

of the past, but 'transformation'. Chapter one exemplifies this theme by demonstrating how in the 're-tooling of the monastic legacy' (p. 32) the older religious buildings were not simply swept away, but exerted a powerful and persistent influence on the (largely) secular structures that replaced them. The principal focus here is on the country house, but in the chapter that follows it is the town that attracts attention, particularly the town hall, where 'again it was the links with the past that proved the most fruitful and stable in the formation of new urban identities in this period' (p. 93). Chapter three takes a novel and thought-provoking look at the 'language of architecture', exploring the ways in which an increasingly literate society used a variety of texts – theoretical works, statutes and proclamations, contracts, topographical writing and poetry – to negotiate its relationship with the built environment. Patrons are the subject of chapter four, where from a series of elite case-studies the key themes which emerge are the heavy and increasing financial costs of investment in high-status architecture, the need to balance conservative against innovative tendencies, and 'the setting of private luxury against civic responsibility' (p. 125). The final chapter concentrates on visual representations of architectural forms, such as in plans, maps, drawings and paintings, suggesting a highly significant shift in perception, detectable in images of townscape and country house, from a fragmentary to a more holistic view of built form. As one might expect from a Yale University Press production, this is a visually pleasing book with a profusion of excellent illustrations. An engaging style of writing adds to this appeal; at the same time the scholarly and interdisciplinary character of the book is evidenced in the rich referencing and bibliography. The title of the book suggests a wide-ranging and comprehensive survey of the period's architecture, whereas this relatively short book is in reality more a series of linked essays. Urban historians will be pleased to see the chapter on the town landscape, but readers of this journal will be surprised that there is no balancing chapter on the rural landscape. It is true that the elite country house receives a good deal of attention, but there is little on the homes of more modest town and country dwellers. The chapter on patrons is welcome, but its presence necessarily invites a similar chapter on the building industry. Not then a grand survey, but this is an enjoyable, stimulating and informed volume that adds to the growing body of scholarship that bridges the gap between architectural history and history.

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doi:10.1017/S0956793308002641

Jonathan Finch, and Kate Giles, eds, *Estate Landscapes: Design, Improvement and Power in the Post-Medieval Landscape*, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2008. 248 pp. 9781843833703.

This excellent and stimulating set of papers originates in a conference on post-medieval estate landscapes held by the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology in April 2003. Twelve papers look at different aspects of estate landscapes, ranging from the sixteenth to the twentieth century and from Britain and Ireland to the Caribbean. After a brief preface and an introductory paper by Tom Williamson, the papers are divided into three groups.

In the first group, 'Landscapes and Improvement', Jonathan Finch examines the Castle Howard estate and shows how the 'ornamental' and 'productive' elements of the landscape should be considered together. Robert Silvester and Judith Alfrey examine the development of Vaynor in the Severn Valley. Sam Turner's paper looks at a rather lower social group. In what for me was the most interesting and original of the papers, Turner examines a 'difficult' and complex Devon landscape, largely enclosed by *c.* 1400, and picks out from it subtle elements of agricultural improvement, in particular the development of regularised, rectangular fields around 'barton' farms. He is thus able to push a socially middling ethic of 'improvement' back into the later Middle Ages.

The second section, 'Landscapes and Material Culture', looks at particular elements of estate landscapes. Charles Orser shows how buildings and other elements of Tanzyfort House, County Sligo, were deployed to express the self-image of the owners. David Dawson and Oliver Kent discuss the siting and products of an eighteenth-century kiln on an estate at Dunster, Somerset. Paul Everson insists on the need to look at the meanings of landscapes, while Harold Mytum looks at the role of monuments in constructing memory, for example in respect of members of estate households who died in the two World Wars. Barbara Heath's paper delineates the meanings of Thomas Jefferson's 'landscape of retirement' in Virginia. This is a model study of a very short-lived landscape (am I the only one to suspect an allusion to Avebury in the circular form of the garden, with trees planted in a circle inside a deep ditch, as depicted conjecturally on p.142?).

'Colonial Landscapes' range from Ireland to the Caribbean. Colin Breen looks at the settlements of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English planters and links this with nascent capitalism. Roger Leech and Dan Hicks discuss colonial landscapes on Nevis and St Kitts, and on the British Leeward Islands, respectively.

If I have one criticism of the volume, it is that although the majority of papers make bold and exciting archaeological inferences about their material, this boldness is not articulated in the volume as a whole. The preface is short, just over two pages, and there is no concluding discussion. As a result, the collective view taken on the role of archaeology in understanding estate landscapes is slightly less than the sum of the individual papers. Williamson, in his introductory paper on archaeological research agenda, defines a 'landed estate' in the British context as 'an extensive or near-continuous area of land, owned as absolute private property by an individual, although not necessarily (following the elaboration of the institution of the strict settlement in the later seventeenth century) his or hers to alienate at will' (p. 1). Hicks by contrast takes a broad and comparative approach to understanding estate landscapes, and discusses 'some of the ways the archaeology of colonialism can [decentre] our conceptions of Britishness' (p. 205). The papers by Williamson and Hicks are both excellent, but like chalk and cheese in their approach. I would have loved to hear a conversation between them, or a concluding Discussion drawing out contrasts and comparisons.

With one or two of the papers, the concluding discussion could have done a little more to highlight the insights established through hard scholarship. Dawson and Kent indicate that their kiln structure was deliberately retained as an element in subsequent views over the park. I wanted to hear more about this: are there other examples of industrial elements in 'prospects', as opposed to Gothick ruins and follies? Is there any evidence of how the kiln was seen, as a romantic ruin or as an emblem of industry? Again, Everson carefully

discusses the necessity of exploring the meanings in designed landscapes, but ‘meanings’ are defined quite narrowly. I wanted to hear more about the meanings that might have been ascribed to elements of the landscape by the illiterate, the poor, by different genders and so on.

Estate Landscapes is a fine volume, one of the best and most enjoyable sets of papers I have read for some time. The generation of scholars represented here have the potential to go on from these fine individual studies to a genuinely comparative and processual view not just of estate landscapes but of landscapes across the Atlantic world, stretching from rectangular Devon fields to Caribbean and Virginian plantations. This volume is in many ways a set of studies advancing towards that very exciting prospect. We should remain impatient and ambitious for arrival at the final destination.

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doi:10.1017/S0956793308002653

Beat Kümin, *Drinking Matters: Public Houses and Social Exchange in Early Modern Central Europe*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. pp. xx + 283. £55 hb. 978 0 230 55408 5.

Beat Kümin asks, deep into his book, whether running a public house was a money-maker. It ‘will come as no surprise that there is no easy answer’, he says, bearing in mind ‘the usual variety’ of ‘types, locations, and socio-economic contexts’ (87). This did not bowl me over, as by now I was frustrated with his caution, and roll-call of variables that rules nothing out in truisms like this: ‘public houses were ubiquitous and highly differentiated establishments’ (49). Tentativeness is set in stone and little is clear. ‘What emerges most clearly’, Kümin stresses, is the ‘fundamental ambivalence of each and every aspect of tavern culture’ (126). And on the same page, turning now to whether public houses were civil or coarse, he cautions ‘once again it would be futile to attempt a generalizing judgement’. More middle ground building follows: ‘heterogeneity of contexts’ puts an end to ‘generalizing judgements’ about the rival pull of alehouse or church (178). The book is almost at an end now, and there ought to be a build-up of steam to bring it home. But the last chapter’s hazy final sentence follows suit: ‘limits of generalizing accounts’ are raised like red flags, warning us again about the ‘complex interplay of settings, agents, period, and situations’ (189).

Drinking Matters is a commonsensical book, but there are times when we need more, and listing variables to describe ‘fundamental ambivalence’, ‘infinite versatility’, or ‘bewildering versatility’ is not enough (191). Examples flow, numbers are crunched, but interpretations are missing to glue things in place. Public houses need ‘a fresh synthesis’ and ‘comparative survey’, Kümin says (4), but not enough ground is covered for this to be a key comparative work: close study is limited to a region in Bern City Republic and another in nearby Bavaria. Other countries come and go from work by others, but all too often differences are noted but left up in the air. Let me give one example: keeping servants ‘varied from region to region, with female servants particularly conspicuous in central Europe’, but I was not told why (95). Yet this book can glow. Early modern