

**Bookreview: Culture, urbanism and planning.
Edited by J. Monclús and M. Guàrdia. Aldershot:
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While, Aidan

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foods into famine-stressed populations led to improved nutrition, increased infant and child life expectancy, and protection against the ravages of infectious diseases.

The author tackles a number of subjects that directly relate to the development of agriculture: chronic malnutrition, famine, globalization, and the homogenization of culture. Much is made of the loss of overall health as a consequence of the move towards settled agriculture and reliance upon mono-cropping. The author suggests that diseases such as rickets, scurvy, and incidences of anemia, dental caries, and knobby joints do not seem to be indicated in our hunter-gatherer ancestors but begin to appear in archival records from Greek and Roman sources writing about the known cultures of that era. Kiple states that our ancestors were significantly taller than the following agrarians; similarly, American Revolutionary soldiers were larger than their European opponents, indicating more protein in their diets.

This book joins with those of Charles Mann, *1491*, and Jarrod Diamond, *Guns, germs, and steel*, in examining the impacts of the new world upon the old. The author states that the 'Columbian Exchange,' touted as revolutionizing the world, did so by reversing the evolutionary trend to diversify: that it rather rearranged food around the world. This globalizing of our foods, fueled by immigration and the industrial revolution, 'ushered in the modern world' (p. 162).

Although food geographers may consider this book a primer reader best suited to an introductory course, the bibliography is extensive and well researched, the writing fluid, and the themes well expressed and thoroughly explored.

University of Wyoming

LUCIUS HALLETT

Culture, urbanism and planning. Edited by J. Monclús and M. Guàrdia. Aldershot: Ashgate. 2006. xix + 293 pp. £55.00 hardback. ISBN: 0754646238.

Culture, urbanism and planning is an edited book that reflects its roots in a collection of papers from an annual conference of the International Planning History Society. As expected from an IPHS conference, the majority of the 15 contributions are firmly rooted in the discipline of planning history, though most are concerned to link past, present and future, and some are predominantly about the contemporary city. The geographical focus is wide-ranging, including chapters on Latin America and South America as well as Europe and the US. Cultural geographers will no doubt be attracted by the intriguing title. They might, however, be disappointed by what they find inside the covers, especially as the combination of 'culture', 'urbanism' and 'planning' is used as a loose umbrella for disparate chapters rather than a starting point for analysis. The editors' introductory chapter has only a brief discussion of the three concepts, but it makes clear that their focus is planning for the cultural economy rather than the ways in which culture gets into planning. The presence of the terms 'urbanism' and 'planning' in the title is seen as little more than an attempt 'to delimit a more comprehensive and fluid area of problems, than that which each term evokes on its own' (p. xvi). Many of the chapters take a wider view of the culture–planning relationship, but the implications tend to be implicit rather than explicit. The chapters that rise to the challenge of linking culture and planning reflect the concern with planning for culture in its narrowest sense.

The strength of the book lies in the intriguing stories and thick descriptions of the chapters, such as Margarita Gutman's discussion of the metropolis-like future visions for Buenos Aires from the 1920's conceptualization and wider reflection. Moreover, Steven Ward's insightful concluding chapter on the origins and dissemination of the 'Baltimore model' of waterfront regeneration shows what might have been achieved by the other chapters in terms of linking case studies to broader conceptual concerns. Ultimately, however, too many contributions feel like they are conference papers rather than fully worked book chapters. *Culture, urbanism and planning* will probably have limited appeal for most cultural geographers.

University of Sheffield

AIDAN WHILE

Garden plots: the politics and poetics of gardens. By Shelley Saguaro. Aldershot, Hants and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited. 2006. xiii + 249 pp. £50.00 hardback. ISBN: 9780754637530.

The mass movement of people across and between continents in the modern period engendered new responses to land in literature as in other areas of culture. Urban and imperial expansion, voluntary and enforced migration, exile and resettlement brought to the fore interdependent ideas about belonging and loss, wilderness and cultivation, homelands and promised lands, which were reflected and constructed in contemporary texts. Borrowing from the Antiguan-born writer Jamaica Kincaid, the fundamental premise of *Garden plots* is that 'gardens and gardening are political' (p. xiii). Informed by feminist, postcolonialist and psychoanalytic theories, this is a work primarily of literary criticism and history, focusing on the place and role of the garden in the works of about 20 authors writing in English in the 20th and 21st centuries. The material is organized by chapters in broadly chronological categories – modernism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, cyberpunk – giving voice to Other voices and gardens, offering multiple perspectives of landscape through literature.

'Gardens' are broadly defined, embracing the material geographies of imperial botanical gardens, domestic plots and allotments but also the politics of plant collecting and biotechnology. At the same time, the book explores imagined landscapes and their relationship with literary processes: writing as cultural journey becomes a sub-theme of the book. Its geographical scope is equally wide-ranging, reaching through Britain, Ireland, India, Nepal, the Caribbean, the Americas, South Africa and New Zealand. In short, Shelley Saguaro shows that, far from being a neutral plot (in all senses of the word), the garden in these texts is materially and symbolically central to political, social and personal understandings of place, mobilized, for example, to articulate and remedy dislocation. These gardens, then, are the lens through which to explore power relations – in gender and race, and between colonizer and colonized. These are most compellingly explored through the works of J. M. Coetzee, Toni Morrison, V. S. Naipaul and Leslie Marmon Silko and their role in writing the 'post-colonial landscape'. This reveals, to cite one example, why, according to Morrison, the dominant, white, meanings of 'country' could never be shared by African Americans: 'country life through Black eyes produced visions of lynchings, share croppers [and] slavery' (p. 164).