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Jo Guldi. *Roads to Power: Britain Invents the Infrastructure State.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012. 297 pp. $39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-674-05759-3.

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As Jo Guldi's *Roads to Power* explains, efforts to build, fund, and maintain roads are critical for anyone interested in how states construct and exercise power. Guldi examines the genesis of "infrastructure states," modern forms of government that "regularly design the flow of bodies, information, and goods" and mediate "the relationship between individuals and infrastructure technology" (p. 4). Describing a process that began in Britain in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, she recounts how the creation of an extensive network of roads led to the growth of bureaucracy and a long-running, back-and-forth struggle between those who advocated for the state's centralizing role and those who emphasized local autonomy. In Britain, this process led to the "simultaneous birth of modern infrastructure and modern bureaucracy" (p. 5).

Power is a central organizing principle in Guldi's work, which offers fascinating insights into who wielded it and how they did so through the improvement of roads. An introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion investigate the infrastructure state from its origins in attempts to impose military control over the Scottish Highlands through the centralized, government-led creation of roads beginning in the late eighteenth century. After 1803, parliamentary road-building schemes far outstripped the scale of earlier military efforts, offering a model of "top-down infrastructure at great expense" (p. 52). By the 1820s, the infrastructure state had emerged, which gave experts, bureaucrats, and statesmen immense control over the functioning of society. These experts claimed that better roads could do all sorts of remarkable things: enhance national safety, boost the economies of fringe regions, promote economic integration, and even convert indolent Scots into hardworking Britons. The infrastructure state, however, was not without its critics. Local interests who saw the state encroaching on ancient liberties led a backlash that from the 1830s brought a halt to state-directed efforts to build infrastructure. These Libertarian localists flourished in the middle of the nineteenth century "with devastating consequences for the nation's infrastructure" (p. 204). Roads created in the previous century fell into disrepair, cutting off large sections of the British periphery from economic progress. Not until the beginning of the twentieth century did centralized government return.

Most of the book is a closely argued and compelling account of road development and use in Britain between the 1720s and 1850. Military histo-

rians will particularly appreciate discussions detailing the importance of the army to the infrastructure state. Like so many advances that originate with military research and development, preparation for conflict drove the construction of the state apparatus, as seen in the analysis of surveys, maps, technical improvements in road construction, and the organization of labor along military lines recounted in the first chapter. ***Roads to Power*** also poses the question whether roads served more as bridges or barriers between places and people. Chapter 4 shifts focus from how roads were built to who used them. Although this absorbing account feels a bit divorced from the other chapters, Guldi argues that improved road networks divided people rather than brought them together. Here again the army played a role. Together with itinerant Methodists, journeymen, and migrant laborers, soldiers formed one of the "mobile communities" that interacted frequently with strangers on Britain's highways in the eighteenth century. With the advent of a national road network, however, middle-class modes of travel, such as the post chaise introduced in 1784, reduced personal interactions and "isolated middle class travelers from dependence on strangers" (p. 155).

Middle-class Britons nonetheless believed that the nation had been united and civilized by roads, and historians have interpreted this period as one where enhanced transportation helped to construct British identity. This account, largely derived from Macaulay's ***History of England*** (1848), is mistaken; as Guldi maintains, "Britain's experience was not one of connection" (p. 22). ***Roads to Power*** contests several other aspects of the standard story of Britain's political and economic expansion. Guldi contends that the creation of roads illustrates that government planning and funding, not private individuals and their inventions, largely enabled the Industrial Revolution. Likewise, government money and centralized bureaucracy helped to promulgate the transport revolution far earlier than historians have acknowledged. Moreover, a careful examination of road building suggests that the emergence of modern bureaucracy should be repositioned from the 1830s and 1840s to the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Guldi posits that by 1840 the return to localism had serious deleterious effects.

A work this rich and interesting naturally invites challenges. It seems undeniable that the massive extension of the road network united Britain, and Britons, in many ways. Also, despite Parliament spending millions of pounds on myriad projects, figures indicating that parliamentary roads comprised only 2 percent of Britain's total road mileage do not wholly substantiate the importance of state investment to its transportation network (p. 81). In turn, to argue that in the nineteenth century, "libertarian localism dismantled the British economy,"seems hyperbole (p. 201). Elsewhere, Guldi softens her stance, suggesting that a "seemingly cosmopolitan parade of progress" merely "masked tensions" over who controlled roads and whose vision would shape the future (p. 23). This more measured language highlights that while ***Roads to Power*** underscores the barriers created by infrastructure, it sometimes does so at the cost of missing the larger linking sinews.

In a broader sense, ***Roads to Power*** addresses the tension between liberty and equality, and it is evident that Guldi wants to contribute to current debates about the role of government in infrastructure development. For historians, connecting the past to the present is tricky business. Readers may find this vein of writing, particularly in the conclusion, the most provocative but also the most open to criticism in several ways. First, Guldi's insertion of current issues deflects attention from the core of the book, which is an important piece of research on the ebb and flow of state development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Secondly, when Guldi leaps to the present day, her argument becomes hazy. The conclusion notes that in the new Internet age, "the warnings of history are clear" (p. 212). But are they? There is deep admiration for centralized efforts at infrastruc-

ture development. Libertarian localists--read the "Tea Party" movement--are the primary bogeymen, but government experts and bureaucrats who were key players in the infrastructure state do not emerge from her story unscathed. As a result, a third quibble is that having put her oar in the water, Guldi ought to lay out her vision more explicitly. Guldi makes vague claims that Britain failed in not building a "representative, participatory government" able to design an infrastructure that reflected everyone's interests equally (p. 23). But there is no satisfactory prescription for today. Indeed, the need for "control of government by visionaries" seems to be her best answer, albeit a curiously oblique one (p. 24).

Nonetheless, the connection that Guldi traces between the history of Britain's road network, the infrastructure state, and modern forms of communication make the book especially timely and stimulating. Although there is much more that *Roads to Power* has to say, this deftly written work offers a compelling case for the importance of government involvement in the creation of infrastructure as well as the role of infrastructure in the development of modern states.