Ranging from 1880 to 1920, this book examines literary representations of new experiments in urban architecture that were necessitated by a growing population. In the words of its lucid introductory first chapter, the book "treats architectural and literary forms as texts that both require exegesis, the rendition of which reveals the interconnectedness of material and ideological realms" (1). Highlighting experiments in housing that in various ways were architecturally distinct from the conventional single-family home, the rest of the book treats four alternatives: model dwellings, women's residences, settlement housing, and garden cities.

Part I (chapters 2-4) considers three novels that depict model dwellings. A predecessor to public housing, model dwellings were meant to provide sanitary housing to the working classes just as their existing homes were being condemned and destroyed. Funded through a combination of philanthropy, capital investment, and government support, model dwellings companies "were ideologically pitched between self-help and civic paternalism" (19-20). They are quite differently portrayed in the three novels considered here. In Mary Ward's Marcella (1894), a model dwelling facilitates the intellectual and personal growth of the upper-class protagonist who temporarily chooses to live in it. But model dwellings are sharply critiqued in two novels by Margaret Harkness, whose important work as a novelist and activist for socialism has been recently discussed in a collection of essays co-edited by Robertson: Margaret Harkness: Writing Social Engagement, 1880-1921 (Manchester UP, 2019). In A City Girl (1887), Robertson writes, Harkness uses the conventions of the fallen woman narrative to show that the model dwellings movement failed to grapple with the inequality created by capitalism. Just as the aristocratic rake of the novel takes advantage of its working-class female protagonist, the model dwellings company exploits its residents—the very people it was intended to help.

The other novel by Harkness considered here—George Eastmont, Wanderer (1905)—is a roman-à-clef of the early socialist movement; its eponymous hero is an aristocratic socialist probably based on Henry Hyde Champion, with some of Harkness's own experiences mixed in. Against a critical consensus that this novel traces the failures of the early socialist movement, Robertson argues that it dramatizes the impossibility of reconciling individual ideological commitment with collective goals; formally and thematically, it reveals that early socialism "seemed predicated on women's marginalization" (68). Like Ward's upper-class heroine, Eastmont elects to live in a model dwelling because he is committed to equality, but he cannot abandon his paternalistic vanity.

As Robertson reads them, then, these three novels represent a range of experiences with model dwellings. Yet I would have appreciated more emphasis on the overall argument of Part I. On the question of whether architecture can effect social progress, does the contrast suggested between Harkness's skepticism and Ward's optimism simply reflect their considerable differences of ideology and experience? Does it also speak to the architectural and social diversity of model dwellings themselves? Or to the particular way that architecture's role in social progress was conceived?

Part II (chapters 5-7) treats three novels about women living in purpose-built accommodation for independent women: architectural forms driven by changes in the labor market that encouraged rural women to relocate to the city. For many years in the later nineteenth century, we are told, a large and growing population of single working women lacked suitable housing. While the buildings ultimately raised to accommodate them were intended to serve this population, Robertson writes that the designers' insistence on maintaining elements of middle-class femininity left the residents tense and frustrated. In Evelyn Sharp's The Making of a Prig (1897), the experience of living in one such residence dashes the protagonist's initial spirit of independence, and the novel's "bleak representation of women's housing . . . contest[s] the popular belief that single, middle-class working women were miserable simply on account of having eschewed the domestic conventions of cozy coupledom" (83). By contrast, Annie S. Swan's A Victory Won (1895) shows how these new urban residences facilitate intimate and egalitarian relationships between women. While Swan uses the conventions of the Kailyard tradition (a form of writing about rural Scotland) in a novel that has been read as a sentimental account of women's self-sacrifice, Robertson stresses instead its picture of radical female communality. Yet unlike Sharp's negative picture of life in a women's residence, which is partially based on the author's personal experience, Swan's positive account is entirely imagined. Given that contrast, I would have welcomed a closer and more pointed comparison between the two novels, which are instead treated separately—in two of the ten short chapters that tend to preclude synthetic discussion.
While the novels of Swan and Sharp remain largely in the women's residence, Julia Frankau's *The Heart of a Child* (1908) moves from the Soho Club for working-class girls to one of London's first blocks of middle-class flats. Ostensibly, the novel tells a story of meteoric social ascent. Yet this rise in the protagonist's fortunes has conflicting consequences.

According to Robertson, the novel is "a rare account of the continuities between economically divergent forms of housing--from the slum to the mansion block--that points out their uncomfortable similarity where matters of women's domestic security are concerned" (127). Despite their unconventional design, Robertson argues, residences like the Soho Club were in some sense nonthreatening because they shored up class distinctions. But in relaxing such distinctions and housing both genders, the middle-class block of flats threatened both the social order and women's safety.

In Rhoda Broughton's *Dear Faustina* (1897), the first novel to be analyzed in Part III (chapters 8 and 9), the heroine moves from a women's residence to settlement housing. The settlement movement aimed to create cooperative cross-class housing that would help the poor by placing them in daily contact with more educated workers. Yet in spite of the egalitarian motives behind these efforts, they often replicated the same class hierarchies they were ostensibly designed to level. In the intense romantic friendship and domestic partnership featured in *Dear Faustina*, the domineering, lower-class Faustina has the upper hand over her middle-class friend Althea. Although Althea moves from a women's residence to the role of middle-class authority in a settlement house and finally to a heterosexual marriage, Robertson does not read the novel as a triumphant story of maturation. She argues instead that Althea's passage through these different residences makes "legible the nuanced and inextricable relationship between economic and sexual power" (133).

On the other hand, Robertson shows, L. T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* (1895) tells a positive story about life in a settlement. When an heiress moves into the slum neighborhood on which her wealth is based in order to help the residents, she improves spiritually as they improve materially. Exploring "the symbolic value of settlement," the novel is said to show how the protagonist's decision to live in the neighborhood she hopes to uplift lets "the organization of her own domestic space grant[,] her allegorical and transformative power among the other residents of the district" (162). Yet Robertson also deftly and fascinatingly reveals the gap between the architecture of the settlement movement and its goals.

In Part IV (chapter 10), Robertson considers the garden cities movement in light of Mary Gabrielle Collins's *Garden Suburb Verses* (1913), which contrasts the dingy and overcrowded city with the civic and domestic arrangements of the suburb. Garden cities such as the Hampstead Garden Suburb, which emerged from the settlement movement, aimed to accommodate diverse constituencies, including those thought to need alternatives to the nuclear family home. Robertson argues that Collins's poems are not nostalgic for a lost arcadia but rather utopian in envisioning what the suburb in practice ultimately failed to foster: a cross-class community. Refusing to mock such communities as other popular and critical accounts of them did, Robertson tries instead to reclaim the value of their innovative, thought-provoking aims.

A brief epilogue considers the legacies of the nineteenth-century housing crisis in today's London. Whereas the modern housing crisis is too often understood quantitatively as an issue of an insufficient supply to satisfy demand, Robertson suggests that these novels and poems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can prompt us to reconsider housing: to see it in a more wholistic and community-oriented way, to focus first on the people for whom the housing is designed.

Valuable and welcome as it is, *Home and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Literary London* is deeply disserved by a title that, somewhat like the "Holy Roman Empire," misrepresents the book with nearly every word--whether or not the author is fully responsible for them all. First, the word "home" hardly forecasts Robertson's persuasive account of why she cares less about the "home," with its connotations of nuclear-family domesticity, than about "housing" as a civic provision, full of architectural and social diversity (7). Second, the word "identity" somewhat blunts and obscures Robertson's vital contribution to the study of women's writing. Although brief, illuminating cross-references to better-known novels by men--George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893), Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (1896)--are interspersed throughout this book, Robertson's subject is an understudied but important group of novels (and one poetry collection) by women. Third, "nineteenth-century" slightly misidentifies the book's historical scope, which extends to 1920. Finally, the name "London" prompts me to wonder why Robertson never explicitly makes the case for focusing solely on London as the relevant urban center, and whether she intends to say something specific about the city or simply assumes that developments in London mirror those in Manchester, Liverpool, or any British city undergoing similar demographic and architectural change during the period. While an exclusive focus on London is doubtless defensible, an explicit defense of this focus might have helped to clarify the stakes of the book.

Apart from the defects of its title, *Home and Identity* makes a number of important contributions to the study of urban architecture and women's writing around 1900. On the level of cultural history, it significantly probes each of the underlying, interrelated architectural movements reflected in Robertson's literary texts, as well as thoughtfully explaining how such experimental constructions affected real women. Moreover, while women have long been linked to domesticity, Robertson's analysis sheds fresh light on the relationship between women's writing and urban housing, understood broadly. That is, she succeeds in defining "women's imaginative and material contributions to the construction of the city" (3). Although it is an understated element of the book, Robertson's account of these neglected but fascinating texts also contributes to an urgent recovery project.

That said, the book could have been more explicit about some of its central claims. Frequently, *Home and Identity* subtly defends texts that offer a romanticized, sentimental, or utopian picture of developments in housing whose effects on vulnerable populations could easily be seen in straightforwardly negative terms. Robertson is also fairly generous to the work of writers with no personal experience of the housing forms they represent as happy sites of individual and social transformation. To justify such generosity, Robertson might have reckoned more pointedly with the arguments of books such Seth Koven's *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton UP, 2006), which she cites frequently but never directly engages. Nevertheless, this impressive and important book makes valuable contributions to our understanding of interrelated developments in architecture, the urban environment, class, and gender in the period. The book will highly impress anyone interested in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century British women's writing, urban space, and the built environment.

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