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Siân Reynolds, *Paris-Edinburgh: Cultural Connections in the Belle Époque.* Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007. xv + 218 pp. Figures (27 b&w illustrations), bibliography, and index. $99.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 0754634647.

Review by Charles Rearick, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

When historians have ventured to compare "*belle-époque*" Paris with other capital cities, they have most often focused on Vienna, London, or Berlin. *Fin-de-siècle* Vienna, as Carl Schorske has shown so brilliantly, rivaled Paris and perhaps even outdid it as the crucible of artistic modernism. London overshadowed Paris as "world capital" in several regards &emdash; as a teeming megapolis (population about 4.5 million in 1900 &emdash; double that of Paris), a gargantuan emporium, and the capital of a vast overseas empire. "By its industrial, commercial and maritime pre-eminence, not Paris but London, the largest and wealthiest city in the world, deserved the title of 'capital of the nineteenth century,'" Philip Mansel has noted, responding to Walter Benjamin's famous phrase. Upstart Berlin made its bid as a new "world capital" in the heady years after German unification, boasting a new panoply of world-class hotels, department stores, museums, and concert halls &emdash; even laying claim to the title "city of light."[1] Siân Reynolds's boldly original book brings a much smaller and less celebrated capital city into the cultural history of the "*belle époque*," examining it alongside France's super-star.

While pairing Paris and Edinburgh, she does not make point-by-point comparison the main purpose of her book. So different were the two cities that many comparisons would be "far-fetched" (p. 193), she allows. With its population of 300,000, Edinburgh was not even the biggest city in Scotland (Glasgow was), and within British cultural life it was a minor player in relation to London. Although Edinburgh's boosters deemed it "the Athens of the North," it could not come close to Paris as a cultural dynamo. In many ways, the two capital cities were "opposites," the author notes: Paris was at the apogee of its glory as a cultural capital famed for its pleasures, fashion, beauty, freedom, and dangers, while Edinburgh was viewed abroad as a staid, even puritanical town located vaguely somewhere in the misty land of Sir Walter Scott's novels.

Nonetheless, Reynolds does make comparisons through much of the book. The most important of them, for the interests of H-France readers, are those that place Paris in sharp relief. Summing up her account of the numerous new buildings added to the two "stone cities" in the late nineteenth century, Reynolds notes that Paris came out with many more theaters and big department stores, while Edinburgh built many more banks, insurance companies, and (Protestant) churches. Another striking difference is that the luxuriant ornamentation so prominent on Parisian buildings was scant in Edinburgh. Also missing, for the most part, were the forms of female nudes that abounded in Paris &emdash; as allegorical figures and caryatids in monuments, fountains, and buildings (though some could be glimpsed up near the top of some Edinburgh façades, discreetly high above the street level). Edinburgh's abundance of royal monuments (most already in place before the late nineteenth century) was still another difference. The two cities took a parallel course in constructing statues of "great men," but Paris set itself apart by the sheer numbers of such statues, constructing some 150 of them between 1870 and 1914, that heyday of the Third Republic's "statuomanie." Altogether the similarities and parallels between the two cities, such as the steep increase in the housing stock and cultural institutions for the middle classes (theaters, museums, concert halls, etc.), seem less important and remarkable than the differences, particularly the differences in scale.

The many comparisons notwithstanding, the author's principal objects of study are "cultural connections," as the subtitle announces. For the period 1890-1914 such connections developed mainly because of the prestige and even cultural hegemony that Paris enjoyed, the world cultural capital exerting its great influence and attraction on the Scots (as on many others abroad). Scottish architects went to Paris to study, and French architectural styles showed up in Edinburgh's late-nineteenth-century churches, department stores, and the Royal Hospital for Sick Children. Scottish students of painting and sculpture flocked to Paris studios, the Louvre, galleries, and exhibits. Scottish women, in particular, found greater opportunities to study art and to pursue artistic careers in the French capital than in Edinburgh (even though female students were denied admission to the École des Beaux Arts until 1897).

Beyond telling about Scots pursuing their personal interests in Paris, Reynolds also tells much about Scottish efforts to create enduring institutional connections. The pre-eminent figure behind those efforts was Patrick Geddes, a man who, without holding any university degree, established himself as a multi-faceted intellectual and representative of Scottish learned culture for several influential groups in France: a network of French academics (including, notably, historian Ernest Lavisse and economist Charles Gide) and a circle of social progressives and revolutionaries, including anarchists Elisée Reclus, Paul Reclus, and Augustin Hamon. With his masterly networking abilities, Geddes began organizing student exchanges and summer conferences in Edinburgh in the 1880s. His "Summer Meetings" featured numerous French lecturers in the sciences and social sciences addressing Scottish audiences of diverse social backgrounds, women in the majority. He also engaged in urban renewal projects in Edinburgh with a working philosophy heavily influenced by the ideas of Frédéric Le Play. In the mid-1890s Geddes and a number of academics and political leaders in both countries founded the Franco-Scottish Society. In part its purpose was to strengthen ties between the universities and historical researchers; more generally it aimed to foster a cultural *entente cordiale* that would promote good political and commercial relations. In 1900 during the Exposition universelle, Geddes and his allies in Paris (notably those associated with the Musée Social) organized an International Assembly/ École Internationale that offered lectures in English and French and also provided guided tours to the exhibits for thousands of visitors.

All in all, these Franco-Scottish "connections" forged by Geddes and company did not rise in intellectual importance to the level known in the Enlightenment era (David Hume, Adam Ferguson, Dugald Steward, Adam Smith, et al.). Nor did they extend into areas generally known as popular culture. Virtually all the initiatives that this book recounts ended up relatively modest in reach, limited to an educated, comfortable middle-class (people possessing more than a modicum of "cultural capital") led by small circles of academic and political elites. Some of the projects, such as Geddes's illustrated review *The Evergreen*, were quite short-lived. Much more far-reaching and consequential, Reynolds shows, was the commercial venture undertaken in France by the Scottish publishing firm Thomas Nelson & Sons, which printed and sold large quantities of inexpensive, quality reprints of French classics and modern literature (along with translations from Russian, Italian, and German) in France and Scotland from 1910 on.

The book's last chapter does not pursue direct connections but rather gives us an illuminating comparative look at changes for women and gender relations in the two cities. Focusing on women's liberties and rights in several specific sectors of life, this chapter gives us a new perspective on the much-discussed "New Woman" of *belle-époque* France. In the matter of everyday freedom and mobility, Reynolds makes the case that bourgeois Parisian women, especially young and unmarried *Parisiennes* (in contrast to working-class women), were more restricted than their Edinburgh counterparts by notions of "respectability" and a sense of danger in the metropolis and so were generally less free to go about the city. But she also points out that the iconography from both cities testifies to a greater degree of freedom in public spaces for women than the moralizing texts of the period suggest. Edinburgh's young women, furthermore, engaged in competitive sports (cricket, lacrosse, tennis, golf) years before their

French counterparts, and in comparison with the *Parisiennes*, they "lacked coquetry" (p. 174). In both countries, growing numbers of women were admitted to the university in the period (though still a small minority of the student body), and most of them concentrated in arts subjects.

For women interested in pursuing medical studies, Paris offered opportunities much earlier (1868) than Edinburgh, and so many foreign women went there for that purpose. But after completing their studies, they ran into barriers blocking them (as well as French women) from professional practice: the French medical establishment long barred women doctors from hospital internships and posts. With regard to women's campaigns for rights and particularly the vote, Reynolds notes that the women's movement in Edinburgh was more militant, broader-based, and more united than the one in Paris. Suffragettes in France had the additional burden of having to contend with a "republican fraternity" (p. 190) strongly opposed to women's political participation. On this topic as on others, Reynolds's well-crafted account adds new dimensions of complexity to the view of Paris as the capital of modernity around 1900. It also adds novel nuances and correctives to the selective, nostalgia-drenched "memory" of a period that, decades later, French memoirs and histories dubbed "belle."

NOTES

[1] Carl E. Schorske's *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), however, does not offer explicit comparisons. Bernard Marchand does compare Vienna with Paris in his book *Paris, histoire d'une ville, XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993), p. 220. Christophe Prochasson follows suit in his *Paris 1900, Essai d'histoire culturelle* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1999). Donald James Olsen's *The City As a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna* (New Haven. Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986) dwells more on comparing the built cities than their cultural life. Claire Hancock's *Paris et Londres au XIXe siècle* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2003) is systematically comparative regarding perceptions and representations. For the quoted comparison with London, see Philip Mansel, *Paris Between Empires, 1814-1852, Monarchy and Revolution* (London: Phoenix Press, 2003), p. 143. On Berlin see Pierre-Paul Sagave, *1871 Berlin-Paris, Capitale du Reich et capitale du monde*, followed by Paris-Berlin: à l'aube du troisième millénaire (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995) and Christophe Charle's *Paris, fin de siècle, culture et politique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998), which offers quantitatively based cultural comparisons with Berlin.

[2] Among the many recent contributions are Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) and Diana Holmes and Carrie Tarr, eds., *A 'Belle Epoque'?: Women and Feminism in French Society and Culture 1890-1910* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007). The period label "belle époque" has appeared *without* the question mark in such valuable studies of French women's history as Jennifer Waelti-Walters and Steven C. Hause's *Feminisms of the Belle Époque: A Historical and Literary Anthology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) and the special issue of *L'Esprit Créateur on Women of the Belle Epoque*, 37/4 (December 1997).

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