as in the huge land companies characteristic of the city. On the other hand, their influence on urban development was more direct, in that they had to part-finance infrastructural projects. Indeed, the discussion of such economic issues would probably have gained from a section giving a general theoretical overview of the economics of urban growth in this period. Overall, the comparative perspective of Forsell's study proves useful, although it might have gained by being taken one step further, in a concluding comparison of key components also found in other cities. The reader is left somewhat at a loss about how far the conclusions derived also apply to, for example, European cities in general.

Mats Deland
Stockholm University

Mia Fuller, *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. xiv + 280pp. 74 figures. Bibliography. £58.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926807004804

A given socio-historical moment is never homogeneous; on the contrary it is rich in contradictions. It acquires a 'personality' and is a 'moment' of development in that a certain fundamental activity of life prevails over others and represents a historical 'peak'.

(Antonio Gramsci, 'Art and the struggle for a new civilization', from *Prison Notebooks*, translated and published in *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Cambridge, 1985), 93)

In a section of his *Prison Notebooks* entitled 'Art and the struggle for a new civilization', Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci argues that one of the central problems of historical writing is the choice of what is representative of a particular time and place. In this context Gramsci rhetorically asks whether more reactionary views are not also representative – in the end asserting that the task of the historian is to convey the full complexity of the social and historical context with all of its conflicting elements. While this might seem a daunting task, this approach at least in part underlies the writing of Mia Fuller's *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism*. This book offers a broad examination of urban and architectural theory and its related practices in the Italian colonies in North and East Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean conducted over the full range of its historical trajectory – roughly from the 1880s until the fall of the Fascist regime in 1943 – and in relation to the constantly shifting political imperatives that shaped Italian colonial policy.

One of the most striking features of the book is its effort to deal with such an expansive geographic context over a long span of time while trying to maintain some sense of the contested nature of political and cultural production in Italy's colonies. This effort is supported by the structure of the book, which begins with the various contexts of Italian colonialism. What seems particularly useful in this section of the book is the discussion of what Fuller describes as conceptual geographies – both physical and human – such as the idea that Libya was part of Italy's historic destiny in the Mediterranean. In the second section, the book outlines theories of architecture and urbanism as they related to Italy's colonies and

as they developed according to specific shifts in colonial politics – with particular attention to the impact of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and declaration of an Italian Empire in Africa in 1936. The final section – which is perhaps its most unique contribution – offers specific case studies of the practices of colonial architecture and planning in Tripoli, in planned agricultural settlements in Libya and East Africa, and in the Imperial city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. As is noted in the introduction, rather than provide a comprehensive history the author presents the major approaches based on the argument that there was no single model for Italian colonial architecture and planning.

While it is hard to argue with any of the major assertions of this book – and one can certainly acknowledge its ambitions – the results are sometimes less satisfying. In part, this is attributable to the relative slimness of a volume that examines architecture and planning in all of Italy's colonial possessions, where any one of these contexts would demand a book of greater length. Although the comparative approach taken is quite laudable, at times the lack of depth leads to some rather questionable assertions. This is particularly true of its discussion of architectural discourse – such as its all-to-brief attempt to capture the full complexity of the debates within modern Italian architecture from 1910 to 1930. One could be equally critical of the lack of intensity with which the author examines 'moderns abroad' in a book that seems to spend so little time discussing the concept (or consequences) of modernity. However, even if it often lacks the full complexity of examination that this subject deserves – particularly for architectural historians – the book fills a quite obvious gap in scholarship on Italian colonialism for scholars of urban history and cultural studies.

Brian L. McLaren
University of Washington

Carl Smith, *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. xvii + 183pp. 68 illustrations. $22.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926807004816

This book is an extension of the interpretive essay that Carl Smith wrote for the online version of the superb *Encyclopedia of Chicago*. Its genesis as an extended encyclopaedia entry is evident in its admirable clarity, relative brevity for a book, bibliographic essay instead of footnotes, generous quantity of illustrations and balanced tone. Unlike many encyclopaedias, Smith's work is also deeply researched and vividly written. This is the place to turn to for a thorough introduction to what Smith calls 'one of the most fascinating and significant documents in the history of urban planning' (p. xv), Daniel Burnham's *Plan of Chicago*. Burnham's 1909 plan not only helped systematize Chicago's parks and downtown, it also inspired much twentieth-century urban planning. However, although Smith has written a wonderful introduction this is not a critical assessment. What is at stake when a small group of elite businessmen invests more than $100,000 to promote their specific vision of a city? Smith repeatedly notes that the leaders of Chicago's Merchant's Club, who financed and promoted Burnham's plan, were sincere in their belief that they were serving the entire city even as they were also often serving their own self-interests. This is true, but simply