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BOOK REVIEW

Maureen A. Flanagan

Constructing the Patriarchal City: Gender and the Built Environments of London, Dublin, Toronto, and Chicago, 1870s into the 1940s

Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2018.

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Maureen Flanagan's book *Constructing the Patriarchal City* offers an in-depth look at the ways in which male ideals about urban life and spaces shaped four Anglo cities—London, Dublin, Chicago and Toronto—and the lives of women within those cities. The main objective of the book is to examine how patriarchal visions of the city were for the most part successful, but that such visions were challenged by women “who had very different ideas of how a city should work and how it should be built” (2). Flanagan argues that the reconstruction of the industrial city into a modern city was framed by three ideas that powerful men had about the city. First, that men viewed the urban spaces as disorderly and in need of reorganizing, through creating clear separations between public (politics) and private (domestic) spaces. Second, she argues that the powerful men saw women as a main cause of urban disorder. In better separating public and private spaces and everyday lives, women would be removed from the main workings of the modern city, resulting in an orderly city. Lastly, men see the city as a diseased organism that can be restored through the application of rational, impersonal structural solutions. These three male (patriarchal) ideas of the city are used throughout Flanagan's book to discuss the urban planning and design in each of the four cities and the different ways in which women resisted.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part of the book is primarily a broad overview of the similarities between the four cities in relation to property ownership, housing, gender roles, and the ideal modern city. The second part of the book looks at these four themes (in relation to the three patriarchal ideas of the city) in more detail for London, Dublin, Chicago and Toronto (one chapter per city). Flanagan draws on a combination of sources to detail both the decisions made by male politicians, planners, and other decision-makers, and the contrasting ideals and projects undertaken by women activists. She focuses in particular on housing and the struggles between capitalist, private housing projects led by powerful men and the more socialist oriented projects of women's organisations.

Flanagan has done a good job of describing how the plans, projects, and processes of early urban planning were very much patriarchal. However, she does not argue or reveal anything new about patriarchal urban planning. Much of what Flanagan argues has been argued before by many feminist geographers, urban planners, architects and social theorists, especially in the late 1970s and the 1980s. Given the plethora of academic and activist work that has challenged conceptions of gender with other aspects of identity, Flanagan could have complemented gender and patriarchy to also include issues of class and, especially, race. For instance she writes about African-

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American women activists in Chicago, Toronto, London, and Dublin as though they resided in white cities with little class, religious or linguistic differences. Yet there were most certainly issues of race in London, Toronto, and Dublin. During the period that Flanagan writes about, London was the centre of the British Empire and had significant populations from Africa, the Caribbean, India, and the Middle East. Jewish, Black, Arab, Indian, Asian and (in the case of Toronto) Indigenous women were all part of the city and most certainly played a role in contesting patriarchal planning (see for example Whittall, 2012). Women and men's experiences in London, Dublin, Toronto, and Chicago during the period that Flanagan writes were varied depending on class, race, and religion. It would have been good for Flanagan to be upfront about her focus on patriarchy but discuss the limitations when race, class, and religion are sidelined.

Nonetheless, the details about each city will interest students studying one of the four cities. The chapters on each city could be read on its own without the Part I, making the chapters great for undergraduate and graduate courses. While Part I includes a section on unplanned city (Chapter 1), the ideas in the remaining chapters (Chapters 2 to 4) are revisited in Part II. There are also ideas and quotations repeated in some of the chapters. Most glaringly on page 143 where a quote from Le Corbusier is repeated in two adjacent paragraphs. The repetition and lack of detailed editing made the book frustrating to read at times. Overall, however, Flanagan does clearly show how gender dynamics shaped early modern urban planning in London, Dublin, Toronto, and Chicago.

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Whittall, D. (2012) *Creolising London: Black West Indian activism and the politics of race and empire in Britain, 1931–1948*. Doctoral Dissertation, Royal Holloway University of London.