Vivian Bickford-Smith, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis: Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xvi + 319pp. 16 figures. 7 maps. 5 tables. Bibliography. Index. £64.99.
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Even for those peripherally interested in urban history, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis* is a good read. Vivian Bickford-Smith weaves together a compelling argument for a more intermeshed urban history of the three cities of Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg, presenting them as parallels, and also as palimpsests. Bickford-Smith is firm on the choice of these cities with respect to difference, development and scale. Drawing on South African urban studies and history standards in addition to less obvious sources, the volume opens with an introduction describing the aim of the project and its intent to deconstruct a specifically racialized history of the development of the city in South Africa, and allow for this discourse to exist blurring the lines of race, class and gender that have underpinned most urban histories of South Africa. This process of deconstruction allows the city to be presented as a function of social intersections, rather than a structural analysis of planning and building types. Because of this, the sections address fundamental tropes in the history of urbanization in South Africa, and dexterously present overlays of simultaneous threads of social, political and ecological histories as critical points of analysis in understanding the complexity of the contemporary South African metropolis.

The opening chapter is a skilful analysis of the construct of 'Anglicanization', a civic as opposed to ethnic means of identity formation which cut across individual interests and allowed instead for a common goal of 'Britishness'. Significantly, this facilitated a measure of social cohesion, across the four provinces of the new Union, and, to some degree, between both black and white residents of South Africa. This not only achieved the ends of the British empire, but presented a credible aspect of a global power, transmitted through what Bickford-Smith refers to as 'multimedia'. The latter is a thread that Bickford-Smith explores throughout the volume in order to achieve a denser presentation of history. This approach allows him to subvert the usual polarized approaches dealing with race and gender, through embracing voices and discussions that are beyond the formal 'media' and which represent different opinions and subversive challenges. Whilst the necessity to delineate strongly the borders of the study to Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg is recognized and acknowledged, in true South African form this boundary allows for a glaring missed opportunity – what is sadly absent is the voice of the amaKholwa at the Georgetown Mission, and their extensive discussions, engagement with, and resistance to, 'Britishness' through the *Times of Natal*, and their own newspaper, *Inkanyezi Yase Natali*.

The second chapter, titled 'More Babylon than Birmingham', revisits Raymond Williams' standard English text *The Country and the City* (1975), using Williams' views on past and future, country and city, to situate the city as contemporary and aiming towards the future, whilst the countryside reflects the norms and values of the past. Bickford-Smith suggests thus that 'Views on the nature of South African urbanization mattered because of their potential to affect prejudices, policies and practices' (p. 79), and in so doing, weaves a narrative of the South African cities

as places of culture, and simultaneously places of 'moral and physical danger'. He discusses alcohol, prostitution, gangsters, disease, militancy, class divides and rape generally as the symptom (or fault) of the immigrant to the city, drawing on multiple sources such as plays, movies and novels which position the city as dangerous for the 'other' (i.e. not British). These media sources of course, serve to reinforce the idea of *civis*, and Britishness. The underbelly of the political, social and epidemiological character of the city is thus exposed in this chapter, concluding with the binary of aggressive and simultaneous tourism campaigns which 'aimed at promoting Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg of sunlit Utopias, both within southern Africa and internationally' (p. 129).

The idea of the 'sunlit Utopia' hinges around the 1946 visit of the renowned twentieth-century travel writer, H.V. Morton. Significantly, Morton was the guest of the South African Railways and Harbours, who had set up a dedicated publicity section. The author contextualizes the growth of the twentieth-century publicity associations, and the increase in the flow of positive information that streamed from them from the 1920s onwards. Much of this positive news again entrenched the notion of 'Britishness', reinforced by the local media which made events and places in England part of everyday experience supplemented by newsreels, motion pictures and radio broadcasts. Bickford-Smith speaks of the cascading legislations promulgated in England, such as the Public Health Act (1919) which had its own versions in South Africa, and ultimately allowed for the municipal production of social housing. The 'Durban System' and its operational framework leads into discussion around a greater degree of control – and 'taming the disorderly city'. The possession of the city through leisure (surfing, Boy Scouts, Bantu Social Clubs) was underpinned by the influence of the Garden City movement, and the American City Beautiful Movement, which addressed the impact of city planning on social behaviour. These ideas were notionally adopted, introducing Le Corbusier, in particular, and his ideas of social modernism. Ironically, it is the idea of 'colour' which is used to market the cities of South Africa in the mid-twentieth century: in promoting a 'unique' identity. But as Bickford-Smith reminds us, there was always turbulence beneath the idyll.

'Selling sunlit Utopias' is pitched against the final major section 'Bitter cries and black Baudelaires' again reinforcing the contestation in the middle of the twentieth century. This section largely addresses the resistance that took hold in the cities, setting the conservative Nationalist Government against the majority of its population. Whilst much of this discourse is now a mainstream narrative, the warnings of Arthur Keppel-Jones in *When Smuts Goes* (1947) are not ironic. The massive influx of Africans to the cities after World War II exacerbated the requirements for exclusionary legislation and segregated development. Whilst the section engages largely with the African voice of both resistance and belonging, Bickford-Smith identifies anomalies, commentary and positioning that is contrary to both apartheid era histories and contemporary revisionism. It expands into identity formation, with the author citing the anthropologist B.A. Pauw (1963) in particular, which allowed for categorization of positions in migration and belonging. Bickford-Smith continues to employ myriad forms of media, particularly motion picture, in order to present a complex history of both resistance and belonging in cities in the late twentieth century.

The short, concluding chapter is reflective. It engages with the sites of forced removals, their different presentations in different media, in a mixture of historical

chronology and interjection. The discussions reflect Anna Bohlin's work in the edited volume by Bender and Winer (2001) presenting the removals as sites of nostalgia.[3] Significantly, Bickford-Smith cites Jacob Dhlamini, whose *Native Nostalgia* (2009) suggests that nostalgia is significant in construction of negative pasts, as it reinforces the palimpsest that is historical experience.

The Emergence of the South African Metropolis is a complex book. However, the task set by the author is not a simple one. The 'multimedia' approach has allowed for a number of parallel discussions, filling in gaps of silence that are prominent in the standards of twentieth-century history, urban studies and, indeed, sociology and anthropology. Whilst by its nature it has moments which are confusing and dense, these points allow for reflection on the confusion and denseness that is South African urban history in recent times. The discourse also hops chronologically, which is at times disconcerting, but simultaneously serves to introduce a greater complexity to issues which may be marginal at face value. It is hoped that more retrospective historians will be able to employ a similar methodology to begin to address gaps in race, class and gender and present more objective historical narratives.

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[3] B. Bender and M. Winer (eds.), *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place* (Oxford, 2001).