

urban music-making: choral societies; the growing importance of hymns for most Protestant churches; the cult of the piano and the associated demand for printed parts and solos; and the sight-singing movement. While the book's exclusions might be justified by its emphasis on the public culture of the concert-going middle classes, it is disappointingly short on the thick descriptions of ticket prices, dress and ritual that have characterized Simon Gunn's work on that subject.

Pieper is therefore not well served by her title, because her comparison of two institutions makes a less than adequate account of *Music and the Making of Middle-Class Culture*. To cherry-pick 'two industrial centres' and their premier musical venues provokes questions about how to define a middle class and its relationship with music but does not provide the answers. That would require not only a more synoptic or at least a more reflective account of class but also – some readers may feel – a more attentive ear for music. Pieper's book certainly discusses the libretti of Victorian oratorios and dutifully lists Leipzig's favourite composers, but does not really convey what it was like to listen to the music. Culture helps articulate a sense of class, but class then determines that when an individual encountered Beethoven or Mendelssohn, 'the observance of ordinary cultural practice was paramount' (p. 149) – leaving all too little room for pleasure.

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Max Page, *The City's End: Two Centuries of Fantasies, Fears, and Premonitions of New York's Destruction*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008. 271pp. 137 black and white illustrations. 24 colour plates. £25.00.
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Max Page's inflationary pursuit of destruction began with a prize-winning study of the demolition of landmark buildings in *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900–1940* (1999), and now encompasses the fires devastating Lower Manhattan in Chesley Bonestell's *Hiroshima U.S.A.* (1950) and the partly submerged hulks of skyscrapers in *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence* (2001). Although *The City's End* is a very different book, embracing comics, computer games, film, painting and literature, Page continues to insist on New York City's exceptionalism, sometimes measured by degree, sometimes by kind. There is so much evidence that Page does well not to be overwhelmed by the sheer number of times that New York City has been imaginatively blown up, swamped, crushed and invaded.

In his account of 'every generation[s]... reasons for destroying New York' (p. 7), Page investigates how New York's apocalyptic fate reflects and sometimes anticipates broader American preoccupations with massive immigration and internal mobility, urban disorder and alienation, economic crises and foreign military or para-military threats. Thus, W.E.B. DuBois' 'The Comet' (1920) puts 'nigger' Jim on the spot when he and a rich white woman, Julia, mistakenly believe they are the only survivors of a deadly gas attack on the USA, while Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's *Superman* shorts in 1941 are informed by urban fears of totalitarianism. As an architectural historian, Page is particularly good on the havoc wrought on the material city. He also brings a historian's insights and knowledge to a broad sweep of imaginative representations of the city. The choice

of illustrations and how they are integrated into the text bring the reader into a bizarre world, in which a giant baby wrenches the Chrysler Building from the surrounding cityscape, and Aerosoft Manhattan reinserts the Twin Towers into the cityscape by modifying the 2004 edition of Microsoft's Flight Simulator. As one might expect, Page has perceptive things to say about pre-visions of 9/11, as well as post-9/11 imaginings of disaster, and about the coincidence of two opposing reactions: it cannot be so, and we have seen this before (in the case of New York City, we now know, many times).

Doubtless, there are cases to be made for other cities' litanies of destruction, but the only shortcoming I should note is the downplaying of internalist explanations of some images and accounts. For instance, his astute commentary on James N. Rosenberg's *Oct 29 Dies Irae* (1929), a lithograph prompted by the urban disorder of the Great Crash, mentions George Bellows (presumably, his *New York* of 1911) and Joseph Pennell. But the logic of visual representation should also take in Max Weber's Cubist tilting and up-ending of the city, as well as the post-Impressionist movements on the canvas of John Marin. How formal protocols, conventions and developments (from Realism to Modernism, in this case) tie in with Page's urban and thematic reference points gets rather little attention. Disaster movies, too, are provoked and shaped by their precursors, as well as by economic, technological or societal crises and watersheds. The humanist underpinning in Page's other books and articles makes a strong reappearance in the midst of all the carnage and violence. He deals deftly with explanations for New York's repeated demise in a fine concluding chapter, examining responses across the political spectrum to violence and its uses and abuses. But his most intriguing, if somewhat hopeful, conclusion is that much of what he has surveyed has a positive purpose, and is even a manifestation of a love of New York and a need for it. 'All this life [on the real streets of New York] explains why we continue to destroy New York... because it is so unimaginable for us, in reality, not to have this city' (p. 228). Page is less troubled by the sight of buildings toppling or sinking into the sea, than by scenes in *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* and *Vanilla Sky*, when, respectively, Harry Belafonte and Tom Cruise are pictured in streets empty of people.

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Eric Mumford and Hashim Sarkis (eds.), *Josep Lluís Sert: The Architect of Urban Design, 1953–1969*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008. 256pp. 94 black and white illustrations. 26 colour images. Index. £30.00.

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This book emerged from a conference held by the Graduate School of Design (GSD) at Harvard to review the career of the Spanish-born architect-planner Josep Lluís Sert, particularly in his role as dean of the School from 1953 to 1969. When architecture schools are involved in books about their own they often degenerate into wish-fulfillment and hagiography. Refreshingly this is not the case here – at least not entirely.