cultural and political meanings. Sylvia Shorto's *British Houses in Late Mughal Delhi* provides a detailed study of the building activities of five East India Company officials and the houses they built in South Asia as well as in Europe.

Shorto spells out the scheme of her book in Chapter One (its Introduction), where she also provides readers with an overview of Delhi and its political and physical environment during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. At this time the city was diminishing in size and significance as the Mughal Empire gradually collapsed. Control of Delhi was contested by rival powers — assertive regional Mughal governors, the Marathas and their French mercenaries, and the armies of ambitious Durrani, Rohilla and Jat rulers (including those allied with the East India Company). During this time the Mughals also still retained an aura of grandeur and authority, although this was steadily eroded over the decades leading up to the revolt of 1857–58. The five protagonists of this book — David Ochterlony (1758–1825), Charles Metcalfe (1785–1846), Robert Smith (1787–1873), William Fraser (1784–1835), and Thomas Metcalfe (1795–1853) — played out their ambitions against this complex and fast-changing political and social climate.

Following chapters are organized chronologically, with each devoted to the aspirations and activities of a single protagonist. David Ochterlony, the subject of Chapter Two, was the East India Company's resident at Delhi for two terms (1803–06 and 1818–20). During his first stint, he established the precedent of adding a Classical envelope around a Mughal building — in this case, the seventeenth-century palace of Prince Dara Shukoh. Its facades and Grecian columns echoed the company's building activities in Calcutta, though Ochterlony also maintained a public presence through entertainments and processions that echoed the lifestyle of a Mughal nobleman. His family life followed a similar pattern, and included several Indian concubines and children whom he acknowledged and supported. Shorto attributes Ochterlony's second building project, Mubarak Bagh (1821–24), to his relationship with one such person, an ambitious younger woman called Mubarak Begum or Begum Ochterlony. That structure, Mubarak Bagh, provided a stage for her largely unsuccessful efforts to be acknowledged as a member of the city's Mughal elite. But it was also intended as Ochterlony's burial site, following established Mughal fashion. Shorto rightly concludes that Ochterlony's public as well as private lives were unabashedly “hybrid.”

Charles Metcalfe, the subject of Chapter Three, also served two terms (1811–18 and 1825–27) as the company's resident at Delhi. In his official capacity, he occupied Ochterlony's residency building and followed similar practices in maintaining the company's

public and diplomatic presence in the Mughal capital. Unlike the more gregarious Ochterlony, however, Metcalfe valued privacy for his Indian family and children, and although he acknowledged this part of his life, he did not openly embrace an elite Mughal lifestyle. Instead, he built a private residence in Shalimar Bagh, a former Mughal garden where a number of company officials shared private houses. Metcalfe initially (1816) shared a house there with William Fraser, but he became its sole owner by 1818. Thereafter, his increasingly Anglicist views led him to favor racial separation, which in turn produced discomfort with his own “corrupt” family life. But Shorto also suggests that Metcalfe’s changing attitudes should be viewed in a wider political context, as the East India Company increasingly sidelined Mughal authority.

Robert Smith, an engineer who lived and worked in Delhi between 1822 and 1830, is the subject of Chapter Four. A member of the Delhi Archaeological Society and a prolific painter, he designed a cupola for the Qutb Minar in an effort to appropriate the structure as a tourist destination. Smith is also known for his efforts to capture Delhi’s historic architecture and topography in oil paintings and in murals on the walls of a spacious *taikhana* [basement] in a house he built (ca. 1820) on the foundations of a Mughal palace. In addition to the *taikhana* (a feature he borrowed from elite Mughal domestic architecture) this building included domed circular and elliptical rooms that could be approached through an arched portico.

Smith later built two houses on the European continent: one on the Palatine Hill in Rome (1846–51), and another, called the “Chateau del Anglaise,” in Nice (1858–62). In all his buildings, he favored circular and elliptical spaces; high, domed rooms; and blatant, exotic elements such as belvederes and kiosks — elements that proclaimed his connection to India and the wealth he had accumulated there. And toward the end of his life Smith built a third such house, called “Redcliffe Towers,” in South Devon, England (1852–62), which he embellished with turrets, octagonal pavilions, and doorways surrounded by polylobed arches. Each of his projects was undertaken against a climate of rising consciousness about global architectural history. Whether viewed as Gothicized, Orientalized, or “hybrid,” his buildings were intended to accrue social capital through visible architectural symbols.

The controversial William Fraser, the subject of Chapter Five, became the official resident at Delhi in 1832. A “country house” remained a consistent desire indulged by many British officials, and Fraser acquired “Ludlow Castle” (built by Samuel Ludlow in 1822) in 1832 and made it the official residency. The house was located on Delhi’s Northern Ridge, a site with significant historical associations, since this was where Timur (Tamerlane) had pitched his tent during his invasion of Delhi in the late fourteenth century. It had also been part of the hunting grounds of the Delhi Tughlaq sultans. Fraser, too, followed a “hybrid” lifestyle that openly straddled the Indian and British worlds, and these networks

allowed him to supplement his income through the breeding and trading of horses. He was also known to own a “native house” at Rohtak and another house in Delhi that provided a home for several mistresses. However, Fraser’s embrace of hybridity had its limits in a climate of increased social distance between Indians and the British — as borne out by the many inconsistencies in his life, including his failure to acknowledge his Indian children and his eventual murder by an angry Indian nobleman.

Thomas Metcalfe, the younger brother of Charles Metcalfe, served as resident between 1835–53, and his building activities are the subject of Chapter Six. By this time, the East India Company was the dominant political entity in South Asia, and Thomas Metcalfe was known as the unofficial “King of Delhi.” He chose to build Metcalfe House (1835) as a permanent residence at a location to the north of the elite Kashmiri Gate enclave. In 1844 he also purchased the seventeenth-century tomb of Muhammed Quli Khan, located near the settlement of Mehrauli in the vicinity of the monumental Qutb Minar. Here he built a country retreat called Dilkusha [Heart’s Delight] by enveloping the existing structure with two additional built layers. The first, incorporating an arcade at ground level where the grade sloped away, provided service spaces and a foundation for the second layer, a ring of rooms around the tomb’s central chamber (which was used as a dining room). Metcalfe also commissioned an album of miniature paintings in which his houses and their surroundings were presented alongside Delhi’s historic structures and topography as evidence of an entrenched colonial domesticity. The illustrations captured Dilkusha’s “picturesque” grounds, while positioning the building as a key fulcrum in Delhi’s landscape and monuments, including the towering Qutb Minar. Such pictorial possession framed British control of South Asia as a historical and temporal inevitability.

Dilkusha was not the only new construction of note in the vicinity, however. In 1847–48, the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar II, added a monumental gateway to his monsoon retreat at Mehrauli, the Zafar Mahal. Built with red sandstone in a deliberately revivalist idiom that recalled imperial architecture from the reign of Shahjahan, it provided an impressive destination for the emperor’s processions. A symbol of dwindling authority, it nevertheless underlined the simmering tensions that would erupt in a revolt against the British in 1857–58.

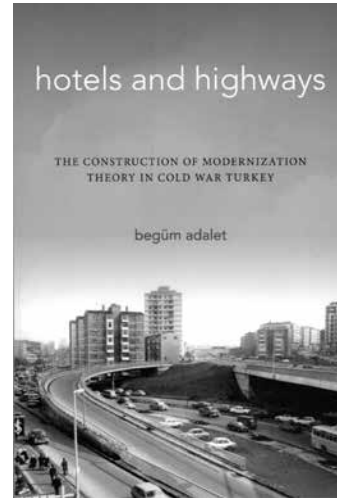
Chapter Seven includes a brief discussion of the desires of each of these five company employees to consolidate social capital in Britain for themselves and their descendants. To this end, each sought to accumulate wealth and property through legal and illegal means, and to secure titles and positions as legacies for children and grandchildren, often from a mixed racial and cultural heritage. Shorto’s book succeeds in its aim of utilizing biographies and family histories to build a larger picture of upward mobility at the time, which involved global political self-fashioning.

The study is rich in archival detail, though substantial portions could be better integrated within the larger narrative of the book. While the author establishes a lasting relationship between power and architecture, this reviewer also questions the use of the term “hybrid.” It is a contentious term that requires consistent, contextual explication if the aim is to unpack the precise nature of power relationships. In this case the author’s clear and complex picture of a shifting political and cultural scene makes her use of it superfluous, and something of a distraction.

In sum, this book is a very well-researched study of significant value. It adds a crucial chapter in the growing literature on the global eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Madhuri Desai
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Hotels and Highways: The Construction of Modernization Theory in Cold War Turkey. By Begüm Adalet. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018. 286 pp.



In *Hotels and Highways*, Begüm Adalet provides a critical account of how Turco-American encounters materialized in academic, bureaucratic and technocratic realms during the first decades of the Cold War. At the confluence of shared — if not entirely overlapping — anxieties about Soviet expansionism, Turkey at the time became a willing participant in the generation and testing of U.S.-born

development theories and practices. By scrupulously recognizing the agency of multiple actors and reinstating perspectives that were deliberately erased or omitted from the record, Adalet demonstrates how intersections of theory with conditions on the ground produced myriad consequences that were often unpredictable and, at times, undesirable.

Sandwiched between the introduction and conclusion are five chapters indexed to particular practices and sites of theory construction. Chapter 1 traces the emergence of modernization theory and introduces some of the key players who formulated a template for development that they hoped could be introduced in the supposedly laboratory-like conditions of Turkey and then propagated elsewhere. Not only does Adalet here map the trajectory of Turkey’s gradual accession into the U.S. orbit, but she provides a concise and sobering précis of the uncomfortably intimate relationship between the American intelligence establishment and academia, which continues to remain consequential to this day.

Chapter 2 then examines the collection of sociological data through surveys, a novel form of information gathering that was alien to local populations and that was met with skepticism by Turkish academics, with whose experience it clashed. Here, Adalet identifies the epistemological disparities between the different parties and exposes the cracks that both interviewers and interviewees could tactically stretch into opportunities for subverting the methods and assumptions underpinning a survey. She thus demonstrates how the use of the survey not only measured and recorded processes of change but also induced them through its own implementation, making it fatally flawed as a method.

Chapter 3 focuses on institutional structures for the transfer of funds and expertise. It thus examines the creation of new agencies to train personnel and maintain net-

works of exchange, and how these introduced professional and ideological discourses intended to prime the imagination of targeted segments of Turkish society. Two features make this chapter particularly gripping. First, it interrogates — albeit with mixed diligence — particular (and, evidently, culturally specific) practices for generating, organizing and transmitting modern professional knowledge. Second, it exposes the tacit social hierarchies within Turkish technocratic and bureaucratic circles, whose members (in contrast to their disapproving American counterparts) regarded manual labor — even jobs requiring highly skilled expertise — with condescension. In so doing, it reveals the acute fractures between American and Turkish engineering cultures.

Chapters 4 and 5 then delve into the infrastructure and architectural spaces upon which rested the manufacturing of modernization theory (p.4). In particular, Chapter 4 examines how, under American influence, Turkey prioritized highway construction in an effort to create an expansive network of roads, with tendrils reaching the country's remotest corners. According to its proponents, the new highway network would mediate national integration by accelerating market consolidation, and so contribute to the production of a thoroughly modern citizenry. Yet, of course, every new route forecloses other alternatives, evolves at the expense of previous itineraries, and distorts geographies in different ways — often producing new hierarchies and exclusions rather than eliminating them. The Turkish highway network also superseded another vision of modernity, that embodied in the nation's railroads (arguably the main infrastructural investment of the early Republican period), challenging the landscapes of mobility they had produced and appropriating their former triumphalist discourse. While Adalet's focus remains on the dynamics of Turco-American relations, some additional probing of frictions within Turkey related to support for railroads versus highways could have led to a more textured reading of divergent interpretations of modernity and progress.

The last chapter cleverly loops back to the Istanbul Hilton, whence the book began. Adalet depicts this structure as a symptomatic enclave wherein American projections about acquiring control over an exotic Orient and Turkish aspirations for global (read Western) respectability encouraged the expression of both American and Turkish architectural and consumption cultures. The discourses surrounding the construction of this building and the practices it engendered provide fertile ground for discussing imperialism, geopolitical posturing, and the mismatched cultural and administrative expectations that destabilized the image both parties sought to promote. However, Adalet misses an opportunity to go beyond the Hilton — and similar, if less successful, hotel projects — to include discussion of the coastal second homes [*yazlık*] and summer camps that proliferated following the promotion of auto-mobility and a culture of leisure. Especially the latter were often affiliated exclusively with specific professional or technocratic organizations or employ-

ers. Their examination as spatial manifestations of the tacit professional-class hierarchies discussed in Chapter 3 would have given her social observations a physical dimension.

Written from a social-science perspective, *Hotels and Highways* focuses mainly on discourse and on the implementation of policy, even when scrutinizing infrastructure and buildings; it also relies primarily on written documents, rather than visual or artifactual evidence — which might be more typical terrain for this journal's audience. This might explain the relatively scant space dedicated to historicizing the processes at hand, perhaps by drawing more explicit parallels between modernization theory in American hands and nineteenth-century colonial discourse and practices targeting the Ottoman Empire.

Adalet writes with lucidity and an economy of language that conveys much subtlety in few words, making this an eminently accessible book for a broad range of audiences. She delves into her material with verve, examining the collection, tabulation and formatting of information severed from its original context and slotted into entirely different structures, or exported as new practices elsewhere. Strategically selected testimonies from characters, well-known or anonymous, pull the reader into the complexities of the situations described. In the process, she conjures up mental analogies between the shaping of space and the shaping of knowledge, suggesting new investigative terrains.

On the bookshelf, this volume will sit well with a growing number of critical interdisciplinary publications on Cold War politics and the use of American soft power in Turkey and elsewhere. Among those dealing with architecture and urbanism during the Cold War in Turkey, one might cite Meltem Ö. Gürel's *Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey: Architecture across Cultures in the 1950s and 1960s* (Routledge, 2018), and Burak Erdim's *Landed Internationals: Planning Cultures, Academy, and Nationhood in the Cold War Frontier* (University of Texas Press, forthcoming). Among more general scholarly works on how America used technical assistance during this period, one might note Daniel Klingensmith's *"One Valley and a Thousand": Dams, Nationalism, and Development* (Oxford University Press, 2007), and Christopher Sneddon's *Concrete Revolution: Large Dams, Cold War Geopolitics, and the US Bureau of Reclamation* (University of Chicago Press, 2015). Collectively, such new work has exposed the untidy processes through which crucial components of the academic and technocratic world were manufactured as part of broader geopolitical calculations.

Zeynep Kezer

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New Islamist Architecture and Urbanism: Negotiating Nation and Islam through Built Environment in Turkey. By Bülent Batuman. Abingdon, Oxon; and New York: Routledge, 2018. 214 pp.; 62 b&w illus.



While a number of works have provided analysis of the relation between Islam and space, the role of Islamism in shaping and being shaped by the built environment has remained largely unexamined until relatively recently. By investigating the role of the built environment in the making of an Islamist milieu, Bülent Batuman's *New Islamist*

Architecture and Urbanism contributes to this new vein of scholarship by defining Turkey's transformation in the past two decades as a process of "new Islamist" nation-(re)building. Specifically, Batuman draws on the fields of political economy and cultural studies to explore the spatial negotiations between nation and Islam and the prevailing primacy of nation and nationalism within new Islamism.

In addition to providing a synopsis of the major themes of the book, Batuman's introductory chapter offers a brief overview of new Islamism(s) and political Islam in Turkey. He opens by pointing to the 2013 Gezi Park protests as a turning point in the history of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP — *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*). Yet while acknowledging the emergence of a considerable literature on urban politics since then, he argues that much of the debate "has failed to adequately address the role of urban space and its production in the AKP's economic and cultural politics" (p.9). The four chapters that follow address this important concern by examining the spatial making of new Islamism in Turkey through four major themes: mosque architecture, housing, public space, and public architecture.

Chapter two, "Politics of Mosque Building: Negotiating Islam and Nation," analyzes mosques as "materialization of religion in the public sphere," and as "a significant means of new Islamist nation-building." It argues that "the architecture of the mosque in Turkey has been politically charged despite — or perhaps due to — the secular state's attempt at strict control over it" (p.52).

Going beyond an economic analysis of space production, chapter three, "Housing Subjects of New Islamism," then attributes the success of the building of Turkey's new Islamism to housing production. Batuman here claims that, in contemporary Turkish cities, "home ownership, social mobil-

ity, access to business networks, establishing cultural capital, and (especially in the case of women) empowerment through self-help provide lines of operation and offer legitimacy to the Islamization of everyday life in the new housing environments" (p.100).

In the chapter that follows, "From the Urban Revolution of New Islamism to the Revolution of the Urban: Public Space and Architectures of Resistance," Batuman next demonstrates how structural administrative changes reorganized metropolitan areas and hybridized the definition of "urban" — helping the AKP maintain Islamist political power in elections. But Batuman also notes how "the urban revolution of new Islamism was not merely a top-down process mastered by the government but also comprised the urbanization of opposition to it" (p.146).

The final chapter, "Building (the) National: The Public Architecture of *Millet*," examines the new presidential residence, suggesting that "the building of the compound was a performative act of regime change," and part of a strategy to "consolidate the legitimacy of the site and foster the influence of the president" (p.195).

Finally, in an epilogue, Batuman asserts "it would be an error to attribute the AKP's apparent authoritarianism to Islamism in general." Rather than being an "essential characteristic" of Islam, he thus suggests it should be seen as "related to the historical specificities of the Turkish case."

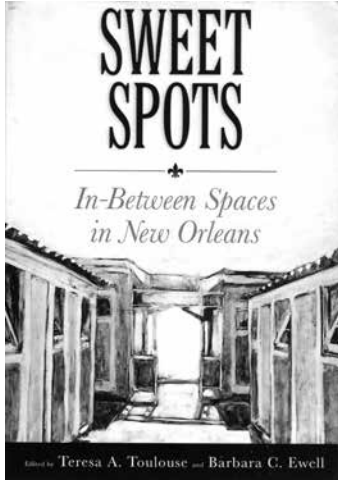
In conclusion, the range of urban and spatial typologies covered in this book is well suited for its interdisciplinary analysis, and is one of its strengths. Some of the chapters, however, could have benefitted from engagement with other scholarship that has made similar arguments. For instance, additional publications by Cihan Tugal could have been cited to more immediately support some of the claims in the book.

Another strength of the book is that it provides comparative cases from other countries — such as urban renewal projects in Beirut and Amman, the presidential palaces of Ashgabat and Putrajaya, and neo-Ottoman mosques built in Tokyo and Washington, D.C.

While each chapter's depth of engagement with spatial concepts differs, they all help clarify the scope and meaning of Islamism as it relates to the built environment, and they highlight the role of architecture in rewriting of nationhood and history. Overall, the book's wide array of inquiry is noteworthy and indicates the potential for further investigation.

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Sweet Spots: In-Between Spaces in New Orleans. Edited by Teresa A. Toulouse and Barbara C. Ewell. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018. xx + 299 pp.; 99 color illus., 1 table.



Warning! If you prefer your history simple, then this book is not for you. Black-and-white, clear-cut, either-or, simple, pat answers are not engaged. Neither for that matter are traditional questions regarding traditional topics. Honoring Malcolm “Mac” Heard (1943–2001), “Architect, teacher, colleague, friend” (p.v), this volume serves as a dramati-

cally rich extension of an interdisciplinary course, “New Orleans as a Cultural System,” that Heard co-taught for ten years with one of the co-editors, Teresa A. Toulouse, at Tulane University. The volume’s title sets the tone: “sweet spots” were those places where jazz musicians could find an ideal sound amid a constant shuffling of people, architecture, musical instrumentation, and composition (p.203). And “in-between” signifies the rich intersections of “spatial and cultural phenomenon” that New Orleans exudes. Searching out the hybrid, the cross-over, and the liminal, this anthology thus addresses out-of-the-ordinary — but what it argues are very New Orleans — examples of urban planning, gardens, architecture, painting, literature, urban debauchery, gender distinction, racial and cultural identity, jazz, second lines, the airport, and philosophy.

Even the general terms for the various subjects in the volume oversimplify the ways particular topics are addressed. In terms of structure, its thirteen essays are organized into six sets, each engaging ways of conceiving the unique place that is New Orleans.

The book’s initial section, “City Palimpsest,” begins with an essay by architecture professor Scott Bernhard on the urban design of New Orleans as it was adapted to the Mississippi’s riverside delta curves. Thus, plats on the river’s convex shoreline thrust apart creating what the author terms “notches,” while plats on the river’s concave sides crossed one another, creating “pleats” — with each irregularity creating a distinct urban setting. English professor Ruth Salvaggio follows with an appreciation of how the city’s gardens reveal history, multiculturalism, practicality, beauty and resilience.

Distinct architecture is the focus of the section entitled “Interstitial Systems.” Here architect Carrie Bernhard discusses the Creole house, the Creole cottage, and the shotgun as the characteristic housing typologies of New Orleans, and

argues that interspatial spaces such as porches, raised basements, attics and courtyards constitute defining similarities. Particularly useful is the essay’s “Taxonomy of Traditional New Orleans Interstices” (pp.66–67), including those termed “applied” (balconies, dormers, etc.), “integrated” (carriageways, crawlspaces, etc.), “enclosed” (attics, cabinets, etc.), and “open” (courtyards, front yards, etc.). Somewhat confusingly, however, Bernhard refers to a “five-bay centerhall” as a shotgun (Fig.3.19, p.62). Architect John P. Klingman then follows with a thoughtful discussion of his remodeling of an 1898 house in the Garden District. Alterations led to reflections which led to appreciation of architecture and the ability to find a distinct sense of place.

Reading art and literature adds dramatic depth and interpretive imagination to meanings behind paintings and stories. In another pairing of chapters, New Orleans’s challenging history of enslavement is addressed through an examination of work by the French painter Edgar Degas and the English novelist John Galsworthy. Art historian Marilyn R. Brown fist exposes the context and reveals the undercurrents of Degas’s famous cotton-office views. English professor Toulouse then explores tensions between the infamous St. Louis Hotel, with its clear slave-trading history, and Galsworthy’s less-than-forthright evocation of it. Toulouse’s probing essay explores what she terms the “uncanny space . . . between history as nostalgia and history as threatening repetition” (p.112).

Even in a heterogeneous city such as New Orleans particular groups and activities often need specific spaces to define themselves. Three essays in another section thus address “Constituting and Contesting the Interstitial,” which translates into a discussion of how different social groups established distinctive identities and places within the more general urban fabric. Here, geographer Richard Campanella, the author of ten books and two hundred articles about New Orleans, unveils the rise of Bourbon Street as New Orleans’s premier destination for “depravity and debauchery” (pp.136–37). Sociologist Beth Willinger then explores how and where young working women who chose not to marry and not to resort to prostitution could find a place in the city. In the face of the open prostitution in the white Storyville and black Uptown districts, this was often provided by organizations such as the Christian Woman’s Exchange, Travelers’ Aid Society, and Young Women’s Christian Association, whose carefully conceived alternatives allowed single women to forge modern identities outside the domestic sphere as respectable, educated, skilled workers. Third, Angel Adams Parham uncovers the layers of history in Congo Square, and in doing so reveals an often unacknowledged diversity within black identity. In particular, she charts the changing distinctions of African, African-American, and Creole cultures through French and Spanish cultural acceptance of Congo Square and its diversity; the subsequent Anglo-American flattening of “black” identity; and the rise of the Civil Rights movement, which encouraged assimilation. However, she also notes the

reawakening of a multiculturalism in the late 1960s, and a concomitant renewal of appreciation for “diversity and hybridity — the in-betweenness that was once a pervasive element of Black identity” (p.190).

The concept of in-betweenness begs the question of actual physical specificity and what constitutes a space. In a section entitled “In-Betweenness in Motion,” jazz historian Bruce Boyd Raeburn creatively defines jazz as essentially in-between, in its fundamental identity between pre-existing ragtime and blues, in type of musicians, in actual beat, and in its participatory character. English professor Joel Dinerstein then picks up the beat, so to speak, and argues that if jazz is essential to in-betweenness, the second line is the in-between between the musicians and the neighborhood. Whereas some of the other essays in the volume seem transferable to a variety of locations, this theme of jazz and the second line are quintessential New Orleans.

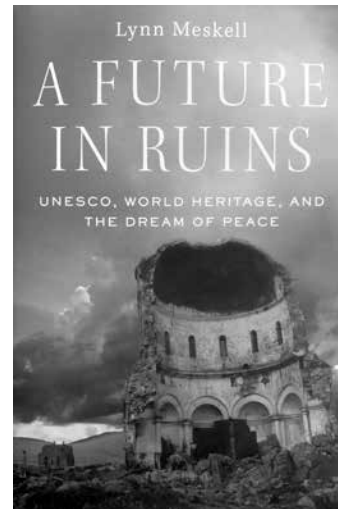
Questions of in-betweenness can also suggest amorphousness and looseness of meaning, leading to the last section “Authenticity, Simulacra, and Apocalypse.” Here, literary critic Christopher Schaberg addresses the unlikely but ultimately rich topic of the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. Philosopher John P. Clark, a twelfth-generation New Orleans resident, concludes by ruminating on the post-Katrina city, traumatized yet transformed to continue its vital expressive existence.

Ultimately, this is an excellent addition to the literature on a place where inclusion and dynamism have continually sidestepped standard expectations to forge new identities and meanings and a rich and vibrant culture.

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A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace. By Lynn Meskell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 400 pp.



During July 2019 global media reported on the conflict between the Egyptian government and Christie’s auction house in London over the sale of a 3,000-year-old quartzite statue of King Tutankhamen (for example, BBC, July 6, 2019). The statue, which it is suspected was looted from the Karnak Temple in the 1970s, was sold by Christie’s regardless, with the transaction taking place

in London to an unnamed buyer. The event revived long-standing controversy over the legitimacy of the trade in ancient artifacts and the sense of colonial supremacy involved in processes of world heritage management. What a time it was for this reviewer to read Lynn Meskell’s investigative book, *A Future in Ruins*, which delves deeply into relationships between heritage and power, the political and the transactional, and the sovereign state and international agency — all in the context of the formation, evolution and transformation of UNESCO. Plagued by irony and contradictions between the mission and practices of UNESCO, the field of world heritage remains controversial, even considering the intertwined series of events related to power, justice and access that took place during the twentieth century.

Meskell’s book is set in the archives and corridors of UNESCO’s World Heritage Center in Paris, and its conventions and meetings. It is further supported by first-hand interviews with and accounts by many officials and academics engaged with its activities, prescriptions, as well as inspections of actual heritage sites. It begins by providing genuine insights on the origins, early visions, politics and power behind the “one-world archaeology” movement, and the intergovernmental organization, UNESCO, whose early utopian ambition was “no less than reconstructing humanity” under “the rubric of scientific humanism or universal heritage” (p.217). Meskell then carefully dissects the multitude of influences that have contested the very nature of UNESCO since its early days, including the intellectual and utopian vision of Julian Huxley’s “cultural internationalism” at the end of empire (p.3). Nowadays, of course, UNESCO is a giant bureaucratic establishment focused on wielding the power of Western nations to offer technical support to developing countries. And Meskell documents how it uses world heri-

tage sites as transactional devices for lobbying, exerting influence, and advancing political agendas and alliances that go far beyond the concerns of heritage

Designed around eight themed chapters — on Utopia, Internationalism, Technocracy, Conservation, Inscription, Conflict, Danger, and Dystopia — the book cuts deeply below the surface. It traces ideological underpinnings, personal histories of key players, and underlying ethical and moral struggles; more critically, it interrogates the geopolitical and cultural context of several controversial projects, campaigns and institutions. Each theme is studied and analyzed via a series of cases, sites and projects, as understood through conversations with involved officials, recorded meeting minutes, and reports. Yet the chapters also invoke a sense of progression through a history of UNESCO's struggles that sum up its slow transformation into the contemporary giant with multiple arms, bodies, subcommittees, and inscription schemes.

Its early mission, of course, was infused with the idealism of saving world heritage, embodied most famously in the Nubia Monument Campaign. Meskell describes how this effort offered early insight into how UNESCO could carve out a purpose and mission that would garner global support. But the agency soon also became a venue for making excessive demands on nations. And, by highlighting the colonial supremacy in its governance structure and the sense of European entitlement within its World Heritage committees, Meskell lays bare its politics. This includes analysis of how Germany, Italy and France used their membership status and technical power to dominate its World Heritage lists.

Meskel's narration of an exhaustive and painstaking archival study makes the everyday politics in UNESCO's corridors and the highs and lows of international efforts accessible to a general reader. She underscores the colonial disposition of its founders and key structures, using examples and recorded notes of meetings and delegates to confirm the cynical view of the organization as an device for continued Western dominance, a remnant of bygone era. Yet she also portrays the recent frustrations of the U.S. government with decisions that do not follow American foreign policy, such as UNESCO's acceptance of Palestine as a member state and the incremental inscription of its heritage sites. Meskell's account of UNESCO's conventions goes beyond recorded minutes and meetings to examine how key events were perceived, how the delegates from different countries reacted to them, and how each convention or accord paved the way for subsequent debates, disputes, and power shifts.

A Future in Ruins transcends the boundaries of history, archaeology, politics and anthropology based on research examining around 75 years of power struggles within a single cultural agency. In many ways she shows how this mirrors the state of international community during this time, which emphasized a transactional politics and monopoly of power. What has been lost through that long history, however, has been the opportunity to affirm the wellbeing of disparate

communities as opposed to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in the interest of nation-states.

The book is limited, however, in covering the socio-cultural consequences of those decisions beyond UNESCO and its committees. There are limited discussions regarding the impact of such agency on the everyday lives of communities. Is there self-evaluation within UNESCO and World Heritage Center processes, projects and campaigns? How does UNESCO evaluate its progress, scrutinize its agenda and learn from its achievements and shortcomings? Ending the book on the subject of Dystopia highlights the irony and fate of an international agency that has grown gigantic in structure but increasingly remote from its original humanitarian values. This is an enlightening and enjoyable book to read.

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Nottingham Trent University

