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Architecture, Urbanism, and British Imperial Studies

G. A. Bremner

Architecture is something that we encounter and negotiate in our everyday lives. The buildings, towns, and cities that we construct and inhabit determine not only how we live but also provide many clues as to why we live the way we do. In some cases, where almost no other traces of civilisation remain, often it is buildings (or remnants thereof) that endure as testament to the nature of societies long since vanished. Indeed, as no less a figure than Winston Churchill once observed, 'we shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us'.¹

Yet, it is remarkable the extent to which this most basic of human needs has largely been taken for granted when considering what might be termed the 'shape' of British imperialism. As Mark Crinson has rightly noted, architecture echoed, inflected and was integral to many of the other practices and relationships that empire required for its furtherance.² In other words, colonialism was all but impossible without the buildings and spaces that articulated its presence. Moreover, the remains and legacy of empire are probably most conspicuous at the level of the built environment, with many if not all former colonial towns and cities having a significant stock of colonial buildings and infrastructure, much of which is still in use. This naturally has consequences for how any post-colonial nation state imagines both its past and future, as well as which buildings to conserve and how.

Rationale for the Volume

As those who work in the general field of British imperial and colonial studies will be aware, there are any number of general primers and histories on the British empire and imperialism. However, none exist specifically on the architecture of empire, and only one on urbanism.³ There is not even what can be described as a 'reader' on the subject.

¹ Churchill quoted in G. Stamp, "We Shape our Buildings and Afterwards Our Buildings Shape Us": Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and the Rebuilding of the House of Commons', in C. and J. Riding (eds.), *The Houses of Parliament: History, Art, Architecture* (London, 2000), p. 149.

² M. Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire* (Aldershot, 2003), p. 4.

³ R. Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London, 1996).

This is despite the amount of scholarship now extant on the colonial built environment, as well as its growing importance. Although hardly comparable with the amount of scholarship that exists in mainstream British imperial studies, the field of colonial architecture and urbanism nonetheless warrants such an overview, and might be considered long overdue. The closest thing we have to such a volume, dealing with the empire as a whole, is Robert Fermor-Hesketh's *Architecture of the British Empire*, a small collection of journalistic-style essays produced forty years ago.⁴ Despite its principal title, not even Jan Morris's *Stones of Empire* (1983) was game to cover the subject in its entirety, in that case dealing only with the buildings of the Raj.⁵ More lately we have seen the appearance of Ashley Jackson's *Buildings of Empire* (2013), a noble attempt to get breadth of coverage, both chronologically and geographically, but one which is limited by its reliance on individual case studies.⁶ Thus, nothing that can be identified as both comprehensive and scholarly has yet appeared.

One of the main functions of the present volume is therefore to present for the first time a substantive and scholarly overview of British imperial architecture and urbanism. It cannot claim to be comprehensive, as not all locations are covered; nor are those that are covered treated equally. Nevertheless, given the obvious constraints on such an undertaking, it is an attempt to offer a coherent account of the essential issues, themes, and concepts that drove and underpinned the production of the colonial built environment. Given more space, one would ideally have included separate chapters on Ireland, domestic architecture, and perhaps British military architecture. Even the relationship between the Commonwealth idea, decolonisation, and architecture would have been a worthy subject, as would the difficult and at times vexed question of heritage preservation—matters touched upon in a number of the chapters included here.

But the volume is not intended as the last word on the topic; nor does it pretend to showcase the latest scholarship in the field, although the authors who have participated in its realisation are among those who have pushed, and continue to push, the

⁴ R. Fermor-Hesketh (ed.), *Architecture of the British Empire* (London, 1986).

⁵ J. Morris (with S. Winchester), *Stones of Empire: The Buildings of the Raj* (Oxford, 1983).

⁶ A. Jackson, *Buildings of Empire* (Oxford, 2013).

boundaries of the discipline. Rather, it is conceived as an entry point. In this respect it is aimed as much at students and those new to the subject as it is at seasoned imperial historians looking for a 'way in' to understanding the major themes of colonial architecture and urbanism. It is also hoped that it will provide a useful reference text for established scholars in the field, as well as a guide for teaching and research.

To aid this use, the volume is divided in two main sections. The first deals with some of the major threads common to British imperial and colonial architecture through time and across the world. These include the origins of British imperial and colonial architecture, key concepts in urbanism and master planning, monumentalisation of the imperial idea, the advent and consequences of Modernism, the architectural effects of empire on the metropolis, and the significance of religious and educational institutions. The second section then maps these (and others) in various ways onto specific regional contexts, considering how each was carried and adapted—subtly or more profoundly—according to circumstance. The first section is thus designed to keep the global dimensions of British imperialism in focus, while the second it intended to capture local variation. In this respect the two sections are supposed to work in tandem. Admittedly, the categories highlighted represent to some extent my own biases regarding topics of importance, such as religion, the metropolis, and the dominions, but all major themes are touched on in some form or other, whether as discrete chapters in their own right, or embedded in one of the chapters that make up the volume.

Scholarship in Colonial Architecture and Urbanism

To be sure, there has been a small industry of scholarship on British colonial architecture and urbanism for the past forty years or so, which has produced a handful of major studies dealing with specific topics, locations, and regions.⁷ Indeed, as pointed

⁷ For a recent comprehensive overview of this literature, see K. James-Chakraborty, 'Beyond postcolonialism: New directions for the history of nonwestern architecture', *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, vol. 3 (2014), pp. 1-9. Some of the prominent early scholarship dedicated more or less specifically to architecture (excluding urbanism) in this genre includes, but is not limited to: S. Nilsson, *European Architecture in India 1750-1850* (London, 1968); R. G. Irving, *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi* (New Haven, 1981); A. D. King, *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture* (London, 1984); P. Davies, *Splendours of the Raj: British Architecture in India, 1660 to 1947* (London, 1985); T. R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and the British Raj* (London, 1989); N. AlSayyad (ed.), *Forms of Dominance: on the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise*

out by Kathleen James-Chakraborty, the increased amount of attention given to this aspect of the historic built environment in recent years has made it one of the most dynamic sub-disciplines in the field of architectural history.⁸ Needless to say, and as Robert Home and Anthony King helpfully remind us in this volume, the majority of this scholarship has emanated from the Anglophone, first-world West, and been concerned largely, although not exclusively, with British India. In this respect, and historically speaking, the sub-discipline of colonial architectural history has developed a relatively defined profile with regard to its chiefly regional focus and consequent association with colonial discourse theory, matters to which I shall return below.⁹

Thus, although having experienced some growth, scholarship on the colonial built environment still pales in comparison to that which has accompanied more traditional subjects associated with the study of British imperialism, such as politics, economics, diplomacy, and military history. Even with the advent of 'new imperial' studies in the past twenty to thirty years, where one might have imagined, perhaps even expected, a subject like architecture to have received more attention, the frequency of scholarship has remained relatively modest. To an extent, this is to be expected. Although architecture is now commonly understood as a basic species of material history, its comparative obscurity is partly the fault of architectural historians in failing to make the subject appealing enough, or even recognisable as such, to a wider and interested audience, despite the best studies being framed in ways that reach beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. Where interest has been generated, it is largely with regard to the postcolonial city, which has experienced something of an explosion in scholarship in recent times. This work necessarily makes reference to the colonial city and its attendant cultural conditions, but is not its main concern.¹⁰

(Aldershot, 1992); M. Crinson, *Empire Building: Orientalism & Victorian Architecture* (London, 1996); idem, *Modern Architecture*. For an earlier overview of the historiographic relationship between architecture and empire, see T. R. Metcalf, 'Architecture in the British Empire' in R. W. Winks (ed.), *Oxford History of the British Empire* (5 vols. Oxford, 1999), V, pp. 584-95.

⁸ James-Chakraborty, 'Beyond postcolonialism', p. 2.

⁹ Ibid. The so-called 'Berkeley school' can be pointed to in this regard.

¹⁰ For instance, see A. D. King, 'Actually Existing Postcolonialisms: Colonial Urbanism and Architecture after the Postcolonial Turn', in R. Bishop, J. Phillips, and W.-W. Yeo (eds.), *Postcolonial Urbanism: Southeast Asian Cities and Global Processes* (New York, 2003), pp. 167-83.

The difficulties the study of architecture faces in this respect may be explained in part by the perception that architecture (actual buildings) requires a specialist and rather technical knowledge for its understanding, despite calls in some quarters that it is too important a subject to be left to professional architectural historians.¹¹ Detailed knowledge of the practices and procedures of architecture are certainly helpful in analysing the built environment, but it is by no means essential. Indeed, some of the most insightful studies on the colonial built environment have come from those who are not professionally trained architects.

Despite these impediments, more research in this area is beginning to appear in schools of architecture, urban planning, and history of art, especially with the dramatic rise in interest in Modernism as an historical category. This has evolved, on the one hand, as contemporary architects have come to associate themselves in an especially self-conscious way with a particular phase in the trajectory of architecture, seeing themselves as standing at the leading edge of an historical moment. On the other, it has been driven by historians' attempts to understand Modernism increasingly as a global rather than merely regional (i.e. European and more broadly Western) phenomenon.¹² All this has naturally affected the way the subject is conceived and taught in schools of architecture. But any kind of shift towards a greater engagement with the built environment in departments of history has remained stubbornly and disappointingly slight. This is despite the fact that some of the earliest and most important studies on British imperial architecture came from that quarter, such as Thomas Metcalf's ground-breaking *Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (1989).

Instead, the so-called 'spatial turn' in historical studies has resulted largely in a focus on macro-level phenomena such as cities, landscapes, and other forms of human interaction (and intervention) across expansive and multiple units of time and space.¹³

¹¹ See quote by John MacKenzie on the dust jacket to Bernard Porter's *The Battle of the Styles: Society, Culture and the Design of a new Foreign Office, 1855-61* (London, 2011).

¹² For instance, see Crinson, *Modern Architecture*; V. Prakash, *Chandigarh's Le Corbusier: The Struggle for Modernity in Postcolonial India* (Seattle, 2002); and more lately, I. Jackson and J. Holland, *The Architecture of Edwin Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew Twentieth Century Architecture: Pioneer Modernism and the Tropics* (Farnham, 2014). From a wider European perspective, see T. Avermaete, S. Karakayali, and M. von Osten (eds.), *Colonial Modern: Aesthetics of the Past Rebellions for the Future* (London, 2010).

¹³ An early example of this in relation to landscape history was Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (Chicago, 1987).

With this has come an engagement with methodological approaches allied to cultural geography, network analysis, comparative and trans-colonial studies, and 'connected histories', among others.¹⁴ While a renewed interest in urbanism and the colonial city can be associated with this focus, again, the study of architecture per se vis-a-vis empire has remained limited. Apart from the technical issues mentioned above, this is perhaps owing to the notion (misconceived or otherwise) that the investigation of actual buildings, or the work of individual architects, at a micro level, is incapable of yielding wider or profound conclusions about the character of British imperialism, unless studied as part of broader and recurring patterns of cultural production.¹⁵

Be this as it may, the way in which students of history (of whatever stripe) are trained in universities has not helped. The premium placed upon traditional subject areas, pressures with respect to funding, and the lines along which academic departments are normally organised—especially in the Western, Anglophone world—has tended to marginalise the serious study of phenomena such as architecture, despite new calls for interdisciplinarity. Again, this might seem all the more inexplicable given that architecture is one of the only major human activities that easily fits the analytical categories of spatial, material, *and* cultural. In overlooking architecture and the wider built environment, historians are in danger of (dis)missing a large and important body of evidence that could support or further problematise their theses regarding British imperial expansion. How an examination of the built environment might fit more easily with the methods and concerns traditional to historical scholarship is another question, but to discount it entirely (in most cases) is perhaps to perpetuate an artificial division between what can be understood as cognate human endeavours, whether they be political, economic, material, or more broadly cultural.

¹⁴ For an excellent and helpful overview of this phenomenon, see A. Lester, 'Spatial concepts and the historical geographies of British colonialism', in A. S. Thompson (ed.), *Writing imperial histories* (Manchester, 2014), pp. 118-42. For the rationale behind 'connected' histories of empire, see T. R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (Berkeley, 2007), pp. 1-15. Although not explicitly related to British imperialism, historians of imperial architecture might gain something in this respect from the work and insights of Sanjay Subrahmanyam. See S. Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 31:3 (1997), pp. 735-62.

¹⁵ This may be one of the reasons why the word 'architecture' is not mentioned once in Alan Lester's summaries of the spatial turn in history and cultural geography. See A. Lester, 'Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire', *History Compass*, vol. 4:1 (2006), pp. 124-41; *ibid.* (Lester).

Even in departments of architecture, undertaking teaching and research on 'special subjects' such as the relationship between architecture and empire is not easy. In such environments, where the tyranny of 'presentism' prevails, a high price is placed upon the instrumentalisation of history (i.e. its 'relevance' and 'use-value'). If history is taught at all in schools of architecture, it is therefore usually in a 'whiggish' mode, where reference to the apparent innovative, avant-garde capacities of Modernism are emphasised as both a practical and foundational creed in achieving a new kind of contemporary condition.¹⁶

Approaches to Studying the Colonial Built Environment

To return to the matter of scholarly profile: if one were to take a glance at the body of scholarship on British imperial and colonial architecture and urbanism as a whole—in monograph, journal article, and edited volume form, and particularly prior to the turn of the millennium—then one would find that it deals almost exclusively with the once-termed 'periphery' of empire.¹⁷ Not only is this body of scholarship disproportionately represented by topics relating to the 'Orient', especially South Asia, but the idea of the metropolis as being part of the architectural and urban fabric of Britain's empire does not figure. Moreover, it is weighted overwhelmingly in favour of the analysis of secular architecture, with very little, if any, accounting for religious structures, despite the fact that Christianity was the most pervasive and potent social force in modern British culture. It can be suggested that scholarship in this genre has languished in this condition for too long. There are signs it is beginning to change, however.

What were the reasons for these emphases? For a start, and generally speaking, architectural history tends to lag behind the cutting edge in other fields of scholarship, and therefore usually takes some time to absorb wider historiographic and

¹⁶ This also has something to do with recent trends within schools of architecture to cease employing professional architectural historians, instead opting for design professionals who can offer a side-line in 'cultural content'. Naturally, such design-focused professionals have little understanding of the history of architecture beyond the Modernist moment with which they primarily identify. In some respects this is reminiscent of the circumstances that led to George Kubler's famous critique of this culture in schools of design. See G. Kubler, 'What Can Historians Do for Architects', *Perspecta*, vol. 9/10 (1965), pp. 299-302.

¹⁷ This is borne out in Thomas Metcalf's overview of the historiography of the subject published in 1999. See, Metcalf, 'Architecture in the British Empire'.

methodological developments. For a long time the ‘empire’ was considered to be something ‘out there’, beyond the self-contained, fabled shores of the United Kingdom—historiographically, there was a clear distinction between ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’, with Britain not really being considered ‘imperial’ at all. But this changed with the advent of so-called ‘new imperial history’ in the 1990s, along with calls as early as the 1970s by historians working at the onetime periphery of the imperial world, such as J. G. A. Pocock, to view ‘British history’ as a planetary phenomenon.¹⁸ Since then, the notion of the metropolis as part of Britain’s imperial experience has become widely understood. In the field of architectural and urban history, this has led to a spate of publications that have worked to articulate the idea of the metropolis (Britain, and London in particular) as a zone of imperial spectacle, performance, and consumption.¹⁹ This, it has to be said, has made a very welcome addition to scholarship in the field, both widening and complicating our conception of what constitutes ‘British imperial architecture’.

The emphasis placed on South Asia as a principal locus of architectural and urban activity in the British empire has likewise distorted reception of and scholarship in the subject. Among the reasons behind the sustained focus on India, and other parts of South and Southeast Asia (and increasingly Africa), has been the impact—and to a degree entrenchment—of postcolonial theory, with its paramount concern for the dynamics of cultural encounter, ‘discursive’ constructs, and corresponding racial politics, including a fundamental interest in drawing out binary categories such as coloniser/colonised, European/‘Other’, and black/white. This is certainly understandable, as these categories are readily legible as basic organising principles in the formal and spatial configuration of many colonial cities. Nevertheless, one of the criticisms has been that the dominant theoretical character of much of this kind of

¹⁸ J. G. A. Pocock, ‘British History: A Plea for a New Subject’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 8:1 (1974), pp. 3–21. For a comprehensive introduction to the rise, nature, and problems of ‘new imperial’ history, see S. Howe, ‘Introduction: New Imperial Histories’, in S. Howe (ed.), *The New Imperial Histories Reader* (London, 2010), pp. 1–20. For an overview of postcolonial theory, its impact and problems, see D. A. Washbrook, ‘Orient and Occident: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire’, in Winks, *OHBE*, V, pp. 596–611.

¹⁹ This has occurred particularly at the level of the city, especially London as the former centre and capital of Britain’s empire. For instance, see F. Driver and D. Gilbert, ‘Heart of Empire? Landscape, Space and Performance in Imperial London’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 16 (1998), pp. 1–17, and some of the essays in F. Driver and D. Gilbert (eds.), *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester, 1999). See also G. A. Bremner, ‘Nation and Empire in the Government Architecture of Mid-Victorian London: The Foreign and India Office Reconsidered’, *Historical Journal*, vol. 48:3 (2005), pp. 703–42. For further references relating to this subject, see ‘Metropolis’ chapter in this volume.

scholarship, including its apparent homogenising tendencies, has meant that the conclusions it draws are often more speculative than grounded.²⁰

Methodologically speaking, this approach is predicated on the notion that architecture and its spatial syntax can be 'read' and thus interpreted as a form of cultural discourse in its own right. In this sense it has looked to pose questions—or make assumptions—about classic knowledge-power relations embedded in the colonial built environment, seeking to unpack the social processes behind what the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre called the 'production of space'. Here the general appeal of Foucauldian discourse analysis, Said's 'Orientalism', and other postmodern and poststructuralist modes of critique (including those of Lefebvre) have played their part, often looming large on the surface of this scholarship.²¹ These developments—the 'political' and 'linguistic' turns in criticism, with their drawing on feminist, cultural, and literary studies—will be familiar to historians of all aspects of British imperialism, and the connection between this type of scholarship and a certain self-conscious positioning (including political commitment) are clearly recognisable.²²

Similar criticisms, it should be said, can be levelled at what might be described as more traditional and thus 'conservative' forms of architectural scholarship, mainly for their apparent nostalgic yearning and ignoring (or not taking seriously enough) factors such as imperial ideology, culture, and race.²³ But a lot of this scholarship was carried out before the advent of the various 'turns' in academic scholarship mentioned above. Nevertheless, it is a point well taken, and the general diffuse effects of more theoretically informed approaches have been profound. Little if any scholarship in the field these days can simply put aside or ignore such factors, even if it would choose to place the emphases differently.

²⁰ For instance, see J. M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester, 1995). In the wider world of British imperial studies, the critique of postcolonial theory has been much more trenchant and sustained. See Howe, 'Introduction', pp. 1-20, Washbrook, 'Orients and Occidents', pp. 602-9.

²¹ In architecture circles, this approach has partly been informed by the 'deconstructionist' notion in the 1980s that architecture (through time) not only represented a body of knowledge, and therefore constituted a discourse, but that it also carried connotations of language.

²² This approach to the understanding of the colonial built environment, especially that of South Asia, has largely become associated with the so-called 'Berkeley school', from the University of California, Berkeley, where a great deal of trailblazing scholarship in this regard was undertaken. See James-Chakraborty, 'Beyond postcolonialism', p. 3.

²³ Metcalf, 'Architecture and the British Empire', p. 594.

With the desire to draw hermetic (even hermeneutic) boundaries around sub-fields receding, and the apparent appetite for more syncretic approaches evolving, colonial discourse analysis now stands as but one among an increasing number of ways to analyse and unpack the built environment. For instance, what one observes in relation to scholarship on very early colonial architecture and urbanism, including slave accommodation, is that painstaking archaeological excavation and analysis is key to making any claims about the historic built environment. This kind of research views architecture rather more as a form of material culture than as one of discourse, and has aided in revealing at a fundamental level, in the case of slavery, the kinds of familial and wider social relationships enslaved Africans maintained in pre-revolutionary America, including cultural and tribal practices brought from Africa. Here the development and influence of vernacular and 'creolised' forms of architecture are also considered important.²⁴

Ultimately there is no one, predominant or exclusive way of viewing the colonial built environment; nor should there be—all have something to contribute, ranging from the archaeologically inclined to the more theoretically informed. Indeed, one of the qualities of the current volume is its implicit demonstration of a variety of different approaches to understanding colonial architecture and urbanism, reflecting not only the different empires (plural) one can discuss in relation to British imperialism, but also the methodological mosaic that is the reality of scholarly work being undertaken in the field. The volume therefore presents something of a corrective, mirroring scholarly trends and currents in the wider field of British imperial studies. In this respect it does not present itself as adhering to or promoting any particular 'school' of thought or mode of analysis, but celebrates the benefits of plurality.

²⁴ For instance, see W. Kelso, *Kingsmill Plantations, 1619-1800: Archaeology of Country Life in Colonial Virginia* (Orlando, 1984); D. Upton and J. Vlach (eds.), *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens, Ga., 1986); and D. V. Armstrong, *The Old Village and the Great House: An Archaeological and Historical Examination of Drax Hall Plantation, St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica* (Champaign, 1990). See also essays in C. Ellis and R. Ginsburg (eds.), *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery* (New Haven, 2010).

The Way Forward? Observations on the Future Direction of Scholarship

If the field of colonial and imperial architecture and urbanism is to continue to develop, then a diverse engagement with what has come to be termed 'new imperial history' is crucial. As will be touched upon at several points throughout this volume, 'new' imperial history has had a profound effect on thinking about and writing on Britain's imperial past. For some twenty to thirty years now, it has redirected almost entirely the way we approach the subject. Although, as Stephen Howe points out, this movement, if we can call it that, is associated with the various postmodernist turns in historiography, including postcolonial theory, it is in reality a much more assorted and catholic endeavour. In its current state it involves a range of new and renewed themes and topics of investigation, not always complementary.²⁵ Among the most influential of late years has been interest in regional and oceanic frames of reference ('Atlantic', 'Pacific', and 'Indian'), as well as World and Global historiographies.²⁶ Equally important have been networked or 'webbed' concepts of understanding imperialism and its spatial character.²⁷

This includes a renewed interest in understanding the political and cultural dynamics behind 'white settler' colonialism and the rise of a 'Greater Britain' and the Dominion idea—what John Darwin once described as the 'real' British empire.²⁸ Certainly as far as architectural history is concerned, and in comparison to the amount of work on the Asian world, this is a vastly understudied area and therefore represents an exciting prospect for the future.²⁹ Indeed, given the development of 'four nations' history and its

²⁵ Howe, 'Introduction', p. 2.

²⁶ See D. Armitage and M. J. Braddick (eds.), *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 11–27; B. Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005); A. Games, 'Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities', *American Historical Review*, vol. 111:3 (2006), pp. 741–57; P. A. Coclanis, 'Beyond Atlantic History', in J. P. Greene and P. D. Morgan (eds.), *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 337–56; J. P. Greene, 'Hemispheric History and Atlantic History', in J. P. Greene, *Creating the British Atlantic: Essays on Transplantation, Adaptation, and Continuity* (Charlottesville, 2013), pp.1–18. For the Indian Ocean, see Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, pp. 1–15.

²⁷ For instance, see Lester, 'Imperial Circuits and Networks', pp. 124–41.

²⁸ By this he meant what British people understood as 'the colonies' as opposed to the 'empire' of India. See J. Darwin, 'Bored by the Raj', *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 February 2005, p. 5. See also J. Darwin, 'A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics', in J. Brown and W. R. Louis (eds.), *OHBE: The Twentieth Century*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1999), V, pp. 64–87. A recent and exciting study in this respect is James Belich's *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford, 2009).

²⁹ Recant calls for reassessing the way we ought to understand architecture in these contexts have pointed out the necessity to contextualise it in a wider imperial and even global sense. This does not mean

implications for thinking through what it means to speak of a 'British' empire, disaggregating and teasing out contributions made to the colonial built environment by particular cultural and ethnic groups from within the British Isles would yield further insights into why certain architectural ideas and forms were not only privileged but also how they moved around and were appropriated in different ways.³⁰ This amounts to a de-homogenising of colonial subjectivity and agency.

The relationship between Christianity and empire in its widest sense (beyond missionary activity alone) has also accompanied this reformation in imperial studies. This is particularly pertinent to the study of architecture in the wider British world, which, as mentioned, has all but ignored religion as an animating force in the organisation and production of space vis-à-vis empire.³¹ As scholars such as Catherine Hall, Andrew Porter, Stewart Brown, and Hilary Carey have endeavoured to show, the religious mind-set of British society was fundamental to how Britain's presence in the world was both imagined and configured, and that we ignore this at the peril of misunderstanding some of the motivations that lay behind the imperial impulse.³² Associated with this is of course the rise in scholarship on the intellectual history of British imperialism, led by the likes of David Armitage and Duncan Bell. This, too, has given us a much better understanding of the ideological premises underpinning British imperial expansion and its various imaginings.³³

merely seeing this architecture as having emanated from elsewhere, which is self-evident, but trying to understand it as the complex intersection of local, regional, and global products, processes, and personnel. For example, see J. Willis and P. Goad, 'A Bigger Picture: Reframing Australian Architectural History', *Fabrications*, vol. 18:1 (2008), pp. 7-23.

³⁰ E.g., see essays in R. G. Asch (ed.), *Three Nations – A Common History? England, Scotland, Ireland and British History, c.1600-1920* (Bochum, 1993). See also H. Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 2012). For some recent analysis of Scottish architects' and migrants' impact on the colonial built environment, see references to F. D. G. Stanley in S. King, 'Colony and Climate: Positioning Public Architecture in Queensland, 1859-1909', unpublished PhD Thesis (University of Melbourne, 2010), pp. 181-225; H. Edquist, 'The Architectural Legacy of the Scots in the Western District of Victoria, Australia', *Architectural Heritage*, vol. 24 (2013), pp. 67-85.

³¹ Two recent exceptions to this are L. P. Nelson, *The Beauty of Holiness: Anglicanism and Architecture in Colonial South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2008), and G. A. Bremner, *Imperial Gothic: Religious Architecture and High Anglican Culture in the British Empire, c.1840-1870* (New Haven and London, 2013).

³² C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Cambridge, 2000); A. Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester, 2004); S. J. Brown, *Providence and Empire 1815-1914* (London, 2008); H. M. Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c.1801-1908* (Cambridge, 2010).

³³ For instance, see D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000); for the late modern period, see D. Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, 2007).

What these 'new' approaches all have in common is their relationship in some form or other to the broader 'spatial turn' in imperial studies mentioned above, as well as the advent of 'new British' history promoted by the likes of Pocock, and seek to identify patterns, connections, and even entanglements that might otherwise be missed or ignored by area studies specialists.³⁴ These approaches also embody something of a cultural geographic understanding of how human activity operates through time and across space, especially with respect to modern European empires.³⁵ These empires were obviously highly dynamic social, cultural, and political phenomena, and the presence of agency and networking was crucial to their establishment and maintenance. This general 'spatial' conception of imperialism, with its concomitant ideas of movement and scale, has therefore transformed the way we now understand these processes and thus the nature of empire itself. As Alan Lester succinctly puts it:

'New imperial historians' have established that, in order to understand British history, one must imaginatively travel in and out of the British Isles, weaving imperial relations overseas into the fabric of the national story. Area studies specialists have been persuaded that we cannot fully understand colonial relations within any one region without tracing entities that move in and out of that region, to and from imperial centres and other regions within, and sometimes beyond empire. Historians of the former colonies have begun to think in terms of the transnational processes which gave rise to their nation-states.³⁶

As a spatial construct *par excellence*, both in a discrete sense and as a wider matrix of human relations, architecture is perfectly suited to this kind of analysis, especially when considered as the outcome of broader patterns of human activity and agency. Thus, in moving beyond postcolonialism, as James-Chakraborty would have it, architectural historians of Britain's empire would do well to consider how the architectural output of

³⁴ For the 'New British' history, see G. Burgess (ed.), *The New British History: Founding a Modern State 1603-1715* (London, 1999). This is related to the advent of so-called 'Four Nations' history mentioned above.

³⁵ For instance, see D. Lambert and A. Lester (eds.), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Career in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2006); G. B. Magee and A. S. Thompson (eds.), *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c.1850-1914* (Cambridge, 2010).

³⁶ Lester, 'Spatial concepts', p. 118.

this once vast, truly global phenomenon might be framed with reference to these developments in scholarship. Indeed, this is potentially one of the most fruitful directions in which the study of British imperial and colonial architecture might move. Recognition of this has led to recent calls to rethink not only how we might conceptualise ‘imperial architecture’ but also how a broader ‘connected’ understanding of architecture in a global sense might (even ought to) result in a reconstitution of long-held canons and hierarchies in the discipline of architectural history itself.³⁷

With this in mind, one question that needs to be considered further is how the cultural and political dynamic between metropolitan and regional centres of imperial authority and control affected the production of architecture. Were regional networks more influential in determining the character of the built environment in certain parts of the British world than ideas emanating from the metropolis? Obviously both came into play to varying degrees, but should we be looking closer at regional patterns and agency in order to reach a more nuanced understanding of why certain buildings were designed, constructed, and used? To take an example, if one wishes to make sense of early colonial architecture in Hong Kong, would it not be more profitable to consider techniques developed in British India than in Britain? Questions of this nature are considered in a number of the chapters in this volume.

It is important to note that, although related, such questions are different to those that might lead scholars to ponder a vernacular explanation, and, if forming the basis of a specific and wide-ranging study, would need to be theorised clearly within a discrete historiographic framework. Considering this, the architectural geography of the British empire—if one could imagine such a thing—would seem to make more sense seen as a complex Venn diagram, comprising multiple-set overlaps of network-based influences that, in their kaleidoscopic effect, rarely if ever correspond directly to colonial or post-colonial state boundaries.³⁸ On this point Thomas Metcalf has observed that the notion

³⁷ E.g., see G. A. Bremner, ‘Rethinking British Architecture: Towards an Expanded Methodology’, in Bremner, *Imperial Gothic*, pp. 431-40; S. Zandi-Sayek, ‘The Unsung of the Cannon: Does a Global Architectural History Need New Landmarks?’, *Architecture Beyond Europe (ABE)*, vol. 6 (2014).

³⁸ This idea of the ‘geography of architecture’ comes from the pioneering work of George Kubler in the 1960s concerning Jesuit and Mendicant Order missionary architecture in Latin America. See G. Kubler, ‘Two Modes of Franciscan Architecture: New Mexico and California’, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6:23 (1943),

of an 'Indian Ocean arena' provides a useful way to conceptualise and understand the British empire and its architecture as a dynamic system that both encouraged and facilitated 'horizontal' inter-colonial relations as much as 'vertical' metropole-colony directed ones.³⁹

To return to Crinson's claim from above, such a conception of British imperial and colonial architecture would necessitate focusing greater scholarly attention on more mundane and banal forms of architecture important to the commercial if not political aims of British expansion—infrastructural buildings such as warehouses, port facilities, and military installations. The continued examination of particular typologies such as state and domestic architectures will always be useful, but these can only tell us so much. It is also important to acknowledge that the dynamic described here elicited tension within imperial power structures regarding architectural production, as the Colonial Office and other metropolitan agencies were often at loggerheads with local administrative officials over what could be built and how.⁴⁰ Such incidents necessitate an uneven and variegated understanding of what 'imperial architecture' was supposed to represent, and to whom.

As transnational (or what might more properly be described in this context as trans-colonial/imperial) studies develop, attempts at comparative analyses between Britain's imperial architecture and that of other European and non-European empires and nations will likely reveal new, previously obscured forms of technological influence and exchange. Making such comparisons can assist in achieving an even richer—if more fragmented and non-linear—understanding of British colonial architecture, its

pp. 39-48; and the essay contained in *Santos: An Exhibition of the Religious Folk Art of New Mexico, with an Essay by George Kubler* (Fort Worth, 1964), pp. 1-9.

³⁹ Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, pp. 6-13. Indeed, Metcalf has ventured what such a reframed architectural history of the British empire might look like in the chapter entitled 'Constructing Identities' (pp. 46-67). The same would apply to places such as Australia. See J. Broadbent, S. Rickard, and M. Steven, *India, China, Australia: Trade and Society 1788-1850* (Sydney, 2003), as well as the development of domestic housing, as Anthony King has demonstrated with the global spread of the bungalow typology. See King, *The Bungalow*.

⁴⁰ There was a long history of this with respect to the East India Company, but it also occurred in instances of Crown colony governance. For instance, see G. A. Bremner, 'Fabricating Justice: Conflict and Contradiction in the Making of the Hong Kong Supreme Court, 1898-1912' in L. Victoir and V. Zatsopin (eds.), *From Harbin to Hanoi: Colonial Built Environment in Asia, 1840-1940* (Hong Kong, 2012), pp. 156-80. See also T. Livsey, 'Suitable lodgings for students': modern space, colonial development and decolonization in Nigeria', *Urban History*, vol. 41:4 (2014), pp. 664-85.

character and multiple sources. This is of course related to the regional and global approaches mentioned above, but would differ in its explicit objective to compare architectural and urban outcomes across political cultures and space. Indeed, as David Lambert and Alan Lester have urged, this could (and perhaps should) go beyond mere comparison in seeking *actual* historical connectedness.⁴¹ To date very little has been done in this regard, but it is certainly one direction in which architectural scholarship might progress.⁴² Indeed, here one thinks of transnational trajectories of architectural development in the ‘Third World’ or ‘Global South’, as articulated in recent work dealing with the influence and technical expertise of Communist world countries in places such as post-colonial Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.⁴³

Another area that offers potential for further development is the incorporation and working through of indigenous perspectives and experience in attempting to gain a fuller, more rounded, and perhaps even entirely alternative understanding of the colonial built environment. As pointed out by Robert Home and Anthony King, according to Siddhartha Raychaudhuri, the European scholarly obsession with ‘the colonial city’ has been largely at the expense of the indigenous city—a critique, it may be suggested, that has a much broader significance for understanding the social and spatial transformations of cities outside the west.⁴⁴ Here indigenous language sources, where available, are crucial in helping us comprehend to a greater extent how such architecture was perceived as a means of negotiation, whether for individuals, families, or various ethnic and/or religious communities confined within the bounds of British

⁴¹ Lambert and Lester, *Colonial Lives*, pp. 1-31.

⁴² An interesting study in another context, which attempts to make such comparisons, is Zeynep Çelik’s *Empire, Architecture, and the City: French-Ottoman Encounters, 1830-1914* (Seattle, 2008). For a very challenging and provocative call to move in this direction with respect to British imperial studies as a whole, and one from which architectural historians might be encouraged in certain ways, see Antoinette Burton’s essay ‘Getting Outside the Global: Repositioning British Imperialism in World History’ in A. Burton, *Empire in Question: Reading, Writing, and Teaching British Imperialism* (Durham, NC., 2011), pp. 275-92.

⁴³ For recent scholarship on this, see L. Stanek and T. Avermaete (eds.), *Cold War Transfer: architecture and planning from socialist countries in the ‘Third World’*, special issue of *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 17:3 (2012); L. Stanek, ‘Mobilities of Architecture in the Global Cold War: From Socialist Poland to Kuwait and Back’, *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, vol. 4:2 (2015), pp. 365-98; C. Roskam, ‘Non-Aligned Architecture: China’s Designs on and in Ghana and Guinea, 1955-1992’, *Architectural History*, vol. 58 (2015), pp. xx-xx.

⁴⁴ S. Raychaudhuri, ‘Colonialism, indigenous elites and the transformation of cities in the non-Western world: Ahmedabad 1890-1947’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 35:3 (2001), pp. 677-726.

political space.⁴⁵ This might include, as Preeti Chopra has recently shown, how certain groups such as the Parsi community in British Bombay were able to carve out a space for themselves—quite literally—in the city through a form of architectural diplomacy.⁴⁶ Such an approach also recognises, as John M. Carroll has observed in another context, that not all of those caught within the meshes of British global imperialism necessarily viewed it as a conquest state—indeed, many among what can be described as the local business elite benefited significantly, either as go-betweens or middlemen.⁴⁷

Last, but by no means least, the study of buildings has its own historiographic traditions and methods which, among others, concern making sense of aesthetics, as well as the careful description and examination of built form—what is otherwise referred to as formal analysis. Despite being considered somewhat old fashioned, and although I would never declare myself to be the greatest exponent of these methods, they are important and ought to remain at the core of anything that claims to be ‘architectural history’. Moreover, they do require a degree of specialist knowledge—nomenclature, stylistic designation, patterns of artistic patronage and influence, formal and tectonic change over time—and, admittedly, are the one area where ‘historians’ are most likely to trip up upon entering the field. Looking to the future, these might be brought back more to the centre ground and reinvigorated in various ways.⁴⁸ After all, they are architectural history’s ‘unique selling point’. To be sure, urban history and geography have other concerns, as discussed, but it is worth reminding ourselves that, at the end of the day, all urban environments are made up of buildings.

All of this would mean harnessing, where appropriate, many of these new approaches and their attendant insights in better enabling architectural historians to delineate an architecture-centred ‘material history’ of empire—one that would speak more fluently to the concerns of mainstream historians, while building upon techniques traditional to

⁴⁵ An example of this would be J. Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities: Negotiating Architecture, Urbanism, and Colonialism in Delhi* (London, 2005).

⁴⁶ P. Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: Urban Elites and the Making of British Bombay* (Minneapolis, 2011).

⁴⁷ J. M. Carroll, ‘Chinese Collaboration in the Making of British Hong Kong’, in T.-W. Ngo (ed.), *Hong Kong’s History: State and Society Under Colonial Rule* (London, 1999), pp. 13-29.

⁴⁸ I was reminded recently of how fundamental and enlightening this approach can be in reading Michael Hall’s magisterial *George Frederick Bodley and the Late Gothic Revival in Britain and America* (London and New Haven, 2014).

the field, including more recent discourse-orientated modes of analysis. To put it another way, this is tantamount to making a distinction between what would otherwise be a 'history of architecture in the British empire' and an 'architectural history of British imperialism'. Where one might easily detach itself from the spatio-political context in simply accounting for buildings in a given area, focusing on dynamics internal to architectural production, the other, by necessity, engages specifically with built form as both a medium and type of agency through which empire materialises and facilitates its peculiar presence. In other words, we must ask not only how a building is conceived or what it means, but also what it actually does.

Whatever the future direction will be, an increasingly plural, complex, and interconnected approach—one agile enough to move between and take advantage of various methods from cognate disciplines—will at least guarantee a certain dynamism (and debate), one would hope, that the field was beginning to show signs of lacking in recent years. We do not want *a* new history of British imperial architecture but *many* new architectural histories of empire.