

Styles' of British Cinema architecture – the 'Granada' style of the 1930s: 'The ultimate fantasy cinema . . . the masterpiece of the Russian stage director and designer Theodore Komisarjevsky – a golden gothic shrine to film'; the modernist, art deco 'Gaumont' Palaces; ABC and the ubiquitous modern 'Odeon' style which did away with the elaborate and the exotic, replacing it with function, minimalism and clean lines – a style which paved the way for the modern multiplex cinema.

His final chapter on 'The Third Age of Cinema', the age of the multiplex is a necessary and fascinating inclusion. It would have deserved more attention than the three-and-a-half pages given to it. Gray begins his exploration in the late nineteenth century with cinema very much on the margins and traces its trajectory from the peripheries (travelling fairs, basements, etc.) through to the rise of the picture palaces of the West End and the inner cities of Great Britain, finally to a cinema that has returned (in a physical sense) to the margins again: enormous modern utopian multiplexes, built to accommodate the latest in film technology (recall the rise of the West End cinema as a result of the birth of the Hollywood Epic), built in retail parks, industrial estates and on ex-industrial land. I would dearly have liked Gray to have drawn this out into a more extensive chapter, noting how these buildings reflect how modern, contemporary, audiences consume and understand the medium of film and debate how these modern, often brutalist buildings, reflect and connote the production, distribution and screening of films as an industrial, consumer product of the 'third age'.

Cinemas of Britain ought to be able to take its place alongside other texts in the area like Stephen Barber's *Abandoned Images: Film and Film's End* (Reaktion Books, 2010). However I felt that in some parts, its potential was not fully reached. How did the changes in style and architecture help audience to experience film itself? This is a question that I felt was never fully answered. Nevertheless despite its (few) shortcomings, this is an essential book for anyone with even a passing interest in film architecture. It offers both historical understanding and research, as well as a deep sense of nostalgia. Flicking through it you may even find a photograph of the lost place where film first became an important part of your life.

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The power of urban ethnic places: cultural heritage and community life, by Jan Lin, Abingdon, Routledge, 2011, 280 pp., \$34.95 (paperback)

Since the turn of the twentieth century, ethnic cultural attractions in urban centres have held the attention of Americans, from urban tourists to city planners and officials. In the age of World's Fairs, visitors were attracted to ethnic villages out of a fascination that was tied to notions of American exceptionalism and white supremacy.¹ From roughly the 1920s to the 1960s – an era dominated by Fordist modes of production and planning – ethnic centres became sites of moral reform and later, blight removal and urban renewal. Today, we find ourselves in a new age of American engagement with urban ethnic centres. As the economy shifts from a rationalized Fordist model to a globalized, neoliberal world economy, a new movement aimed at

preserving ethnic heritage sites has come from a multivalent group of individuals and organizations. Not only is there renewed vigour from grassroots organizations intent on preserving ethnic heritage sites, but there is also a concomitant influx of investment coming from private and public monies both nationally and internationally to stimulate investment and tourism. Indeed, the urban ethnic places of today are both sites of power and community empowerment for ethnic activists and preservationists as well as for global capital.

In *The Power of Urban Ethnic Places*, Jan Lin maps a broad narrative of urban ethnic places as well as case studies of the ‘world cities’ of Houston, Miami, New York, and Los Angeles from the turn of the twentieth century to today. In so doing, Lin situates the development and contestations over discrete ethnic neighbourhoods and business districts within a longer history of capitalist development and urban planning. In his application of the concept of ‘glocalization’ (the intertwined relationship between global and local processes of capitalist investment), Lin pushes against declension narratives focused on the destructive effects of urban renewal and deindustrialization. Rather, he suggests that in the current era of neoliberalism and globalization, ethnic heritage places have attracted a broad spectrum of tourists and consumers, counterbalancing some of the decline caused by urban renewal and decentralization and recruiting new flows of transnational capital. While certainly interested in broad processes of global investment, Lin points to the centrality of culture and ethnic cultural workers in reviving their neighbourhoods and communities. For community activists, locally driven revitalization movements helped sustain a sense of place and helped mobilize new cultural symbols around which communities might resist slum clearance and gentrification.

Lin organizes his text around a general historical survey of American urban policy and ethnic place-based movements, followed by four case studies (Houston, Miami, New York, and Los Angeles) and a conclusion elucidating the multiple possibilities and uneven access to local and global capital in ethnic revitalization movements. In general, Lin finds critical contrasts between the continued disinvestment in black communities and the dynamic revitalization of Latino and Asian ethnic enclaves. As has been well documented by other scholars, the former was a legacy of urban renewal and highway construction policies that left many African American neighbourhoods depopulated and plagued with problems of abandonment; the latter, meanwhile, emerged as an important product of more recent transnational investment and immigration. The transnational aspect is key to understanding this most recent turn in the US’ ethnic enclaves: for instance, visitors to Miami’s Little Havana and South Beach districts can find transnational banks, high-rise condominiums funded by Latin American and Caribbean investors, and a Calle Ocho street festival that is internationally visited and funded. This is in stark contrast to the city’s historically black Overtown district which was devastated in the postwar period by the construction of the I-95 expressway. Because of these very different contexts, revitalization efforts in Overtown are smaller in scope and more interested in preserving landmark home and cultural centres. The same processes of transnational capital investment and revitalization can be found in the Chinatown districts of Los Angeles and New York.

Lin warns against an overly celebratory treatment of the relative successes of Asian and Latino districts, however. Despite their economic and social vitality, such enclaves run into the critical problems of authenticity and ownership. The massive infusion of international as well as private investment in revitalizing ethnic neighbourhoods brings with it both gentrification and removal of poor and elderly ethnic residents as well as the well-founded fear of becoming ‘ethnic theme parks’ – commercialized spaces for urban tourism that erode community

control and cultural authenticity.² Here, Lin draws useful parallels with the ethnic heritage sites in American world cities and the World's Fairs during the Age of Empire. In both eras, ethnic enclaves and districts promoted international knowledge and the exchange of goods for some at the expense of others. Both historical moments reveal problematic dynamics of appropriation and exoticization by privileged American visitors and global capital at the expense of the communities and historical memories they are meant to preserve.

Notes

1. Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
2. Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology, and Development in American Urbanism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

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Precious commodity: providing water for America's cities, by Martin Melosi, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, 302 pp., US\$27.95 (paperback)

In the last few years, cities have reacted to growing budget deficits by trying to sell publicly owned services to private companies. Milwaukee attempted to sell its waterworks, Dallas sold its zoo, and my own town of New Haven has been considering leasing its parking metres. While this push toward privatization seems like a recent trend, historian Martin Melosi reveals the longer history of such attempts in his new book, *Precious Commodities*. In telling the history of water management from the Revolution to the present, Melosi shows that the privatization and consequent commodification of that public good posed serious ethical and environmental questions that affected much more than government coffers.

Water is an essential ingredient for urban growth, public health, commerce, transportation, industry, energy, and agriculture – in short, for human survival. It is both a home to other species and a dumping ground for waste and pollutants. The way a society controls its water can establish and reinforce social hierarchies and political structures. For all of these reasons, the management, conservation, and distribution of water are contentious and worthy of serious study. While contemporary water debates centre on water's growing scarcity in the face of expanding human populations, Melosi argues that the focus instead needs to be on who controls the water – a point that is vital for determining the future direction that innovation, allocation, and sustainability work will take.

Water has trickled through much of Melosi's impressive list of publications and here he collects his previously published chapters and articles into a single volume. Topics include a survey of river 'improvements', the development of urban infrastructure in response to faulty