builders of private housing sought to undermine the government's role in housing construction by using an extensive, seemingly civic-minded public process to obstruct and ultimately defeat public housing projects. The procedural roadblocks used to thwart public housing in the postwar era, such as massive public involvement, negative public-relations campaigns, and fear mongering, are now used by opponents of all large, contentious projects. That environmentalists have employed the same tactics to delay the development at Playa Vista for decades gives Cuff no comfort.

Indeed, though she argues persuasively that many of these case studies were “whale-sized, state-subsidized utopias,” Cuff maintains that the provisional nature of the city is a good thing and that these convulsions give it life. She also finds the enormous scale of the convulsions the only one that can accommodate the economic forces that exist in the contemporary city. I agree with this assessment, and would add that only by marshaling the existing economic forces in the city can we ever hope to gain control of its aggregated image. Importing European ideals about community has not worked in the past and is unlikely to work in the future, for, barring wholesale ideological change in the U.S., our views on property rights, economics, and politics will continue to underpin our built environment. The Provisional City, important for architectural and urban historians, is also an excellent book for architecture students, who will find an integrated view of the challenges they face in creating imagery that can address public ideals within these difficult constraints.

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Joan Ramon Resina and Dieter Ingenschay, editors
After-Images of the City

In testing the concept of an “after-image” as an analytical tool, the editors of this volume, Joan Ramon Resina and Dieter Ingenschay—both professors of literature—contribute fruitfully to the project of developing interdisciplinary methodological approaches to urban studies. The book is the product of a discussion group organized in conjunction with a conference called “After-Images of the City” held in 1998, though its contents differ significantly from the proceedings. In an introductory chapter, Resina explains that the after-image refers not only to visual imagery, but also to a social imaginary that “flashes up” (in David Harvey’s words) in all of the images that follow. Resina positions the after-image against Kevin Lynch’s rationalized, unified, Gestalt-influenced “image of the city,” which inadvertently naturalizes not only a contingent visual order, but also the unequal social relations that it implies. An after-image is not a “timeless Platonic entity” but a “temporalized, unstable, complex image brimming with the history of its production” (2). An after-image does not “represent”—a process that implies stable signs and referents—so much as it evidences mediations, the movements of social relations and of ideology. The analytic of the after-image allows the critic to circumvent the rhetorical pitfalls of freezing and monumentalizing urban conditions that are in fact constantly in process.

I would argue that this problem surfaces more often in literary studies, where the city sometimes appears static, as passive terrain for the movements of narrative, than in recent scholarship issuing from architecture and geography departments. Dana Cuff’s Provisional City (Cambridge, Mass., 2000) and Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin’s Splintering Urbanism (London and New York, 2001) are two recent examples that offer sophisticated accounts of urban change. Although the city is dynamic in these discourses, what appears static is the (normally dominated) subjectivity that exists within it, leaving unanswered questions about how people relate to the objects and images that surround them, what it is like to live in a city.

It is in exploring subjectivity that literary studies in general, and this volume in particular, have much to offer historians of the built environment. Of the nine contributors to this book, only one, Mary Woods, is an architectural historian, and only one, David Harvey, is a geographer; the other seven teach in literature, American studies, and Romance studies departments. All of the cities considered are European and North American. The essays vary widely in subject matter, depth of research, and level of engagement with the notion of the after-image. In fact, not all employ the term “after-image”: Debra Castillo’s keen analysis of the (pop) cultural constructions of Tijuana, for example, uses instead the notion of a “shadowtext.” What all of the texts do accomplish, however, is to provide an example of how an interdisciplinary approach to visuality can shed light on the relation between cities and subjectivity, even if not all of them venture into discussions of why cities look the way they do.

This is true, for example, of Ingenschay’s essay, “Bees at a Loss: Images of Madrid (before and) after La colmena.” In considering the recent Spanish novel, Ingenschay offers a striking account of how Madrid’s monumental ring highway, the M-30, might figure into the social imaginary of a madrileño student and drug dealer—a type of person who, if visible at all, is typically mute in discourses on the built environment. This type of analysis would be all the more valuable if it had a spatial component, but with a bibliography restricted almost exclusively to literary sources, the essay ventures no opinions as to why the M-30 might be there to begin with. In Ingenschay’s own words, “the metropo-
lis” appears as “an indispensable backdrop” (135) and not as the dynamic entity promised by the logic of the after-image. Similar criticisms can be made of Omar Ette’s article, “The World in Our Head: Images and After-Images of the City in the Works of Albert Cohen,” and of Jürgen Schlager’s “London: Tomorrow’s Yesterday, Future Images of the Past,” both of which offer strong accounts of urban experience but sparse accounts of urban change.

Schlager’s essay differs from Ingen-schay’s and Ette’s in that its aims are more polemical than expository. The author closes his analysis of recent literature on London by calling for an iconoclastic “psychogeography of the city” (59), yet he undertakes no consideration of that term’s Situationist origins or subsequent uses. A much richer analysis of literary mapping is to be found in Harvey’s excellent text, “City Future in City Past: Balzac’s Cartographic Imagination.” Through an analysis of Honoré de Balzac’s vivid cognitive mappings of Paris, Harvey locates within Balzac’s bourgeois, “nostalgic pastoralism” (58) the seeds of its own resistance. In “After-Images of the ‘New’ New York and the Alfred Stieglitz Circle,” Woods convincingly argues that photographs by Stieglitz and members of his circle “manifest an ambivalence about modernism, skyscrapers, modern cities, and national identity” (207). In so doing, she opens up interpretative possibilities in a body of work that has often been pigeon-holed as commenting only on the triumphs or failures of modernism, through monumentalizing representational strategies. Tom Conley’s imaginative piece, “The City Vanishes,” considers the consumerist manipulations in representations of the city in sports broadcasting, but also suggests the ways in which the inherent instability of such images opens up cracks in which challenges, “a miniature ‘politics’” (221), can flourish. The essays by Harvey, Woods, and Conley take advantage of the destabilizing potential of the notion of an after-image to suggest new opportunities for investigation in seemingly closed or monolithic subjects.

The most spatially minded essays in this volume are the ones that seriously engage the notion of the after-image, and they use the concept in an expository rather than polemical mode. Mark Selzter’s “Berlin 2000: ‘The Image of an Empty Place’” posits that the after-images of trauma in Berlin have contributed to a mistrust of the notion of “representative buildings” and to the very idea of “meaning-as-such” (67). This analysis goes some way toward explaining Berlin’s proliferation of glass façades, imagined as representations of “democratic transparency” (67). The collection’s strongest, best-researched essay is Resina’s “From Rose of Fire to City of Ivory.” With a diverse bibliography—which includes, but does not end with, urban studies, theoretical texts, poetry, early documentary films, and eyewitness accounts of worker uprisings—this article provides a resonant account of the role that visuality has played in Barcelona’s modern urban history. The memory of the worker uprising of 1936, for example, later flashes up not as an abstract rumination on anticlericalism or secular space, but as images of the exhumed corpses of nuns, put on display by anarchists. Viewed as a reaction to such images, the “chimerical classicism” (108) of much of Barcelona’s architecture—which trembles with a nervous preoccupation with social harmony—suddenly makes more sense. In both Selzter’s and Resina’s pieces, the analytical framework that is proposed offers an austere account of the role that the visual imaginary plays in constructing not only our subjectivity, but also buildings, grids, and urban plans—cities. They are fine examples of the potential of interdisciplinary urban studies. The notion of an after-image could simply be a call for sensitive history, an exhortation for awareness of the subtle historical factors that help shape any object of study. The key difference in this volume is the focus on visuality; that is, on our propensity to metonymically condense unseen social relations into images. Many critics have made the case that this operation is relatively recent, peculiarly modernist, and often manipulative. A sustained engagement with discussions of when and why such visuality came about is beyond the scope of this book. As for the rhetorical strategies employed, Resina and Ingen-schay voice a desire to avoid overly speculative methodologies and “theoretical neologisms” (xi). By and large the essays succeed on this count, but some concepts appear—such as “doughnut hole aesthetics”—that are not sufficiently developed to offer useful insights. The reader will also find more than a few instances of the unqualified use of overdetermined terms like “post-modern,” accompanied by the occasional deployment of neologisms like the redundant “poly-palimpsest” of the city. On the whole, however, the writing is direct and inventive.

The concept of an after-image is not entirely new; consistent with its own logic, many prior analytical frameworks flash up in its operations. Resina himself notes that Pierre Bordieu’s habitus, for instance, goes a long way to denaturalize apparently spontaneous images and behaviors. I would make the case that Harvey’s already-canonical essay “Monument and Myth: The Building of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart” (1979), probably unparalleled in its capacity to destabilize iconic images when it was written, offers an excellent example of the analytical procedures of the after-image. But that is not to say that the after-image is a concept whose potential has passed—its capacity to link spatial analysis to a visual and social imaginary, and to subjectivity, seems promising. And although some of the texts in this volume are of limited interest to the urban historian, the best of them are both pertinent and a pleasure to read.

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