

monitor daily lifestyle choices in order to sustain health—and so petitions emphasized the role of external factors in causing sickness. Thus illness for the poor was frequently attributed to accidents, particularly because of their occupations, or as a consequence of years of hard work. The petitions usually listed physically debilitating problems that could be confirmed by inspection, such as paralysis or broken limbs rather than internal diseases. Petitions tried to convey a sense of the material and social deprivation caused by infirmity and disease—the loss of goods, wealth, and friends—and the severity of the problem—the person would perish without help.

Weisser examined fifty-two men and women, but the core of her analysis is based on a few well-known sources like Elizabeth Freke or Sarah Cowper. Weisser unwittingly pushes an image of overwrought, emotional, complaining women—and Freke and Cowper surely fit that mold—but, notwithstanding stereotypes and contemporary portrayals, many early modern women did not. The gentlewoman Mary Clarke suffered from badly swollen legs, toothache, and, at times, pain so bad it took her breath away. Even so she neither took to her bed nor included heightened accounts of her suffering in her letters; rather, she kept on dealing with estate problems, workmen, child care, servant issues, and keeping her husband, Edward, up-to-date.¹ Nor could women from lower down the social scale, married or single, spend weeks in a sickbed unless it was absolutely impossible for them to get up. Depicting male behavior as matter of fact and workmanlike and female behavior as emotional and communal may not be the most productive approach to gender in early modern society.

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Redbrick: A Social and Architectural History of Britain's Civic Universities.

By *William Whyte*.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xviii+390. \$110.00.

As salaries lag and workloads mount, academics feel increasingly squeezed. On one side they confront officious administrators, preoccupied with fund-raising and pushing absurd rebranding exercises; on the other side they face distressingly homogenous student bodies, who approach their educations as consumers buying credentials rather than scholars seeking knowledge. Morale cannot be helped by the fact that more than 40 percent of the professoriate recently dropped dead—such is the state of affairs in the paleoliberal university, King's College London of the 1830s.

Commentators on today's universities often seem more familiar with these gripes than their lineage, and it is precisely that combination of contemporary relevance and historical perspective that recommends William Whyte's revelatory *Redbrick*. The "first history of the civic universities for sixty years" (9), *Redbrick* explains how the civic universities came to comprise Britain's national university system. Leeds and Leicester, not Oxford and Cambridge, are—in the words of the historian D. W. Brogan, writing in 1951—the "normal universities of the modern world" (218), and Whyte explores how their ethos emerged, developed, and eventually triumphed. *Redbrick*, in this sense, refers not strictly to those sturdy Victorian institutions in industrial cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds, but to the whole network of modern universities that can trace

¹ Mary Jepp Clarke, letters, *British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries*, 264R, 296, 360, 445R, <http://solomon.bwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bwld/getvolume.pl?S7378>.

their origins back to University College London and King's College London, and whose numbers swelled so dramatically through successive waves of expansion during the twentieth century. Exeter and Leicester, Keele and Sussex, Loughborough and Salford, De Montfort and Oxford Brookes, and even the Open University all figure here as iterations of a Redbrick idea that is (relatively) democratic, pragmatic, and innovative—if also, too often, overextended, underfunded, and mired in a recurrent sense of crisis. Collectively, Whyte argues, the development of the civic universities over the previous two centuries represents “an almost forgotten revolution, a Renaissance that nobody now notices” (8)—an oversight that this beautifully produced book remedies triumphantly.

After a prologue examining the origins of King's College Windsor in loyalist New York, in order to illustrate the variety of precedents and ambitions that subsequent establishments inherited, *Redbrick* begins not in the provinces but the capital. Part I tells the intertwined story of the foundings of University College London and King's College London, which opened their doors in 1828 and 1831, respectively. These precarious foundations were beset by crises from the outset, which were partially resolved through the shared federation of the University of London. That foundation marked a key point of departure for the civic universities to follow, since it established an accredited structure through which localities beyond London could establish colleges of their own. Part II then examines the mid-Victorian university, from 1843 to 1880, showing that these establishments were driven by rivalries partly denominational but increasingly civic. These institutions served whole new swaths of society: provincial, non-Anglican, middle and working class, and most importantly women. Parts III and IV push forward through the Second World War, by which time Redbrick had transcended civic horizons to emerge as a truly national system. And Parts V and VI take the story up to the present, showing how successive waves of university expansion—before, during, and since the Robbins Report of 1963—have all remained indebted to the model of Redbrick.

The book is comprehensive, ranging from the eighteenth century to the present; it perceptively attends to false starts and fictional accounts, alongside more familiar and lasting successes; and it is deeply researched, generously illustrated, and beautifully written throughout. Announcing itself as “a social and architectural history,” each section devotes equal attention to student cultures and building forms, but the most commanding discussions reflect Whyte's sure-footed skill as an architectural historian. The readings of buildings advance his most pointed arguments, especially regarding the relationship between Redbrick and Oxbridge. Whyte challenges those historians who read civic university buildings as derivative or traditional, identifying “an archetypally Redbrick architecture” (157) instead, one that offers “a new architecture for a new sort of institution” (158); this “vibrant series of architectural experiments” (160), he continues, actually “owed little to Oxbridge” (161). Far from second-rate Oxbridge knock-offs, the buildings of Redbrick—like the Redbrick idea itself—were utterly their own: innovative, modern, and diverse, they ultimately emerged as the physical signature of Britain's university system.

Whyte advances these arguments so energetically that readers might wonder whether something significant is missing. Here, after all, is an account of more than two centuries of British universities that minimizes the significance of Oxford and Cambridge—despite the fact that, surely, many of the ideas and personnel shaping Redbrick were themselves made in Oxbridge. But that is precisely the perspective—“disastrous,” in Whyte's view (8)—that has long distorted understandings of Britain's civic universities, preventing their recognition as achievements in their own right, and Whyte's bracing refusal to grant it any quarter emerges as one of the defining contributions of this powerfully argued and persuasive book. *Redbrick* belongs on the shelf of every historian of architecture, univer-

sities, and indeed modern Britain, and it should also inform wider discussions about the university in Britain past, present, and future.

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Ten Books That Shaped the British Empire: Creating an Imperial Commons. Edited by *Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014. Pp. x+284. \$89.95 (cloth); \$24.95 (paper).

This innovative volume explores the many functions of the book in empire, the modern British Empire in particular. One thinks immediately of the multitude of ways that the book served, as the editors suggest, as emblems of imperial authority and sovereignty: the King James Bible as perhaps the most striking example of a book that was imagined to create a unified Christian empire. But the notion of a “book” in an imperial context is neither simple nor straightforward. Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr refuse to fetishize either ‘book’ or ‘empire,’ noting that if “empire was not a coherent whole but an assemblage—a far-flung, reticulate, and vascular patchwork of spaces joined by mobile subjects of all kinds—the book was often also just such an assemblage” (2). The book was not only an object that unified empire, but also a radical sign of the “chaotic pluralism” of imperial authority and legitimacy (2).

The authors all agree with the basic premise that books could change empire. But their sense of what books wrought—and how—differs widely. The book’s relationship to imperial power was never singular or predictable. As the editors note, these are ten books of different shapes and sizes working through capillaries of imperial print culture and colonial politics. These are not all “big books,” which founded or dismantled empires. Five began as pamphlets and one as a newspaper serial. Imperial classics and anticolonial blockbusters are juxtaposed with lesser-known works. Less an engine than a camera, the book helps us understand how imperial change happens. The book, as Burton and Hofmeyr evocatively put it, operates as an “illuminating dye—at once clearing space for and running through empire’s pathways, consolidating notions of the imperial self in some places, challenging them in others” (16).

The essays are organized chronologically, by the date of publication of their key text, which gives a strong narrative arc to a productively messy tale. First, Tony Ballantyne illuminates the troubled history of Wakefield’s *A Letter from Sydney*, a foundational text for British settler colonialism in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada in the 1830s. Produced while Wakefield was incarcerated in Newgate prison, this text invites us to consider the complex conditions under which imperial ideas were forged. Charlotte Macdonald’s excellent essay on *Jane Eyre* traces the book’s readers in London, Wellington, the Antarctic, and the schoolrooms of southern Africa, charting its circulation of imperial and anti-imperial readers from the 1840s to the 1960s. Catherine Hall’s essay on Macaulay’s *History of England* offers a rich “biography” of Macaulay and his text, juxtaposing the book’s truly global reach with its own striking omissions (the Atlantic empire, for example). As Hall reminds us, Macaulay’s text was transformative in positing colonial rule as the only path to modernity—a paradigm that would later be undermined, but never completely eliminated.

The tone shifts with Marilyn Lake’s essay on Charles H. Pearson’s *National Life and Character* (1893). Lake powerfully illustrates how, as imperial anxieties accelerated at