

present. Newcomers to the subject will be richly informed while specialists will appreciate the masterful synthesis across time and space – and all will appreciate Lincoln’s enthusiasm for China’s ‘urban civilization’.

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Rosemary Wakeman, *A Modern History of European Cities: 1815 to the Present*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020. x + 382pp. 69 figures. Bibliography. £72.00 hbk. £22.49 pbk. £17.99 ebook.
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Writing a history of European cities poses particular problems. Weber’s model of the European city as an ideal type may now have been discarded in favour of more pluralistic and contingent readings but whether urban Europe possessed a distinctive form or experience and precisely what that might mean remain elusive. Rosemary Wakeman’s exemplary study of modern European cities starts by jettisoning many of the conventional props: the identification of Europe with its Western half, the focus on capital cities and the emphasis on social class. By contrast, her fascinating new history highlights the European continent as a whole (though Ireland and Scandinavia outside Sweden are largely off stage), provincial cities including ports and manufacturing centres and the complex kinds of social patterning to be found in a university town like Uppsala or a melting pot like Salonica. The timeframe too, from the end of the Napoleonic Wars to the present day, differentiates the study alike from the excellent long-range account of Peter Clark, *European Cities and Towns 400–2000* (Oxford, 2009), and Leif Jerram’s splendidly idiosyncratic study of twentieth-century urban Europe, *Streetlife* (Oxford, 2011).

The central organizing device for Wakeman’s book is the figure of the *passant* or passer-by. It is a figure that is not to be confused with the *flâneur*, as she is at pains to explain, but closer to that of the urban traveller (in practice often an Anglophone one given the multiplicity of languages in play). What this device enables is a panorama of an astonishing number of different European cities over time without pretending to an insider’s eye-view, impossible in such a broad survey. So we have chapters such as ‘Roaming the markets’ and ‘Car trips through the City (1960s–70s)’, suggesting a particular mobile viewpoint but one which never neglects the material aspect of city life. If this is a study that has fully absorbed the new urban cultural history, the economic, demographic and the political are present too. Particularly fine are the visceral descriptions of how European cities were devastated by successive catastrophes, including the ‘urbicide’ of World War II.

Does this make for a big new interpretation of modern European urban history? Probably not, though it might be hard for a survey or synthesis to achieve this purpose without unsettling a balanced geographical and temporal coverage. Rather, the book judiciously follows existing lines of interpretation, encompassing themes such as industrialization, urban reform and planning, modernity and modernism. The book’s originality lies principally in the fresh perspectives it throws up by virtue of

its wide geographical scope. Put crudely, old topics like urban modernity or modern warfare look differently seen from Barcelona and Belgrade rather than London and Paris. Attention to the Balkans in particular is refreshing, bringing into view a cosmopolitan admixture of cultures and distinctive urban forms shaped by the legacy of the Ottoman empire. All of this, of course, challenges the Europeanness of the European city and makes the characteristics of the latter still less distinct and easy to pinpoint. Small wonder, therefore, that in concluding her study, Wakeman is forced back on broad generalizations, following Le Galès and Bagnasco in asserting as the prime feature of the 'European urban system' its spatial density and stability over time.

Surveys like *A Modern History of European Cities* have been sidelined in recent historical scholarship in favour of the monograph, not least in urban history where the biography of a single city remains prevalent. Yet the survey foregrounds questions about comparison and scope that the monograph frequently evades and which are essential to replenish the field. Rosemary Wakeman's study is notably rich in raising such questions. It pushes us to explain developments not contained by urban or national boundaries, such as the impact of modernism on the built form of cities east and west or the cultural consequences of the successive 'rediscovery' of heritage and the urban past across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Bravely too, it challenges the reader to make sense of the multiple large-scale processes affecting European cities since 1945 – migration and mass mobility, deindustrialization, decolonization – and to integrate them into the long-term historical trajectory of European urbanism. Quite simply, it represents the best survey we possess of a big and important topic and one that raises a whole series of research questions about how we begin to rethink modern European urban history beyond the conventional divisions of period, empire and the Cold War.

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