

more than five years of work from a newly purchased African before death by overwork. So, while Perry's volume is a very helpful overview of an important historical arc, making some significant contributions to the field, her tendency to write in isolation is a drawback. Even so, Perry's work is on the path towards a more complete and truthful telling of the history of these places, one that accommodates the view that the history of harm in 'the elegant piles of bricks and beautiful landscapes' is inescapable.

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Mark Crinson, *Shock City: Image and Architecture in Industrial Manchester* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2022), 234 pp. incl. 174 colour and b&w ills, ISBN 9781913107338, £35
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Reviewed by JULIAN HOLDER

Mark Crinson's latest book continues his practice of coming at the history of architecture from out of left field, being located at the junction of several mutually supportive discourses, and is all the richer for it. The book explores Manchester's shifting identity — that disparity between 'image and architecture' — during, predominantly, the nineteenth century. It is clearly a work some years in gestation: for over twenty years the author was at Manchester University, before moving to Birkbeck, University of London, and in the preface he offers an elegiac and personal recollection of a lost Manchester of the 1980s — 'Madchester', post-industrial, pre-IRA bomb, a city down on its luck yet still defiant.

Crinson recounts that his postgraduate work in the United States demanded that everyone studied their local landscapes before, or alongside, the dominant subjects of the field: 'the city one lives in should be one of the subjects that an architectural historian works'. This approach is greatly to be welcomed and, writing as another who spent the major part of his career living in Manchester, it is both humbling and exhilarating to read a book that offers a radically new interpretation of its past. The 'shock' in the title is the shock of industrialisation and its workings out in this particular place and in this particular time, predominantly between 1820 and 1850. As a title it was first used by Asa Briggs in one of the perceptive essays in his *Victorian Cities* (1963). By the 1870s, and the imposition of civic order as signified by Manchester's new town hall, the seismic change brought about by industry had both abated and been absorbed forever.

That 'shock' gave us new building types, new social classes and new technologies, and Crinson deals with the fallout of all three. As the so-called first industrial city, this is his central argument against the significance of Paris in histories of modernity. Walter Benjamin's arcades and artisan workshops, often hidden behind elegant façades, are thus replaced with Friedrich Engels's factories, mills and slums — the omnipresent modes

of production, more than consumption. Manchester was 'a cog in the wheel of global cotton': it created back-to-back terraced squalor where Paris created boulevards. 'Scale, or even inhospitability', Crinson notes, are barely mentioned by Benjamin yet are 'important issues in any book on Manchester'. The shock is fundamentally a question of modernity and urbanism — the shock that shook up the very notion of what constituted a city.

Divided into six substantial chapters, each is in effect a case study, sandwiched between an introduction and a coda. The chapters' origins in earlier essays result not in a sequential narrative, but in a series of stimulating, provocative and thoughtful deliberations on aspects of Manchester's identity developed, one suspects, over a long time. Yale University Press has lavished its usual high production values on the book, which is as much a joy to look at as it is to read. Manchester, or the Manchester that Crinson discusses, is partly a city of solid monuments and that monumentality — such as the 'unalloyd bigness' of its mills, warehouses and civic buildings — is ably captured in the images chosen.

The first case study is Ancoats, long regarded (thanks particularly to Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* of 1845) as one of the touchstones of industrial capitalism in its dichotomies of wealth and wretchedness, radical politics and proto-welfarism. This is a superb essay in its close reading of the development of the factory building. It began, at scale, here. Ditherington and the mills of the Derwent valley may have assisted, but in terms of the urbanism created by capitalism, the story starts with Ancoats. As Karl Friedrich Schinkel wrote when he visited in 1826, 'Here are buildings seven to eight storeys, as high and as big as the Royal Palace in Berlin.' This is the chapter in which the *Image and Architecture* of the book's subtitle is most potently explored through a reading of the buildings and texts, and (perhaps following Schinkel) the author reconceptualises these early factories as 'palace-mills'. Familiar, even hackneyed, representations of Ancoats are challenged and expanded here in a subtle and intellectually rigorous examination that is exhilarating to read.

Deploying a wide and challenging body of sources, successive chapters deal with the Free Trade Movement and its urban geography; the photographic representation of the city; the town hall ('as a Gothic machine' — machines and machinery lie at the heart of the author's concerns); industrial smoke and pollution (the Rylands library); and the four successive rebuildings of Manchester's Royal Exchange — a central node and headquarters for global cotton — that takes the reader into the 1920s.

The almost undeclared target of the book is Benjamin's 1930s essay 'Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century'. Although only putative, the link between Paris and Manchester as a result of cotton is indelible in Benjamin's opening sentences, due to the significance that he affords textiles. Whereas in Benjamin's Paris it is read as superstructure, in Crinson's Manchester it is base. Confronting such a seminal text might have been done more clearly as I, for one, find the argument persuasive and wanted more. Nonetheless, *Shock City* is a provocative, skilful and significant contribution to a wide variety of disciplines, not just architectural history. It is a well-overdue reassessment of and challenge to the prevailing belief that Paris was the capital of the nineteenth century.

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