

**Lees, Andrew. *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought, 1820-1940*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Pp. xi, 360. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$30.00**

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the focus for describing projects, services, and staff contributions, they do have some drawbacks. The reader learns the library "has been a mirror of the social history of the city," but little about the actual degree to which the library helped satisfy the needs of Toronto's citizens or what different groups felt the library's roles should be. As a result, the library's relationship with individuals, organizations, or urban trends remains sketchy. For example, the introduction of children's services before the First World War is not considered in relation to contemporary developments generally described as the new child centred education movement that emerged at the turn of the century in Ontario's school system.

What does clearly emerge in these pages is Penman's major theme bridging one hundred years: a deep commitment to service and pursuit of excellence. Ultimately, it is staff members who have pride and are dedicated that provide the basis for any successful organization. In this area TPL has been well served itself.

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Lees, Andrew. *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought, 1820-1940*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Pp. xi, 360. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$30.00.

In *Cities Perceived*, Andrew Lees draws together a massive amount of articulate comment on the most remarkable phenomenon of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century — urban expansion and concentration. These 'monster growths' engaged the attention and concern of writers, physicians, clergymen, architects, sociologists, politicians and poets, and Les has done a commendable job of bringing coherence and intelligibility to the jumble of observations, criticism, and justifications they produced. Although the organization is chronological and national, several themes emerge which bridge time and place. All of the commentators appear to have accepted the idea that the city was a distinctive entity, a peculiar mechanism with its own dynamic, but few were prepared to consider difference on its own merits. Instead, most took urbanity to be both emblematic and symptomatic of modernity — a perception which largely shaped their reaction.

To conservatives, cities represented "perfect disorder." Out of chaos grew "a complication of evils:" physical wretchedness, moral turpitude, materialism, cosmopolitanism, spiritual ennui, and death. Liberals, by contrast, tended to see materialism as the means to human betterment, and applauded the power of the city to liberate the individual

from restraint. While admitting certain shortcomings, they were initially confident that the energy of urban expansion would fuel the engine of Progress. The very concentration of individuals' creative energy was self-correcting; out of the festering morass would come "germs of invention" to advance mankind. Both groups reacted not so much to the city as a locale or even as a social organism, but to the city as an idea — an expectation — which either signified their faith or symbolized their worst fears. Growth and change in London, Paris, Berlin or New York only marginally affected the nature of the reaction; the state of affairs within the cities over the course of a century appears to have been far less a factor than the state of mind of the observers.

The same might be said of Lees' own treatment of the topic. Despite an ambivalent, even slightly hopeful conclusion, readers fond of cities and urban life will find this a discouraging and depressing book. Unconsciously perhaps, the author seems to have adopted the approach and orientation of urban critics. In a sense the title is misleading, since Lees has focused not so much on perceptions of urban society as on reactions. Reaction by its nature implies a response to threat or danger, and an undertone of the problematical informs both the organization and language of the discussion. Each section opens with a catalogue of charges and indictments, followed by the "case for the defense." The latter consists less of responses to the city *per se* than reactions to the attacks of the anti-urbanists on a vision of modernity that liberals and others were attempting to advance. The city becomes simply a battleground over which this war of ideas is fought. Adams and Orwell, among others, were critics of modern culture and capitalism; that these found expression in cities was really incidental but urbanity is a casualty.

Semantics add to the atmosphere created by arrangement. Critics of the city have insights, make observations, express concerns; civic boosters apologize, justify, rationalize. While Lees chronicles their optimism that problems could be solved, he seems to confuse faith in amelioration with genuine positivism; the occasional suggestion that cities might make a special contribution he characterizes as "extravagant enthusiasm." Claims by Lindeman, Anderson and others that urban morals and order were different, but not inferior, get only passing mention. Overall, the choice of commentary favours the attack. Those who regarded urbanity as a threat to culture (to take one example) have twenty-six pages to make their case; those who defended cities as a cultural stimulus only half as many. As Lees moves into the modern period much of the material is drawn from sociologists, settlement workers, civic officials and other professionals self-admittedly concerned with the difficulties, the deviant, the abnormal in urban life. Here and elsewhere, Lees makes little attempt to consider the motives and context which prompted the remarks he quotes. Again to take a single example, what architect has not berated the awfulness of his surroundings. Think of poor Nash and Wren,

universally scorned for a slavish devotion to harmony and balance by Victorian successors eager to rebuild. Moreover, even granting the pitfalls in selecting evidence alluded to by the author, there are still surprising omissions. There is, of course, Dickens describing London's wretchedness, but no mention of Smiles. Spengler's despair at urban civilization is here, but where is Sandburg's celebration of Chicago's brawling, sprawling robustness? There is Mayhew but not Mann, Priestly but not Proust, Harold Laski but not Sinclair Lewis.

In sum, scholars will find in Lees a mine of comment, observation and concern but are also likely find some disappointments. Despite the title, a large portion of the discussion is not focused on urban society, the city as organism, but on the physical mechanism — the familiar problems of sewers and slums. The years after 1918 are passed over briefly in the concluding chapter, despite the common assumption that these represented the 'golden age' of urban civilization. Commentary is catalogued uncritically, and the author's remarks are more summary than synthesis and analysis. In many ways *Cities Perceived* resembles its subject: diverse and absorbing, impressive yet uneven, fascinating but flawed.

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Timms, Edward and David Kelley, eds. *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985. Pp. vii, 269. 35 black and white illustrations, index. £26.50.

"This book analyses the responses of European writers and artists of the early twentieth century to the challenge of the city" (p. 1). It comprises fifteen essays which examine the variety of these responses while also trying to identify within them "underlying patterns of coherence." The approach is comparative and interdisciplinary, and the result is essentially successful. While emphasis is given to the writers' reactions to the city in the period 1900-1930, the editors have struck a happy balance between literature, painting, architecture and cinematography. And it is pleasing to find that the majority of the essays make precise reference to others in the book, thereby creating a sense of coherence which is often lacking in such collected works. Occasionally, however, the cross-references are incomplete, as on p. 182 where we should read p. 122 for p. 000; and similarly on p. 212 n. 18, where p. 3 should be substituted for p. 000.

The theme of the *Unreal City* is taken from T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* and is examined in a broad European context with analysis of writers such as Apollinaire, Rilke, Pound,

Joyce, Brecht, Musil and Kafka, and with an extension to New York through Lorca. In each case we witness the authors' sense of disorientation and antagonism towards the city which may seem paradoxical given the apparently elegant civilisation of early 20th-century London, Paris, Berlin and Vienna. And yet it is this facade of elegant reality that is dissolved by the avant-garde of the early 20th-century. Thus, for example, in chapter 15, Edward Timms takes Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The Man without Qualities*) and the writings of Franz Kafka as the jumping-off points to examine life respectively in the Vienna of the pretentious Ringstrasse facades, and the Prague of medieval alleys and baroque palaces. His exemplary analysis cites contemporary analogues in architectural, political and psychological thought, while parallels are made with Rilke's Paris, discussed by Naomi Segal in chapter 6; Joyce's Dublin, examined along with Eliot and Pound by Michael Long in chapter 9; and Döblin's Berlin analysed in connection with Brecht by David Midgley in chapter 11.

The duality between the apparent ideal of the built environment and the experience of life within it is expressed at a number of different levels by the writers and artists under consideration. Baudelaire, whose influence on many of the authors discussed in this book is stressed time and again, urged artists to adopt urban themes for their work. But his plea was initially only heard by illustrators — whose little-studied work is mentioned in passing by Frank Whitford in his excellent analysis of "The City in Painting" (p. 45) — of whom Daumier would give monumental expression to his themes like *Third Class Carriage* (c. 1865) (Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada). Impressionist and Divisionist versions of urban subject matter were more concerned with superficial luminosity than the depiction of human reaction to the city and as such contrast sharply with early 20th-century depictions of the urban experience, a point made forcefully by Whitford's juxtaposition of Monet's *Boulevard des Capucines* (1873) and Meidner's Expressionist *I and the City* (1913) (pp. 47-49). While Meidner's angular formal language owes much to the Futurists, as did that of George Grosz (p. 60), their view of urban life did not conform to the Futurist glorification of the city as witnessed in the writings of Marinetti, the paintings of Boccioni and Carra, and architectural projects of Sant'Elia, discussed in chapters 3 and 4. As Timms observes, "For the Futurists the city is dynamic; for the Expressionists it is demonic" (p. 118). "Universal dynamism" and the perception of simultaneous sensations introduced in the "Technical manifesto of Futurist painting" of 1910 were expressed in Boccioni's *The Street Enters the House* (1911), and influenced Robert Delaunay's *City of Paris* (1912), while the concept of simultaneity is witnessed in Expressionist poetry (p. 119) and in Pound's view that "In the city the visual impressions succeed each other, overlap, overcross, they are cinematographic."

Infatuation with the city was not all-embracing among the Futurists as we learn through Judy Davies' analysis of