

Brooklyn: The Once and Future City. By Thomas Campanella (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019). Pp. 550. Hardcover \$35.00.

In recent years, Brooklyn, New York, has undergone a renaissance, sparking renewed interest in the borough's history. Thomas Campanella, an Associate Professor of Urban Planning at Cornell University, masterfully explores the history of his native Brooklyn from its early settlement by Dutch colonists to the present day in *Brooklyn: The Once and Future City*. The book fills a void in the historiography of the borough as few historians have attempted a comprehensive history of Brooklyn for a general audience.

Campanella, a gifted storyteller, persuasively argues that Brooklyn is worthy of study apart from the rest of New York City, whose histories are often dominated by Manhattan. While the book explores many topics across its five hundred pages of text, Campanella's thesis is that two reoccurring themes, hope and disappointment, are the organizing principles of Brooklyn's long history. His eighteen chapters begin with an exploration of the borough's Dutch and English colonial roots, and end with Brooklyn's association with hipster culture in the modern era. Campanella describes how Brooklyn, long an independent city, engaged in fierce competition with Manhattan for much of its history. Brooklyn lost this battle in 1898, when it renounced its independence to form the City of Greater New York. Campanella argues that in the minds of Brooklynites, their city was equal to Manhattan in the pre-consolidation era, only to assume a subordinate role in the politics and culture of the consolidated city. Nevertheless, Brooklyn's history of cultural, social, and political subordination created generations of ambitious strivers, who like Brooklyn itself, sought to overcome a sense of inferiority.

Campanella details how Brooklyn has always attracted the "doers" and "dreamers" of each generation. For example, he proves that Brooklyn, even during the earliest days of Dutch and English colonization, had been viewed as a place to fulfill one's aspirations, sometimes at the expense of others. From the earliest Dutch settlers who sought their fortunes by establishing plantations and outposts to trade with Native Americans, to the modern era when immigrants from all over the world settle in the borough, Brooklyn has been a place for new beginnings and lofty ambitions. The city continued to be shaped by migration and immigration over the past two centuries. Black migrants from the American South, millions of Southern Italians and Eastern European Jews in the early twentieth century, immigration from the Middle East, China, the former Soviet Union, and the Caribbean in the late twentieth century, and the recent infusion of white Americans 'hipsters', as well as thriving LGBT communities, created one of most diverse places in the world. This culture is uniquely Brooklyn.

Second, Campanella argues that repeated disappointment has also shaped Brooklyn's history. Brooklyn imagined itself as an equal to Manhattan but never quite moved out of its shadow. For example, in the nineteenth century, Brooklyn's political leadership sought to rival Manhattan's Central Park with its own feat of urban landscaping, Prospect Park. Campanella wonderfully describes how Brooklynites understood the construction of the mighty Brooklyn Bridge as the symbolic union of two equals. In the 1930s, Brooklyn boosters played a crucial role in the founding of the city's first airport. In parallel, they sought to develop Brooklyn's Jamaica Bay into an international port. But, as Campanella illustrates, none of these attempts ever quite measured by its rival Manhattan.

Campanella does his best work when tracing Brooklyn's developmental collapse in the twentieth century. These failures include the rise and fall of Coney Island, the closure of Brooklyn's famous horse-racing tracks, the closure of the Brooklyn Naval Yard, the departure of the Brooklyn Dodgers, the deindustrialization of Brooklyn's once-great industrial and manufacturing economy, and the collapse of Brooklyn's long-time hometown newspaper *The Brooklyn Eagle*, which all fueled an economic decline by the late 1900s. He argues that outside forces played a role in the borough's long decline. New York City urban planners focused on building a system of highways rather than the development of public transportation, which led to the rapid growth of suburbs in Long Island and Westchester at the expense of Brooklyn. Despite these setbacks, the constant efforts to resurrect past glory gave Brooklyn a distinctive 'underdog' culture that embraced the continuous quest for prosperity and cultural relevance.

Campanella's work draws upon years of archival research into Brooklyn's under-researched past. The book includes copious citations to *The Brooklyn Eagle* and other local newspapers. He also utilizes other previously under-worked historical sources located in Brooklyn's libraries, historical societies, and at the archives of Brooklyn College. He explores at length Brooklyn's efforts at urban planning in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including efforts to build roads, parks and public spaces in the nineteenth century. Moreover, Campanella adds to the debate over the legacy of Robert Moses, New York City's master urban planner of the twentieth century. In his view, Moses left a detrimental impact on Brooklyn, forever altering the physical landscape, by his decisions to create highways that broke up and isolated many neighborhoods.

In later chapters of the book, Campanella, who grew up in a southern Brooklyn neighborhood called Marine Park, explores the rapid recent development of the area. He explores the construction boom that followed the Second World War, and the many grand projects that never reached fruition. Two prominent examples include the efforts to transform Marine Park into a world-class urban park that would have featured the largest sports stadium in the country, and the stillborn efforts to transform Barren Island, used for years to dispose of the city's dead animals, into an international commercial airport. Real estate developers like Fred Trump, the father of President Donald J. Trump, built thousands of single and multi-family homes in southern Brooklyn that catered to Irish, Italian, and Jewish Americans who wanted an opportunity to own a piece of the American dream. The development of these homes shaped southern Brooklyn into a working-class enclave with a distinctive culture that had little in common with cosmopolitan Manhattan.

While the book adds much to the discussion of Brooklyn's rich history, it is not a perfect work. Campanella tends to romanticize the city and its inhabitants, often to the detriment of his scholarly argument. While he mentions Brooklyn's long history of slavery (both Dutch and English settlers held slaves, and slavery remained well-into the nineteenth century), Campanella could have spent more time exploring how issues of race, class, religion, and ethnicity divided Brooklyn into enclaves in the twentieth century. For example, Brooklyn experienced massive white flight and racial tension. African Americans escaping from the Jim Crow South and Black immigrants from the Caribbean in the 1940s faced discrimination and

hostility. When faced with changing demographics, many white residents fled Brooklyn from 1960 to 1990. In recent years, thousands of African Americans have been priced out of Brooklyn by gentrification. In many neighborhoods, life-long residents have been deprived of the opportunity to participate in Brooklyn's so-called rebirth in the 2000s. Campanella does not ignore these tensions entirely, but he tends to play down issues of race, class, ethnicity, and religion. Moreover, in his attempt to craft a sweeping history of Brooklyn, Campanella necessarily glosses over the vast diversity in the city. Brooklyn and its collection of dozens of unique neighborhoods often have little in common with each other. Each neighborhood in Brooklyn may deserve a separate history rather than being combined in an epic narrative.

Written in beautiful prose, the book is a labor of love from a native son. It works best as a broad survey of Brooklyn's history. Campanella offers valuable insight into Brooklyn's unique political culture, shaped by its relationship with Manhattan, as well as its prior centuries of independence. The book particularly shines when analyzing the more recent political culture of working-class white people in south Brooklyn. Hopefully, the book will spark further study into Brooklyn's African American past, and the relationship between African Americans and the borough's immigrant communities. The study of borderlands is most often associated with scholars of imperialism, but this book shows that the neighborhoods of Brooklyn, with their shifting demographics, represent micro-borderlands. For these reasons, *Brooklyn: The Once and Future City* succeeds as an interesting read for a general audience that also raises deeper questions for scholars.

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