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Transforming Metropolitan London, 1750–1960

Frank Mort and Miles Ogborn

Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
Change plus vite, hélas! que le cœur d'un mortel)
(Charles Baudelaire, "Le Cygne,"
in *Les Fleurs du Mal*)

Charles Baudelaire, the lyric poet of Paris as the capital of the nineteenth century, reminds the urban historian that the metric for the rapidly changing form of the city is not simply the achievement of planners' visions or the rise and fall of land values but the vagaries of the human heart. Canvasing both urban poetics and politics, but shifting the focus to London, the articles in this issue are all concerned with the transformation of the metropolis in the two hundred years from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. They seek to map out and exemplify new ways of approaching the cultural history of the English capital, as well as revisiting more well established questions about the nature of urban planning, environmental reform, and the experience of modern metropolitan life. The collection began as a symposium on histories of urban change, held in London in July 2002. This was one of a series of meetings funded by the British Economic and Social Research Council under the title "Transforming London: Rethinking Regeneration through Commerce, Planning and Art." The discussions, involving both academics and practitioners, focused on the dynamic interaction between civic, commercial, and cultural programs that have shaped and continue to shape lives and landscapes in the

The collection of articles that make up this issue came out of a series of meetings, titled "Transforming London: Rethinking Regeneration through Commerce, Planning and Art" and organized by Alison Blunt, David Pinder, and Miles Ogborn of Queen Mary, University of London; Michael Keith and Rob Stone of Goldsmiths College, University of London; Frank Mort of the University of East London; and Sophie Watson of the Open University. They were funded by Economic and Social Research Council Grant A2612. Erica Rappaport also presented a paper at the initial "Transforming London" meeting, while Mica Nava acted as the respondent. A version of Rappaport's paper was published as "Art, Commerce, or Empire? The Rebuilding of Regent Street, 1880–1927," *History Workshop Journal* 53 (2002): 94–117. We would like to thank Edward Oliver, cartographer, Department of Geography, Queen Mary, for the cover image.

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metropolis. All of the articles that follow show how understanding the city in these ways involves addressing a shared set of questions, albeit ones that the authors have confronted in different terms. We highlight three significant issues by way of introduction, in order to demonstrate what is distinctive about the approach to urban history presented here. First, there is a concern to identify the parameters of a specifically cultural history of the city and to show how such a project relates to the existing historiography on metropolitan London. A second issue concerns visual representation, and more specifically the ways in which practices of visualization are understood to be an integral part of the making of the modern city. Finally, there is renewed analysis of the roles of a range of expert, professional, and technical actors in the drama of metropolitan transformation. Exploring each of these questions has also meant attending to the specific nature of London's historical development and to the particular ways in which that history has been written in the recent past.

There have been a number of impressive and comprehensive social histories of London published over the last decade. Bridging academic history and a wider general readership, these texts are themselves part of a broader revival of interest in the historical that is currently underway within British society.[1] Large-scale and frequently epochal histories of the metropolis, along with similarly grandiose narratives of empire, royal and aristocratic biographies, and a resurgence of interest in the romance of the industrial revolution, appear to have the capacity to reconnect a wide range of readers with modern history. Though there are significant differences between the recent accounts of London, all of them define environment and setting as a relatively passive backdrop against which "real" historical processes are played out. This is not to argue that Roy Porter's *London: A Social History* (1994) or Jerry White's *London in the Twentieth Century* (2001) expresses a disinterest in the particularities of modern London's geographical development. White, in particular, convincingly demonstrates how the contours of the city have been repeatedly transformed under pressure from its extraordinarily diverse populations, and in doing so foregrounds the role of New Commonwealth migrants as one of the most significant groups effecting urban change. Our point is that these recent books exemplify the ways in which a specific tradition, derived from social and urban history, has conceptualized the city. In as much as these recently

[1] See, esp., Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London, 1994); Stephen Inwood, *A History of London* (London, 1998); Francis Sheppard, *London: A History* (Oxford, 1998); Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and its People* (London, 2001). For other similar treatments, see Gavin Weightman and Steve Humphries, *The Making of Modern London, 1914–1939* (London, 1984); Steve Humphries and John Taylor, *The Making of Modern London, 1945–1985* (London, 1986).

published works represent a consolidation and a welcome popularization of this tradition, it is worth briefly revisiting some of the key premises that have underpinned social historians' treatment of London in order to highlight our own approach.

English social and urban history as it has developed since the 1950s has understood space and place to be constituted by and not constitutive of historical processes. Social and urban historians have acknowledged that historical change in the metropolis has been generated by a wide variety of forces, for example, by the complexities of London's international and regional economy, by municipal politics, and by popular culture. However, they have been less ready to acknowledge that social change is itself simultaneously spatial. There are, of course, a wide range of variations within this historical tradition. As Simon Gunn has observed, one of the chief characteristics of the urban history of an earlier period was the enthusiastic scope of its interests, with an indifference to theory beyond empiricism.[2] Its chief testament was the pioneering collection edited by Harold Dyos and James Woolf on the Victorian city as "image" and "reality."[3] In the 1970s and 1980s, urban history was overtaken by fully fledged social history, in works such as Gareth Stedman Jones's exemplary treatment of the political and social economy of late nineteenth-century "outcast London."[4] More recently, urban and metropolitan history has undergone a revival in a range of specialist journals.[5] Despite this renewed interest, urban social historians have not viewed the geography of London as an active agent in the processes of modern historical change.

The cluster of concerns around space and geography understood as an integral part of wider social processes has been the province of cultural theorists and human geographers, rather than of social or urban historians. There is an extensive tradition of scholarship, drawing on Marxist and poststructuralist theory, that develops insights from Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau.[6] In this body of work, space and geography are

[2] Simon Gunn, "Knowledge, Power and the City since 1700," *Social History* 27, no. 1 (January 2002): 59.

[3] Harold Dyos and James Wolff, eds., *The Victorian City: Images and Realities,* 2 vols. (London, 1972). See also Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963).

[4] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study of the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971). For other social and labor histories in this tradition, see John Marriott, *The Culture of Labourism: The East End between the Wars* (Edinburgh, 1991); Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London, 1870–1914* (London, 1996).

[5] See, esp., coverage in the *London Journal,* and in *Urban History.*

[6] See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicolson-Smith (Oxford, 1991); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, 1988); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford, 1989).

understood as theoretical ideas pitched at a very high level of abstraction, conceptualized as part of epochal configurations such as modernity and postmodernity, or within highly generalized notions of modern identity. Historians therefore are confronted with a familiar problem posed by much recent social theory, namely, that such accounts lack historical specificity and cannot be integrated effectively into studies of specific contexts. As a result, the project of an urban history that actively incorporates the spatial dimensions of social processes but at particular points in time and in more delimited settings remains substantially underdeveloped.

However, there has been a concurrent set of developments in the recent historiography of London that demonstrate a greater receptivity to insights derived from cultural geography and social theory.[7] Some of the authors representing this latter approach are included in our collection. Comparison between the two perspectives is instructive; one of the most notable differences between them being their respective objects of focus. Social historians present an enviable level of historical detail about particular districts and areas of the city, while their overall approach is shaped by a conception of the modern metropolis as a social totality, capable of analysis as a complex entity. In contrast, recent research from cultural historians and historical geographers has moved to the particular, the contingent, and the microcosmic. In this latter approach London is most frequently observed close up, rather than from the panoramic vantage point of the social historian. What is uncovered at close range is much more about the ways in which conceptions of urban society and culture and the geographical ordering of the city are interrelated in the history of specific streets and thoroughfares, monuments, buildings, and even distinctive interiors. Such detailed attention to particular facets of the urban milieu can be seen as part of a broader movement away from grand explanatory narratives and toward the production of microhistories that has occurred across many other areas of historical work.[8] In the context of the history of modern London, the turn to the detailed particularities of place and setting, and to the multiple social

[7] See Gareth Stedman Jones and David Feldman, eds., *Metropolis, London: Histories and Representations of London since 1800* (London, 1989); Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago, 1992); Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory,* vol. 1, *Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London, 1994); Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680–1780* (New York, 1998); Frank Mort and Lynda Nead, eds., "Special Issue: Sexual Geographies," *New Formations* 37 (1999); Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (London, 2000); Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London, 2003).

[8] On the turn to microhistory, see Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing,* ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 93–113; Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London, 1997), pp. 186–91.

actors who inhabit these environments, produces a particular effect. London's geographies now become active sites for examining the competing uses, social meanings, and power relations that have structured the development of the city. In this respect, it is not accidental that these new histories of London are not only more overtly spatial; they are also complexly cultural in ways that Porter's and White's accounts are not. Reflecting the narrative challenges posed by the agendas of cultural and literary history, London as modern metropolis is understood not only as a social entity but also as an imagined and representational landscape that has been shaped by a wide variety of iconographic traditions and cultural resources.

Our aim as editors is not to suggest that these recent developments in the historiography of modern London are mutually exclusive; to do so would be to reproduce an unhelpful distinction between social and cultural methodologies that has recently impeded historical debate. All of the authors in this issue work across the boundaries established by these different approaches to urban history, and they also draw on other disciplinary traditions, especially those of art history and historical geography. Moreover, all of the articles seek to reopen debate about some of the most significant forms of society and culture that have traditionally been associated with the development of the modern metropolis.

In this context, it is productive to refine the terms of the debate still further, asking to what extent the term "metropolitan" is synonymous and interchangeable with the idea of the "urban," and in what ways it references a distinctive geographical and social entity. At various points over the past two and a half centuries, a wide variety of public intellectuals and urban professionals (courtiers, planners, architects, local and national politicians, sociologists) have produced diverse and competing definitions of London as a metropolis. A number of these visions of metropolitanism are canvased in the articles featured here. From the vantage point of the political and social elites throughout the modern period, the metropolis has consistently referred to the administrative and cultural infrastructure of monarchical or state power in its domestic and imperial guises. For a metropolis to be fully metropolitan it required a monarchy, a court society, a diplomatic corps, and suitable architectural styles, together with all of the trappings of governmental and bureaucratic power. Given the highly centralized organization of the modern British state, from its constitutionalist, monarchical beginnings after the settlement of 1688, through to the crystallization of a fully fledged domestic and imperial administration, it is hardly surprising that many of the sedimented political and bureaucratic forms of metropolitanism are part of the continuing legacy of modern London.

However, in the sociological and historical literature of modernity, metropolitanism has also carried another set of powerful cultural con-

notations. Lynda Nead opens her study of London as it was processed in late nineteenth-century snapshot photography and on early silent film by confronting a number of the classic cultural tropes that have become indelibly associated with the modern, Western metropolis. Nead convincingly argues that one of the central problems with sociological readings of urban modernity, many of which are derived from Georg Simmel's seminal account of "the metropolis and mental life," is the way that they collapse the cultural history of particular European cities into a synthetic account of urban experience.[9] There is a similar conflation of the specific forms of the communications and media industries that are cited as an integral part of the changes in city life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Notions of accelerated technology, fragmented psychology, and a perceptual climate of hyperstimulation used to define an overall transformation in the pace and quality of urban experience are far too general, Nead insists. What happens, she asks, when the modernity concerned is that of London and the cultural forms are those of instantaneous photography and the earliest projected moving film? In framing her answer, Nead stresses the importance of investigating the specific cultural impact of these two commercially driven media technologies on a city that was defined as both dynamically modern and heavily ghosted by its past.

Chris Otter's study of the technologies associated with attempts to transform the distribution of meat and light in the rapidly expanding metropolis of the nineteenth century also offers new insights into the cultural sociology of the Victorian city. His aim is to understand the relationship between technology and the "civilizing process." Otter's reading of urban reform offers an implicit challenge to earlier Whig and Tory accounts of social progress, as well as to those Marxist and Foucauldian counterhistories that placed sanitary science and environmental politics in the context of either class-based ideologies or regimes of modern disciplinary power.[10] Otter reveals how urban technologies were a means

[9] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel,* ed. Kurt Wolff (New York, 1964). For related discussion of Simmel's work, see David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (London, 1985); David Frisby, *Simmel and Since: Essays on Georg Simmel's Social Theory* (London, 1992); David Frisby and Mike Featherstone, *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings* (London, 1997).

[10] For "Whig" and "Tory" interpretations of nineteenth-century urban reform, see, respectively, Samuel Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (London, 1952); Royston Lambert, *Sir John Simon, 1816–1904, and English Social Administration* (London, 1963). For Marxist histories and histories influenced by Michel Foucault, see Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750–1850* (London, 1978); Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830* (London, 1987); Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830–1864* (Chicago, 1995).

of actively managing and shaping the senses of sight, sound, smell, and touch. On the one hand, they could shield the eyes and ears of genteel urbanites from the offensive and barbarous workings of backstreet butchers. On the other, they enhanced the sensory vocabulary of London's populations, first through gas lamps and later via electric lighting. Together these technologies worked to shape urban subjectivities, combining new repertoires of sensory experience with older traditions of perception and display.

A further area that repays sustained cultural treatment is the idea of London as a planned city, an issue that forms the central focus of the articles by Miles Ogborn, David Gilbert, and Frank Mort. The vision of a planned metropolis has been a recurrent rallying point for a wide variety of politicians, public intellectuals, and professionals since Wren's plans for the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of 1666. Many of these planning luminaries have marked out London as a highly distinctive urban center, strongly differentiated from its European and North American counterparts. London's dispersed and scattered development, and its piecemeal and disparate evolution, have inspired both positive and negative readings throughout the modern period. For example, the English capital has been celebrated repeatedly as a focus for democracy, in contrast to the excesses of "continental" absolutism and totalitarianism, political forms that are understood to have been embedded in the structure of many European capital cities.[11] At the same time, London has also been denigrated as exhibiting the worst excesses of urban political chaos, on account of its relatively weak administrative coherence coupled with the dominance of finance capital in the City of London.[12]

The arguments advanced in this issue about the planned city all recognize the specific dynamics of London's metropolitan environment and the ways in which "planning," broadly understood as a shifting coalition of political and professional interests and knowledges, has intervened in the city's geography with the aim of restructuring key urban functions and strategies of social governance. One of the familiar historical insights reinforced by these studies is that intellectual and political pragmatism has been a marked feature of planning debates about the future of the English capital. However, the three articles addressing planning also work to expand discussion of this key aspect of urbanism in

[11] See, e.g., Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *London, the Unique City* (London, 1934); Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York, 1938).

[12] For studies in London's government, see Ken Young and Patricia Garside, *Metropolitan London: Politics and Urban Change, 1837–1981* (London, 1982); Andrew Saint, ed., *Politics and the People of London: The London County Council, 1889–1965* (London, 1986); Susan Pennybacker, *A Vision for London, 1889–1914, Labour, Everyday Life and the LCC Experiment* (London, 1995).

new ways. An important issue for all of the authors is the constraints imposed by policy-dominated histories of English planning.[13] Plans are not simply rational and programmatic statements of future policy launched into a clearly bounded political arena; they also possess a rich cultural life and precipitate long-term cultural consequences. Plans offer large-scale and frequently eclectic visions of the city, the origins of which extend well beyond administrative or municipal government, as those phenomena are conventionally understood. Similarly, the impact of planning cannot be simply judged against a bureaucratic conception of "implementation," precisely because plans are disseminated through a wide variety of channels that extend well beyond traditional conceptions of policy. Each of the three articles acknowledges this waywardness of planning in different ways. In some instances, plans are read back to the remarkably expansive resources that generated them: from debates about the complex interrelationship between monarchical authority and contemporary conceptions of taste and commerce, in Ogborn's article on eighteenth-century London, to the improved and domesticated version of metropolitan imperialism explored in Gilbert's study. In Mort's article plans are understood as significant social fantasies about the urban environment, fantasies that are communicated through the channels of popular politics and civic education quite as much as via policy. In each case, there is an attempt to rethink the ways in which plans and planners can be understood as part of a wider social and cultural history of the modern metropolis.

This process of reconceptualization and redefinition is also central to the way in which the issue of visual culture is addressed in these articles. Analysis of visual imagery *as representation,* in the context of the changing urban landscape and the social meanings attached to the city, is in no sense new. Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* (1973) stimulated a range of studies of the ways in which specific urban centers in different historical periods have been depicted. Such research has used Williams's binary categories to provide the historian with an archive of representations of cities as places of power, progress, and excitement, and as landscapes of dirt, degradation, and despair. This tradition of scholarship has drawn heavily on textual sources, particularly the work of novelists, poets, and journalists, and on visual evidence from painters, engravers, photographers, and filmmakers. Analysis has emphasized the cultural

[13] See, e.g., Peter Self, *Cities in Flood: The Problems of Urban Growth* (London, 1957); Donald Foley, *Controlling London's Growth* (Berkeley, 1963); J. T. Coppock and Hugh Prince, eds., *Greater London* (London, 1964); Frank Smallwood, *Greater London: The Politics of Metropolitan Reform* (Indianapolis, 1965).

construction of urban phenomena and in doing so has sought to disrupt dualistic distinctions between the image and reality of the city.[14] All of the articles here recognize the importance of this debate, but they also move discussion beyond iconography, understanding urban representations as located within broader networks of visual culture and according visual practices an active role in social change.

There is an extensive tradition of cultural research that situates visual objects and artifacts in the urban contexts of their production, distribution, and consumption. The emphasis in a range of recent studies has involved shifting attention away from assumptions about the primacy of the visual object itself and toward the object's full integration into the circuits within which it is rendered socially meaningful.[15] What is innovatory about the articles here is that this mode of historical interpretation is applied to visual artifacts that are not customarily approached in this way. Ogborn situates John Gwynn's plans for the City of London and Westminster within the programs of artistic production promoted both by the founders of the Royal Academy and through the new, regular exhibitions of the work of British artists in the 1760s. This provides an explanatory framework for the aesthetics of Gwynn's maps, together with the prominent place they accorded to royal spectacle and their relative lack of concern for the practical details of urban transformation. Gilbert and Mort offer an interpretation of the wide range of maps, photographs, and drawings that accompanied a series of seminal plans for London in the first part of the twentieth century, by situating them within the diverse representational traditions used to record the modern city. Watercolor sketches, aerial photographs, and sec-

[14] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London, 1973). For examples using a range of different sources, see Max Byrd, *London Transformed: Images of the City in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1978); William Sharpe and Leonard Wallock, eds., *Visions of the Modern City: Essays in History, Art, and Literature* (Baltimore, 1987); Caroline Arscott and Griselda Pollock, with Janet Wolff, "The Partial View: The Visual Representation of the Early Nineteenth-Century City," in *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class,* ed. Janet Woolf and John Seed (Manchester, 1988), pp. 191–233; Alan Mayne, *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representations in Three Cities* (Leicester, 1993).

[15] For an early example of this approach, see Francis Haskell, *A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque* (London, 1963), and his *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion, and Collecting in England and France* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1976). For more recent attempts to understand eighteenth-century cultural production and consumption, see John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997); Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1999); David Solkin, ed., *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780–1836* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 2001); Rosie Dias, "'A World of Pictures': Pall Mall and the Topography of Display, 1780–1799," in *Georgian Geographies: Essays on Space, Place and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century,* ed. Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers (Manchester, 2004), pp. 92–113.

tional drawings were all variously deployed in these plans, with the aim of achieving distinctive cultural and aesthetic effects. Moreover, these future visions for London were circulated in a variety of exhibitions, displays, and published media in order to engage different political and social constituencies in a wide-ranging debate about metropolitan reconstruction.

For Otter, the rhetoric of urban technological transformation was simultaneously encoded in written and visual media. Dualistic images of London, presenting stark contrasts between order and disorder, were used to promote changes in metropolitan government that reduced complex sets of urban relationships to a matrix of technical processes. The protocols of draftsmanship and cartography that carried the visions of nineteenth-century scientists and engineers simplified and celebrated what were in reality politically contested technologies. Moreover, developments in printing and publishing made it possible for such images to be produced large-scale and in high-quality formats, side-by-side with extensive written commentary. As the pages of newspapers such as the *Illustrated London News* reveal, the issue of urban reform was orchestrated in words and images as part of a much wider agenda of metropolitan spectacle and edification; it was promoted alongside other prominent news and entertainment items, such as royal reportage, urban melodrama, and the coverage of popular science.[16] In a related sense, Nead takes seriously the production and consumption contexts of snapshot photographs and the early, short films of city life. She frames discussion of the commercial and cultural possibilities released by the appearance of the handheld camera from the 1880s in the context of new ways of being in and moving through London, and the pleasures and anxieties that this produced for a middle-class public. Early films, by contrast, were first shown in the "low" venues of music-hall and fairground entertainment. Nead reveals how these silent records of everyday life offered camera-sensitive viewers innovatory perspectives for viewing the metropolis (and potentially their own place within it), that eroded distinctions between the experience of the city and its representation.

A new and important step is taken within all of these articles by arguing for the active role of visual practices in reshaping modern metropolitan life. There is, of course, a healthy historical skepticism about such an approach. Jay Winter, in his work on European capital cities at war, has criticized urban historians who overemphasize questions of iconography and imagery. Such a method, Winter argues, prioritizes the city as it is represented and imagined, with a corresponding neglect of what he understands as the city as it is "experienced," namely, as a complex

[16] See James Secord, *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (Chicago, 2000).

aggregate of local communities. In sounding this note of caution, Winter has sought to avoid reducing the metropolis to a regime of representations.[17] In these articles, however, visual representations are not simply conceived as depictions of the city, to be decoded for idealist insights into the nature of historical change. London as it has been imagined visually cannot be separated from the ways it has been rendered meaningful through cartography, filmmaking, sketching, and all of the varied uses of the modern media. In each case representations are not understood as representations *tout court,* but as products of practices and technologies that are themselves an integral part of the ways in which the city functions.[18]

In each of the articles, the authors trace the cultural impact of visual practices in transforming the dominant urban optic and the sensory experience of the modern metropolis. This process of reeducating the senses is explored by Nead in terms of the relationship between the rhythms of city life and its visual forms. Otter draws attention to the ways in which sanitary reformers worked toward the concealment, as well as the deodorization, of many of the manifestations of nineteenth-century cloacal horror. Moreover, those engineers and technocrats who lobbied hard for electric lighting to be brought to the city privileged an expansively moral vision of optical lucidity.[19] In the articles by Ogborn, Gilbert, and Mort, the visualization of urban space is conceived as an integral rather than incidental part of the city's planned future. Ogborn's interpretation of John Gwynn's *London and Westminster Improved* (1766) demonstrates how drawing techniques, based on Shaftesburian principles of form and harmony, provided the moral and political basis for large-scale urban change. Gilbert's discussion of the London Society's *London of the Future* (1921) identifies how aerial photographs were used by progressive-minded pressure groups to develop planning arguments about the ordered and the disordered city. Mort demonstrates how plans and drawings designed to correct London's interwar urban sprawl and to imagine a new civic metropolitan core for both Westminster and

[17] Jay Winter, "Paris, London, Berlin, 1914–1919: Capital Cities at War," in *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914–1919,* ed. Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (Cambridge, 1997), p. 5.

[18] For other examples, see James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (Minneapolis, 1999); Mona Domosh, "Those 'Gorgeous Incongruities': Polite Politics and Public Space on the Streets of New York," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 2 (1998): 209–26; Nead, *Victorian Babylon;* Rose Marie San Juan, *Rome: A City Out of Print* (Minneapolis, 2001).

[19] This theme is central to Chris Otter's, "Making Liberalism Durable: Vision and Civility in the Late Victorian City," *Social History* 27, no. 1 (2002): 1–15.

the City of London were reenergized during the early 1940s, as part of a wartime propaganda battle over the destruction and rebuilding of European cities. What all of these articles demonstrate is that visual culture in the city is neither epiphenomenal, nor simply a passive reflection of social processes, rather, it is integral to the making of the modern urban experience.

This concern to reexamine the cultural practices that have transformed modern London has also encouraged us to reevaluate the role and significance of the urban actors in this metropolitan drama. Tracing a genealogy from Charles Baudelaire, through to Simmel and Walter Benjamin, much of the sociological literature on urban life has been overshadowed by the figure of the *flâneur*.[20] The centrality awarded to this leisured, male, connoisseur of the urban public sphere has meant that definitions of modernity have become preoccupied with the street as the key site of urban geography, and with nineteenth-century Paris as the paradigmatic modern metropolis.[21] Feminist historical research, concerned to explore the gendered dimensions of city life, has challenged this monolithic account of *flânerie.* By tracing the varied histories of shopping routes, suffrage politics, and the contested meanings of cosmopolitanism, this work has promoted a welcome attention to questions of feminine and masculine identity and performativity, as well to the diverse stagings of modernism in the English capital.[22]

The articles here seek to extend and develop these insights, but they do so by shifting the focus of historical attention back to a set of professionals, experts, and technicians of urban life. These architects,

[20] See "The Flâneur," in Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* trans. Harry Zohn (London, 1989), pp. 35–66; Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life"; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999). For commentary, see Keith Tester, ed., *The Flâneur* (London, 1994); Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity," *Theory, Culture and Society* 2 (1985): 37–46; Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in her *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London, 1988), pp. 50–90; Elizabeth Wilson, "The Invisible Flâneur," *New Left Review* 191 (1992): 90–110.

[21] On the street, see Nicholas Fyfe, ed., *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity and Control in Public Space* (London, 1998); James Winter, *London's Teeming Streets* (London, 1993). On Paris, see Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London, 1983), chap. 3; T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (New York, 1985); David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* (Oxford, 1985).

[22] On the gendered dimensions of metropolitan culture and its performative aspects in London, see Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907–14* (London, 1987); Mica Nava, "Modernity Tamed? Women Shoppers and the Rationalisation of Consumption in the Inter-War Period," *Australian Journal of Communication* 22, no. 2 (1995): 1–19; Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1995); Peter Bailey, *Popular*

planners, urban reformers, and early media specialists might be retrospectively accorded the title of "urbanists," if that term did not sound so exotic when applied to some of the doyens of the English capital. Men like Christopher Wren, Edwin Chadwick, Aston Webb, and Patrick Abercrombie are hardly neglected figures, but either their treatment has been exclusively biographical or they have been understood as the bearers of emergent forms of genteel professionalism and expert knowledge, dedicated to social improvement or social regulation.[23] While such approaches have provided valuable insights into the formation of professional society, they have not explored the ways in which masculine professional identities were forged in and through the making of the modern city. It is here that we underline the significance of London's metropolitan geography in shaping the identities of a range of modern experts. To reiterate, London did not simply provide the location or social context for the emergence of many professional cadres and coteries; the material and cultural fabric of the English capital played an active part in the construction of the social scripts of professional selfhood. As so often, the artifacts and forms of knowledge generated by these urbanists reveal as much about themselves as they do about their supposed objects of investigation. Cartographic imperatives of classification, fantasies of order and disorder, and elaborate hierarchies of touch and smell all point to some of the recurrent obsessions of these professional men. Historians need to know more about the complex social psychology through which the city's material and social geography was rendered meaningful to men and women from the professional strata. Such a process involves understanding both how programs of urban intervention crystallized professional ideas about the self and how social identities were "lived out" at the level of the interiority of the personality. In each case, this means considering how professionals were formed within wider sets of social relationships that frequently involved struggles for urban authority and control.

Culture and Performance in the Victorian City (Cambridge, 1998); Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life* (Manchester, 1999); Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women and the Making of London's West End* (Berkeley, Calif., 1999); Judith Walkowitz, "The 'Vision of Salome': Cosmopolitanism and Erotic Dancing in Central London, 1908–1918," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 2 (April 2003): 337–76.

[23] See Sir John Summerson, *Sir Christopher Wren* (London, 1965); Bryan Little, *Sir Christopher Wren: A Historical Biography* (London, 1975); Finer, *Sir Edwin Chadwick;* Gordon Cherry, ed., *Pioneers in British Planning* (London, 1981). For examples of more complex treatments of some of these figures, see David Matless, "Appropriate Geography: Patrick Abercrombie and the Energy of the World," *Journal of Design History* 6, no. 3 (1993): 167–78; David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London, 1998).

All of these articles represent work in progress, and their historical conclusions about metropolitan London are provisional, contingent, and methodologically open-ended. Taken together, they represent a significant set of research agendas for further work on the cultural and social history of the modern city. Urban history is proving to be an important field of current historical debate both in and for itself, and also because it represents an extremely fertile terrain on which a range of more expansive historical questions can be explored. The issues posed here about geography, culture, and experience in modern metropolitan London represent one important strand of this developing field.