

Jewell has presented us with a very good book for entry into the topic of women during this period. However, although this book covers the general swath of knowledge about the status of women at the time, this is not a generalist's book. The book presumes a knowledge of the major people, historical trends, cultural differences, and practices of the times covered in the book. And the book covers the period from late antiquity until the high middle ages, so it assumes a knowledge of quite different periods in European history. Thus, those who already have a background in history will find this book most useful.

Teachers of European history or women's studies will find this useful for providing information on the types of work that women performed or were allowed to perform. Upper-level undergrads in history and related fields (medieval literature, classics, and religious studies) might find this a useful though slightly challenging read as well.

One of the greatest strengths is Jewell's interdisciplinary nature of her research and vision: The book covers social, economic, political, and religious history. The book is divided into sections based upon spheres of life that women inhabited in order to better probe the contributions of women in rural, urban, political/landholding life, and religion.

If there is any flaw, it is a small one: The least effective section of the book is the last chapter, where Jewell presents case studies of exceptional women in the early middle ages. This section seems least effective because the previous chapters have all assumed a detailed knowledge of these exceptional women and others. Perhaps one way to use this book in a classroom would be to read these studies of individual women first—in order to orient new students to the women and their roles in the early middle ages—and then follow these case studies up with the rest of the book.

United Theological Seminary

Andrea Janelle Dickens

Tristram Hunt. *Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City*. New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Co., 2006. Pp. 608. Paper, \$20.00; ISBN 0-8050-8259-X.

Works profiling Britain's post-industrial past are abundant, given the nation's standing as the world's first industrial and urban society. Accordingly, present-day authors face a massive challenge in conferring new information on Britain's development during the nineteenth century. Such a challenge thus confronts Tristram Hunt, author of *Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City*.

Opening with "The New Hades," *Building Jerusalem* probes the horrendous state of city living following the onset of industrialization, and in the following ten chapters (including an epilogue) it bravely accounts for British endeavors to establish a new, improved urban vision. Emphasizing numerous social and environmental problems,

Hunt's articulate book leaves no stone unturned in explaining the British quest for progress. Offering a superb account of Victorian City misery, something instructors and students alike will appreciate, *Building Jerusalem* grapples with matters like Dickens' picture of urban Britain, the Victorian's enthusiasm for Ancient Greek and Renaissance urbanity, and the significance of architecture in comprehending the meaning of Victorian advancement. Implying that city improvement was principally a means to beautifying the urban form, Hunt outlines how the appearance of British cities purposefully came to resemble renowned cities from Europe's past so that the Victorians could celebrate Britain's rise to magnificence and laud their society as part of Europe's lengthy chronicle of cultural cultivation. Significantly though, Hunt also considers the dirtier side of urban evolution. He unpicks the story of road, drain, and sewer construction so as to weave together matters of the city useful with the city beautiful. Citing 1870s Birmingham as a case in point, *Building Jerusalem* lucidly describes its reformed-minded model of governance and so how public authorities could, if they wished, build better cities through both splendor and utility.

Exploiting the tradition of urban biography, as well as thematic and process-based approaches, *Building Jerusalem* additionally elucidates the development of the cultural, political, and economic heart of Britain and its empire, London. Presenting the metropolis as both a world city and a place of disorder, Hunt examines the affect of Social Darwinism and investigative studies that revealed by the 1880s an impoverished, undernourished human race whose existence was observed to endanger the future of the British race. With the subsequent materialization of model communities like Letchworth Garden City, Hunt appropriately notes that the distresses of urban life were alleviated by a social equity paradigm. Yet as significant as this was in providing good health and better housing as a right for all, as Hunt also notes, in practice suburban settings were generated that ultimately eroded the British urban spirit.

In summing up, *Building Jerusalem* should be acknowledged for being a dense manuscript that grants a detailed overview of the evolution of the Victorian City and the principles and people that forged its character. Thoroughly researched, eloquently written, and enthusiastic in tone, *Building Jerusalem* is adventurous in tackling a broad array of subjects and their impact upon the Victorians and their cities. While the tome's exploration is extensive, it is nonetheless imperative given the complex nature of British cities in the nineteenth century. Consequently, as Hunt appreciates, his narrative needs to examine a plethora of themes and not be lopsided towards just a handful of events, experiences, people, and places. The outcome, however, is that *Building Jerusalem* has much to offer to both the young learner and the more experienced scholar, although the sheer compactness and length of Hunt's thesis will be unmanageable to those unfamiliar with British History. Yet for those of advanced historical understanding, *Building Jerusalem* tidily complements classics like Briggs's *Victorian Cities* and Cyos and Wolff's *Victorian City*, thereby granting another stimulating insight into the world's first modern urban culture.