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Reviews of books

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David Nicholas, *Urban Europe 1100–1700*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. xii + 239pp. 14 figures. Bibliography. Index. £16.99 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805212610

David Nicholas has already amply demonstrated his broad and impressive knowledge of medieval Europe's towns. In his latest book he takes a longer timescale, consciously rejecting the traditional division between medieval and early modern and indeed emphasizing a conviction that the whole period experienced an essential continuity of urban forms and structures that came to an end only with the Industrial Revolution. As he himself puts it in his preface, the book's purpose is to explain why some Europeans in the past chose to live in towns, how they made a living and how they contrived to organize themselves. Further to that: what was it that made the large towns develop as they did? A central theme is the relationship between towns and their regions, his thesis being that local conditions created regions that came to be centred on towns with a limited range of central functions, as well as larger regions whose central places were the great cities. In their development, these great central places transformed the rural society they grew out of. An introductory chapter discusses general themes and theories of urbanization, and is followed by five chapters: 'City and region', 'The morphology of the urban plan', 'Corporation and community', 'Social structures and infrastructures' and 'Material culture and cultural environment'.

These are broad themes, and Nicholas paints with a broad brush: his towns being in essence the same sort of organism, he is happy to write in general terms and to make comparisons across Europe (as indeed he did in his much longer, two-volume study of the medieval town published in 1997). Often that works: his discussion of the developing shapes and structures of towns, for instance, usefully discusses many common features (even if his assumption that the plans of most older cities of Europe evolved organically might be difficult to defend). Other sections are less successful: given the enormous degree of diversity and change in political realities in Europe during this long period, to produce a coherent discussion of the evolution of urban government and urban communities seems over-ambitious. One is impressed at the attempt Nicholas makes, but it is questionable whether his synthesis can convey as much as a series of regional or period-based studies would, or so well. The same is true of his treatment of the many manifestations of the gild. And that does raise a central question about this book, which is how realistic its

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scope actually is. An all-embracing survey of this sort has its impact, not least when Nicholas is addressing the urban models of Max Weber and others of lesser stature – which he does well. But at the same time, a short book about such a large theme cannot easily convey nuances and the variations which can tell more than the similarities. A limited amount of material from other parts of Europe (although not from Scandinavia, for instance) is skilfully blended into a book whose focus is essentially Flanders, northern France, northern Italy and Germany. Doubtless that reflects the author's own research interests, although it is chiefly his definition of towns and urbanism that determines the book's scope and character. For Nicholas, size really does matter, and he is dismissive of what he calls 'dwarf towns', rejecting the description of both Milan and Saltash as urban as a 'useful analytical tool' (p. 11). He has a point, in one way; yet at the same time this denial of the extraordinary variety of the urban identity limits his analysis. Small towns could together show more varied features than larger towns; and if they did indeed have a whiff of the rural about them, the reek of cattle dung that doubtless pervaded (for instance) medieval Birmingham as the regional livestock-marketing centre implied no lack of urban features. In addition, Birmingham's promise of greater things, observable already in the sixteenth century, challenges Nicholas' time-frame: in many small towns, perhaps more than in the great cities, can we see unmistakable signs of economic and social change and a growing diversity well within his period of study. Whether these changes were 'of degree rather than of kind' is ultimately a subjective judgment, although one suspects that most urban historians will remain unconvinced by the rejection of traditional periodization. Readers of this book who think they already know about medieval and early modern towns will experience that sort of occasional irritation; it is only fair to say that it will not detract very much from most readers' sense of enjoyment and profit.

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John Schofield, *Medieval London Houses*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, second printing, with corrections, 2003. 272pp. 264 plates. 4 maps. 3 tables. Gazetteer. Sources and Bibliography. £25.00 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805222617

It is a commonplace of urban history that the most successful cities destroy the physical evidence of their past. London is no exception. Indeed, the devastating effects of the Great Fire and twentieth-century bombardment have compounded the consequences of continuous redevelopment based on commercial supremacy to leave only the fragmentary remains of barely 17 secular buildings for the historian of the medieval and early modern periods to examine *in situ*. However, against this paucity of architectural evidence must be set the remarkable wealth of archival and archaeological information which exists for the City of London and which have been mined assiduously by Schofield to present a coherent account of the development of the London house from the thirteenth to the early seventeenth centuries.

The property records of the various institutions involved in the governance of London in the period are voluminous and the author has sensibly focused on those records which illuminate the extensive archaeological excavations which have

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taken place over the last 30 years together with the properties of the Clothworkers' Company and Christ's Hospital which were surveyed in great detail by Ralph Treswell in the years around 1610. These case studies are given a broader context by selective use of other documentation, contemporary chronicles and the rich archive of pictorial and topographical views which survive from the sixteenth century and were provided in abundance by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarians. The result is a synthesis of current scholarship which convincingly puts London at the centre of national architectural innovation and places its development in a European context. The influence of the topography on the layout and the property boundaries of the City is followed by detailed chapters on the fabric, furnishings and room use of the houses at all social levels. In places the book betrays its origins as a doctoral thesis. The relentless catalogue of features and examples can make for heavy reading and it lacks a final chapter giving a general overview. But the detailed information is invaluable and the lavish reproduction of historical illustrations, some of them in colour, goes a long way to compensate for the poor survival of standing structures.

This book was highly commended when it was first published in 1995. The publishers deserve congratulations for putting it back into print with minor corrections. Subsequent scholarship has not diminished the towering achievement of its author.

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Jesús Escobar, *The Plaza Mayor and the Shaping of Baroque Madrid*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. xxvi + 347pp. 123 plates. Bibliography. £65.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805232613

Situated in the centre of what is commonly called 'Old Madrid', the Plaza Mayor has been the heart of the Spanish capital since the early years of the seventeenth century. But while this important square has been studied before, the volume under review is the first to offer a detailed and fully contextualized account of the square's construction. The author further demonstrates that the construction of the plaza was simply one, admittedly crucial, part of a larger make over of Madrid's urban fabric that was initiated by Philip II (1556–98) shortly after he settled his court there in 1561. At the time, Madrid was largely medieval in design and lacking many of the features associated with modern, Renaissance cities, among them broad, straight thoroughfares and a large central square suitable for purposes of ceremony, entertainment and monarchical display.

The creation of a new Madrid constitutes the heart of this important study. In keeping with his training in architectural history, Professor Escobar devotes three chapters to the construction of the plaza, surrounding houses and porticoes, the three-story Panadería containing a bread mart, royal gallery and private apartments, as well as the creation of the web of adjacent streets that repeated many of the design elements contained in the plaza itself. Escobar emphasizes that the plans for the new urban centre were the work of a committee – the *Junta de Policia* – and entailed the on-going collaboration of a team of architects, surveyors, building masters and other officials. He thus refutes those scholars who had attributed

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the plaza and its surrounds to individual architects such as Juan de Herrera and Juan Gómez de Mora. Another corrective concerns the plaza's date. Traditionally understood to have been constructed towards the end of the reign of Philip III (1599–1621), Escobar demonstrates that the origins of the plaza can be traced to the 1580s and to the urban reforms instituted by Philip II.

Underlying these reforms were two basic design concepts. One, summarized in the Spanish word *ornato*, aimed at the construction of buildings and spaces meant to embellish the city and enhance its overall reputation. The other was *policia*, which can be translated as civility, but architecturally means order and uniformity of design. Escobar highlights the extent to which these principles underscored the squared shape of the plaza and the uniform design of the apartment houses constructed around it. The apparent desire for uniformity was such that the *Junta de Policia* even dictated the colour of the iron-work on the surrounding balconies as well as the texture and the colour of the stone used as window trim.

Readers of this journal should also be interested to learn that Escobar's reconstruction of the Plaza Mayor's history goes well beyond questions of architecture and design. Following Henri Lefebvre, he regards the plaza as a social construct and thus analyses the different and changing ways it was put to use. The plaza served, for example, as a market place, and Escobar reproduces an unusual 1625 map indicating the location of the food stalls erected in the plaza's centre. It was also a commercial centre: its porticoes provided shelter for a variety of vendors, whereas artisans and even the occasional dentist occupied the ground-floor apartments of its houses. These houses remind us that the Plaza Mayor was also a residential square. According to one survey, it had over 180 households in 1618, among them merchants and shopkeepers, lawyers and clergyman, government officials and at least one grandee. Unfortunately, Escobar is not able to document the sales of these houses nor the overall finances of the Plaza Mayor, but succeeds in giving this square a human dimension that architectural histories so often lack.

Following Pedro Calderón de la Barca's seventeenth-century metaphorical description of the Plaza Mayor and Madrid, 'the wide plaza of the great theatre of the world', the book's next section emphasizes the use of the plaza as a ceremonial space. Important religious processions, such as those held on Corpus Christi, generally found their way to the plaza, and starting in the seventeenth century the Inquisition used it for the occasional auto de fe. Secular entertainments staged in the plaza included bullfights, tournaments and *juegos de cañas*, a peculiarly Spanish pastime that allowed opposing teams of mounted noblemen to show off their horsemanship and martial skills. Such a performance apparently delighted Charles, Prince of Wales, when he visited Madrid in 1623, and another was put on for the future Pope Innocent X in 1626. On this and other ceremonial occasions, plaza residents rented out their balconies and windows to spectators, generally at a rate fixed by the municipal council.

The book concludes with a wide-ranging discussion of the importance of plazas in Spanish town planning as well as the symbolism of the plaza as an urban space. The meanings attached to the Plaza Mayor, for example, were many. As the 'centre of the republic' (p. 191), the plaza's spatial harmony symbolized the order and civility of Madrid itself. Yet the plaza was also royal space, and integral to the special kind of 'theatre-state' that the Spanish Habsburgs, together with other early modern monarchs, attempted to construct. The Panadería, for example, with

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its royal gallery perched on top of a bread mart, conveyed messages of royal beneficence, and in this royal context the plaza's *ornato* and *policia* exemplified other benefits that accrued from Habsburg rule. In addition, the regularity and uniformity of the plaza represented 'the image of God' (p. 191) along with the sober religiosity of the Counter Reformation church.

Escobar handles these symbolic issues judiciously, and wisely refrains from pushing the metaphorical aspects of the plaza too far. He ends with a comparison of the design elements of the Plaza Mayor to other well-known seventeenth-century squares, notably the Place Royale in Paris and London's Convent Garden, an assessment of the Plaza Mayor's influence on other Spanish squares such as the one constructed in Salamanca during the eighteenth century and a brief account that carries the Plaza Mayor's history down to the present. Solid and well documented throughout, this elegant volume also brings much-needed attention to what was – and remains – one of Europe's premier urban spaces.

Richard L. Kagan
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Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies. Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-century England*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003. ix + 260pp. 7 figures. Select bibliography. £25.00.
doi:10.1017/S096392680524261X

In this provocative and immensely stimulating book, Gowing aims to reconstruct the social history of the female body in the early modern period, drawing extensively on parish records and court testimony to investigate the related questions of how ordinary women perceived themselves and how they were perceived by others. Beginning with a discussion of contemporary understanding of bodily functions, gender differences and sexual knowledge, successive chapters concentrate on intercourse, pregnancy, childbirth and parenthood, arguing essentially that women's experiences were shaped by profound cultural and social tensions about the reproductive body and about maternity. What comes through most clearly from the fascinating amalgam of analysis and anecdote that informs every chapter is the sheer vulnerability of the 'leaky' female body and thus of an individual's ability to control their own physical destinies. Gowing emphasizes, for example, the extent to which female servants were vulnerable to sexual assault by male employers who assumed the right of sexual access to their bodies; in one case from the Court Books of the London Bridewell in 1605, Alice Ashmore's master was reported as claiming that 'thou art my servant and I may do with thee what I please' (p. 61). Lacking the written indentures which protected male apprentices, female servants often found themselves dangerously exposed to the predatory instincts of male members of the household, while their general physical welfare was dependent on the good will and good management of their mistress. As Gowing points out, mistresses were not invariably sympathetic to the plight of vulnerable servants; married women in charge of their own households enjoyed much greater autonomy but often chose to exercise it through active participation in the intrusive communal policing of the social freedom and sexual behaviour of the unmarried that was commonplace in early modern society.

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As this indicates, Gowing's analysis stresses the fact that women in this period cannot be portrayed either as passive victims of patriarchal oppression or as united in opposition to a hostile male world. On the contrary, she emphasizes throughout the extent to which women colluded in their own subordination and collaborated in the strict regulation of the female body. There are some examples here of what might be interpreted as 'female solidarity', as when in 1666 Isabel Nicholson's mistress refused to allow two experienced matrons to examine her breasts for signs of pregnancy. It is worth noting, however, that one of the two women demanding access to Isabel's breasts was her own mother, so there may well have been a more complex sub-text here to do with rival claims to authority over the girl's body, as well as with the fact that such informal searches were much less common in urban than in rural communities. Childbirth, too, which has sometimes been portrayed as an occasion of rare female power, its processes creating an exclusively female community and culture, emerges from Gowing's evidence as a much more ambiguous and contested event, a public and painful 'travail' in front of an audience often bristling with rivalry, tensions and outright hostility.

Indeed 'ambiguous and contested' seems to sum up Gowing's highly original perspective on the politics of the body in Tudor and Stuart England. There can be no single model which explains how this political game was played out: urban society operated slightly but significantly differently from rural society; marriage paradoxically gave women more physical autonomy, rather than less; men relied on women to police their own subordination. By acknowledging and exploring these complexities, Gowing has produced a volume that should be essential reading for anyone interested in the workings of early modern societies.

J.M. Ellis
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J.T. Smith and M.A. North (eds.) (for the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society), *St Albans 1650–1700: A Thoroughfare Town and its People*. Hatfield: Hertfordshire Publications, 2003. xv + 264pp. 24 plates. 21 figures. 18 tables. Bibliography. £16.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805252616

This book presents the conclusions of a 13-year study by the Seventeenth Century Research Group of the St Albans Architectural and Archaeological Society, a predominantly amateur team formed under the leadership of the distinguished architectural historian J.T. Smith. The plentiful local records have been subjected to extraordinarily thorough and frequently sophisticated analysis, and the end result is clearly intended as a comprehensive survey of all aspects of life in 'one of the largest of small towns' in late seventeenth-century England. Somewhat in the manner of a Victorian civic history, the book begins with an account of local topography, along with the corporate and parochial structures. However, the authors seek also to utilize more recent approaches to urban issues, and there is much valuable information on poor relief, population size and composition, the workings of the local economy and such socio-cultural issues as education and the role of women. Although the town's social hierarchy is explained primarily in terms of the wealth and status associated with particular trades, individual exceptions and the intricacies of personal ties are brought to the fore. Naturally the

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architectural evidence is subjected to intense scrutiny, while the text is copiously illustrated with old views, specially commissioned photographs and well-designed maps, plans and graphs. For the benefit of general readers, technical terms are clearly explained throughout, and indeed the book will serve as a friendly introduction to research techniques and the mechanics of urban officialdom for newcomers to this field.

The principal strength of this study lies in the vast array of information which it presents on everyday life in a moderate-sized town, from leisure pursuits to the perils of sawpits dug in the public highway. It offers a stimulating and perceptive account of St Albans' strategic location on the main road from London to Chester, showing how the prosperity which accrued from through traffic was ultimately threatened by improvements in transport which reduced the town's viability as an overnight stopping-point. London's cultural impact, apparently deleterious, is also considered. However, the delineation of the local religious and political landscape is curiously incomplete. Post-Restoration St Albans was striking for its unusually large dissenting population, around 22 per cent of the whole, which ostensibly co-existed peacefully with the Anglican majority, the authorities regularly turning a blind eye to practitioners of occasional conformity despite Tory domination of the corporation from the late 1670s. Intriguingly, the electorate regularly returned Whigs to Parliament, except in 1685 when the mayor brought in dragoons to impose two Tory outsiders on the voters. This persistent Whig strand probably reflects the influence of the Grimston family, owners of the important neighbouring estate of Gorhambury, but similar electoral results just a few miles away at Hertford undoubtedly arose through nonconformist opposition to the Tory corporation there, and exploration of this parallel scenario might have generated further insights into the public life of St Albans itself. Comparisons with other towns generally are in short supply here, and not surprisingly the conclusion struggles to identify the town's defining characteristics. This book is an attractive and useful addition to the literature, replete with striking observations and honest scholarship, but it is not quite the last word on St Albans in the later seventeenth century.

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M. Hallett and J. Rendall (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century York: Culture, Space and Society.* York: University of York, 2003. x + 93pp. 44 plates. 2 figures. £25.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805262612

The importance of county towns to the social and cultural transformation of eighteenth-century England has long been recognized, yet their influence is often seen and their histories frequently written as collective rather than individual. The fear is that studies of individual towns can too easily be dismissed as parochial and particularistic. In such an historiographic context, this collection of essays is especially significant as it forms a conceptually informed and explicitly interdisciplinary treatment of one of the most important towns in eighteenth-century England: a place that for much of the period viewed itself as second only to London. Importantly, the six essays that comprise this volume do not attempt to offer a comprehensive history of York, but rather focus on a variety of topics within

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its socio-cultural development. Peter Borsay sets out the parameters for much of what follows in a clear and concise manner. He highlights the importance of civility, sociability and improvement in shaping the character and built environment of eighteenth-century York, but also outlines some of the tensions that ran as undercurrents to such developments. Roey Sweet, Mark Hallett and Michael Brown explore these themes most thoroughly in their chapters on, respectively: the role of the town histories of York (notably Drake's *Eboracum*) in shaping its civic and social identity; the imagining and presentation of the (improved) city in pictures and maps; and the social context and impact of the associational activities of York's leading citizens, particularly as expressed through membership of the Doctor's Club. Fay Bound's fascinating analysis of marital violence draws on a contemporary rhetoric of what constituted civil and uncivil behaviour within the home; but in drawing her data from across the county, she weakens the focus on York. Edward Royle's examination of the architecture and ministers, sponsors and congregations of the city's churches revolves around the shifting pattern and expression of social power, rather than the book's core themes of sociability and civility.

All the contributions are written in a lively and engaging manner, reflecting their origin as a series of public lectures. At the same time, they are erudite, convincing and thoroughly grounded in strong empirical research, to which the copious footnotes bear witness. The essays not only provide valuable new evidence of the character and transformation of this archetypal eighteenth-century leisure town, but also approach its history from a refreshingly varied set of perspectives. Sweet, for example, offers analysis of the written history of York; Hallett (illustrations) and Royle (architecture) focus on visual histories; whilst Bound, drawing on the testimonies of aggrieved wives and husbands, effectively presents us with oral histories of the city. The one disappointment comes with the treatment of space. Whilst many of the contributions are sensitive to the role of space, it is generally seen as an outcome of social action: produced through the plans of architects and improvement commissioners, and through the everyday lives of York's citizens as they promenaded, socialized and worshipped. Walks and assembly rooms, houses and churches are thus seen as important spaces within polite society; but space is never examined as an independent variable, with the power to shape the social relationships that it framed. It is a stage set, rather than an active context for urban society. This is, however, a minor flaw in an otherwise impressive volume. In its careful weaving of local detail and broader socio-cultural themes, this collection of essays not only plugs an important gap in the historiography of York, but also offers a useful blue-print for the analysis of other towns.

Jon Stobart
Coventry University

Madge Dresser (ed.), *The Diary of Sarah Fox* née *Champion, Bristol 1745–1802, Extracted in 1872 by John Frank*. Bristol: Bristol Record Society vol. 55, 2003. xxviii + 286pp. 3 illus. 1 table. No price given.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805272619

Here we have a tantalizing document, the lost 40-volume diary of a Georgian Quaker woman, printed from the select extracts made by a male Victorian editor

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who was perhaps more intent on displaying the diarist's exemplary Quaker life than on recording the quotidian detail that a social historian of today might have preferred. As a result we learn nothing of how she dressed, what she ate for supper, where she shopped, whether she kept a pet or owned a horse – though we do discover she occasionally still rode at the age of 60. Local and national themes – food riots, illuminations, French invasion scares, shows of waxworks, medical advances (improved inoculation, electrical treatments) – feature only in fleeting remarks; and the world of business and politics largely passes the diary by, notwithstanding the family's strong involvement in commerce (from porcelain manufacture to the sugar trade) and her own brother's electoral work for Edmund Burke in 1774. In recompense we gain considerable insight into Sarah Fox's personal circumstances, her long dependent spinsterhood until a late marriage in 1790 and the consolation and uplift she found living among the community of Friends. Covering a span of over 50 years and with a large cast of characters, the diary offers constant reminders of the precariousness of late eighteenth-century existence. Sickness, misfortune and death haunt as many pages as the happier events, the sociable visiting, the many journeys through the West Country or sometimes up to (rather sinful) London and the frequent Quaker meetings which so influenced Sarah Fox's moral judgments and reinforced her deep faith in eventual heavenly reward. Bristol itself, though seldom directly alluded to, remains a constant presence as she moves between different family houses in the city and the outlying villages, or pays her charitable visits to the poor and various local institutions. Bristol's transatlantic links also sweep American Quaker preachers like William Savory into her orbit, and America too tempts away her beloved brother and family to a slave plantation in South Carolina. This does not stop her holding the same anti-slavery opinions as her friend Hannah More.

The index to this book lists over 50 Foxes, nearly 40 Champions and 40 Lloyds, besides Fry, Harford, Rogers and other Quaker families galore. Faced with so many names the reader needs every aid the publisher can supply. Alas, we are given merely only one, rather defective, non-foldout, Champion family tree. There are no maps of Bristol or the West Country to show locations and routes of journeys, the index references are sometimes a page out, and editorial policy on annotation is often inconsistent. All the same this is a very readable text, by no means weighed down by piety, that genuinely illuminates provincial social life and Quaker networks of the period. It also has the advantage of an excellent introduction by the editor, Madge Dresser, judiciously drawing out the salient themes.

Trevor Fawcett
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Stephen Lovell, *Summerfolk: A History of the Dacha, 1710–2000*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003. xvii + 260pp. Bibliography. £18.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805282615

Not many Russian institutions have survived from Tsar Peter to President Putin, but the dacha is one of them. Stephen Lovell's delightful and erudite book on

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the history of the dacha follows this very Russian phenomenon from its tsarist and aristocratic origins to the present day excesses of Russia's nouveau riche. In the process, he makes a valuable and original contribution to many areas of Russian history. Although the roots of the dacha extend back to Muscovite times, the modern dacha in the sense of a summer residence really begins with Peter the Great and his city St Petersburg. Peter gave out parcels of land between the city and the Peterhof Palace to favoured aristocrats so that they could construct summer residences. Gifts from Peter were onerous matters and came accompanied by a series of regulations and instructions, backed by the liberal application of the tsar's personal cudgel – a real not metaphorical one – on those who were lagging behind. The basic principle of the dacha as summer refuge from the oppressiveness of the city was established, even if over the next three centuries the form of the dacha would mutate considerably. Lovell conveys clearly and concisely the chronology of the dacha, its development from an aristocratic to a mass phenomenon of Russia's urban middle class in the late imperial age to the perquisite of party and state apparatchiks in soviet times. Alongside the dominant mode of dacha use, however, there were always countervailing tendencies and interpretations which made the dacha an ambiguous and contested institution. Its malleability no doubt contributed to its survival.

One of the many pleasing aspects of Lovell's book is the manner in which it cuts right through the conventional periodization of Russian history. His approach not only brings the continuities to light but illustrates more sharply the discontinuities. For example we see the tenaciousness with which people defended their dachas as private property in soviet times, taking advantage of whatever loopholes and ambiguities were available through the law and outside of it. All the qualities that the soviet state so conspicuously failed to mobilize in its citizens – energy, initiative and enthusiasm – were displayed in abundance when it came to acquiring or holding on to a dacha. On the other hand for many soviet citizens, particularly in the precarious Stalin period, access to a dacha and the right of use were much more important than outright ownership. The ability of the dacha to adapt to radically different and sometimes simultaneously contradictory wider political contexts is amply demonstrated by this refusal to be confined by the traditional divisions of Russian history.

Lovell provides us with a fascinating window into the cultural history of Russia afforded by the dacha. The dacha was shaped by the environment in which it emerged yet it also began to shape that environment and change cultural values. Once Russia's urban middle class adopted the dacha, it offered an outlet for new forms of leisure and social interaction that helped them define themselves against both the aristocratic elites and the plebeian masses. Thus concerts, promenades and informal visiting offered an alternative to the grand aristocratic spectacles and the uncouth alcoholic binges of the peasants and working class. The new leisure activities of the dacha contrasted as well with the stultifying earnestness of the intelligentsia with its guilt-laden yet arrogant mission to save the lower orders. A short review cannot do justice to this wide-ranging book except to acknowledge its originality and the valuable contribution it makes to many different aspects of Russian history. It will be read with profit and pleasure by a much wider category of readers than is normal for an academic book.

Shane O'Rourke
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John Hassan, *The Seaside, Health and the Environment in England and Wales since 1800*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. xiii + 296pp. £40.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805292611

Connections are now being belatedly made between the histories of health, environment, tourism and urbanism. In his exemplary and highly readable monograph, John Hassan traces complex relationships between the social and cultural construction of the seaside holiday, grave problems associated with pollution, sewage disposal and coastal erosion and the long-standing, romantic British obsession with living in an 'island community'. Building on his own earlier work on water supply and the water environment, the author engages with a wide-ranging theoretical and empirical literature, including the seminal writings of John Walton, John Walvin, Alain Corbin and John Urry. This body of work allows the author to confront the mass dissemination of restorative ideologies associated with sun, wind and sand, municipal performance in relation to investment in state-of-the-art and frighteningly outdated sewage disposal infrastructure and intriguing variants of the Foucauldian tourist 'gaze'. Beginning with a survey of the Georgian era, Hassan's overview moves rapidly, perhaps too rapidly, through the Victorian and Edwardian eras, before embarking on a revealing account of 'fun, crowds and problems' in the inter-war period. This section is augmented by reproductions of seductive inter-war advertising material. A GWR poster singing the praises of Newquay captures fashionable (and erotically inflected) middle-class obsessions with a restrained version of surfing in the 1930s. Publicity from Weston-super-Mare during the same period depicts formation divers plunging, swallow-like, into a classically clean-lined modernist swimming-pool. However, by 1950 a poster from the same location carries an image of a single-child family swooping down towards an eerily empty and well-ordered beach. Spontaneous physicality has given way to the austerity-dominated conventions of the post-war middle-class seaside holiday.

If Hassan moves too quickly through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – readily accessible material on a wider range of resorts would have deepened context and analysis – he provides a pioneering overview of complex scientific, environmental, governmental and municipal debates between 1945 and the near-present. Describing the multifarious activities of Tony Wakefield, founder of the Coastal Anti-Pollution League in the late 1950s, and drawing on a wide range of unexploited pressure-group evidence, Hassan traces a complex narrative which takes the reader from the environmental 'awakening' of the 1970s and 1980s to the 'muscular' activitism of Surfers Against Sewage in 1990s. He juxtaposes progressive radical demands that rigorous standards be compulsorily applied to beaches and bathing water against a conservative governmental line which tended to legitimate cash-strapped resorts' resistance to investing in modern sewage treatment and disposal processes. Finally, Hassan informs the reader that, by the end of the 1990s, 'the great coastal clean up was beginning to achieve tangible results' and that, by 2000, compliance with the Brussels Bathing Water Directive had reached 90 per cent. Thus, unusually for a monograph of this kind, Hassan's excellent book ends on a note of qualified optimism rather than incipient disaster. The author has written a bench-mark work for future studies of the interrelated environmental, medical and cultural histories of modern Britain.

Bill Luckin
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Arturo Almandoz (ed.), *Planning Latin America's Capital Cities, 1850–1950*. London: Routledge, 2002. xii + 282pp. 128 figures. £55.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805302616

This collection's central argument is that although European (especially French) notions were a leading influence on Latin American urban planning between 1850 and 1950, they 'were but one set of ideas amongst a more extensive baggage of urban culture' (p. 270) made up of ideas and customs inherited from the colonial period, plus the political and social goals of the local elite. Almandoz acknowledges Latin America's economic dependence, but denies dependency theory's assertion that economic dependence forced total cultural imitation. Chapters trace the ideas and projects of urban planners in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Santiago (Chile), Mexico City, Lima, Havana, Caracas and San José (Costa Rica). The quality of these chapters varies greatly, particularly in terms of placing planning in a political and economic context, which is necessary to give the findings relevance beyond the intellectual history of planning. Margareth da Silva Pereira's study of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Carol McMichael Reese's study of Mexico City and Lorenzo González Casas' study of Caracas best explain why the capitals were growing, what governments wanted from their capitals and where the money for planning schemes came from. The contributors agree that although the Latin American urban elite took Europe as a model of progress and modernization, they rejected plans that relied too heavily on foreign ideas. For the authors, this rejection is an example of cultural autonomy. However, readers should also remember that few, if any, Latin American republics were strong enough or rich enough to carry out the authoritarian urban renewal and clever government land speculation that they saw in Paris and other European capitals. Did urban renewal schemes in Paris and other European cities respect local needs and ideas any more than their Latin American counterparts?

Latin American planners did interpret European models in the context of the problems they perceived in their own cities, creating subtly different notions of progress and modernity. For example, from the 1870s on, many proposed major new streets were inspired by Baron Haussmann's Paris boulevards. They wanted diagonal routes to shorten cross-town trips and enliven colonial checkerboard street grids. Several of the authors, following the planners they study, therefore classify 'Haussmann' and 'grid' as opposites. Ironically, Haussmann's boulevards had actually made Paris more grid-like rather than less, by opening straight thoroughfares through a maze of narrow, unplanned streets. The period photographs, maps and other illustrations are most helpful where the respective authors tell what point each picture is meant to make; unfortunately, many of the illustrations are not tied into the respective authors' arguments. The occasional mistranslated words and phrases will sometimes puzzle readers who know neither Spanish nor Portuguese, but they do not make the text unreadable. There is little theoretical or technical jargon. Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and Mexico City dominate Latin American urban historiography, probably because they are now among the largest cities in the world. In the nineteenth century they were not so outsized, and it is good to see them compared to other cities like José and Caracas and, indeed, it would also have been valuable

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to sample the non-capital cities that held the majority of nineteenth-century urbanites.

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Michael Schäfer, *Bürgertum in der Krise: Städtische Mittelklassen in Edinburgh und Leipzig*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003. 456pp. 10 tables. Bibliography. €64.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805312612

In 1987 Hans Mommsen put forth the thesis that the European urban middle class (*Bürgertum*) as a social and cultural class formation (*soziokulturelle Assoziations-form*) no longer existed after World War I. In his post-doctoral thesis, Michael Schäfer presented a critical reflection on this thesis. Undeniably the decade following the outbreak of World War I was a period of crisis for the middle classes all over Europe. But did this social group lose its influence and power to such a degree that one would call it a fundamental break and 'the end of the middle-class age' (*bürgerliches Zeitalters*) (p. 397)? To reach a plausible answer to this question requires first a convincing research method. The author found one in a cross-border comparison of the civic societies of Leipzig and Edinburgh. The selection was well-thought-out. Both cities were of similar dimension and social structure, and also possessed a relatively large service sector. Both became railway hubs which speedily developed into industrial centres. In addition, both cities played a central role in the production of books. Furthermore, Leipzig as well as Edinburgh were the homes to important national institutions as well as universities.

Schäfer has succeeded in presenting us with a very detailed and systematic analysis of the political, economic, social and cultural dimensions of the civic middle class of both cities. Differences between the two cities first appear at the political level, in particular, that of the systems of political participation. Leipzig possessed a three-class franchise that allowed only 8 per cent of the population to be engaged in politics. By contrast Edinburgh used a census franchise in which 22 per cent of the inhabitants could vote. Further differences emerge when the author discusses the relationship of middle- and working-class people. Whereas the middle class of Leipzig did not fear any confrontation with the labour movement, the Edinburgh elite could look back to a long tradition of co-operation with trade unions and the new labour party. In spite of these differences the social structure of both of their city councils were dominated by the same groups of professionals, tradesmen and educated middle class. The political debate also concentrated on problems resulting from the process of industrialization. There was a great deal of controversy around the question of whether local government should be engaged in public transport. Further discussions centred upon the systems of philanthropy and social welfare. In both cities the middle-class citizens voted against an expansion of local government. They also preferred a system of poor relief founded on a network of private philanthropic foundations and associations. But above all Schäfer shows the importance of middle-class privileges in the cultural sphere and in higher education for the development of their identity.

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However, these private networks and the political and cultural system of the urban middle classes ran into a deep crisis when World War I broke out. The Leipzig middle class was hit harder by the shock of a radical structural change than their peers in Edinburgh. Pensioners, professionals, local clerks and professors in particular had to suffer under the losses of war and hyperinflation. The wealthy bourgeoisie (*Wirtschaftsbürgertum*) equally experienced a difficult decade. The elimination of all financial savings, together with the reduction of income in many professions, led to a crisis in the middle-class lifestyle (*Bürgerlichkeit*). For the first time many citizens experienced what it meant to become proletarian but there were even more who were afraid of becoming proletarianized. However, this was not the end of the story. There were deep cuts in the system of political and cultural privileges for middle-class groups. As a result of the incorporation of general and free elections, there was a dynamic shake up in the political elite of Leipzig. Social democrats broke through and became members of the local government and the magistracy. The city parliament's social and personal composition totally changed. The private welfare institutions which were the pride of civic self-administration were caught in a crisis and were partly converted to the purposes of the social democrats. Another consequence of fundamental reforms was the loss of privileged access to higher education. It was in this climate that superficial recriminations toward workers, foreigners and social climbers flourished. This opened the door to a form of popular anti-Semitism which gained wide currency in the middle class of Leipzig. But there were also numerous dissenting voices and the general attitude remained, all in all, ambivalent.

In contrast to the Leipzig middle class, in Edinburgh many enterprises were granted sky rocketing profits by the boom after the end of the war. However, there were some branches of the Edinburgh economy that entered a state of crisis and in 1921 and 1922 there was also a dramatic economic downturn. But in general, the crisis was less drastic than that of Leipzig. It is also important to point out that Edinburgh also had its share of recriminations as well as being involved in a sharp 'profiteering-discussion'. The context was not anti-Semitism and the discussions were restricted to the first years after the war. Yet even when the privileges on franchise and access to higher education disappeared, the traditional middle-class lifestyle survived in Edinburgh on a broader scale than in Leipzig and one of its elements was the 'unbroken continuity of Edinburgh middle class philanthropy' (p. 312).

After a careful discussion of many of the various aspects of both cities the author reaches a conclusion that is totally different from Mommsen's statement mentioned above. The middle class as a socio-cultural formation neither vanished in Edinburgh nor in Leipzig and its distinctiveness from other social groups within city society remained solid. But this did not apply to all middle-class groups. Whereas the educated middle class of Leipzig experienced a dramatic loss of its economic preconditions for a middle-class lifestyle, this tendency was less developed in Edinburgh. The processes that occurred in the Scottish city were 'less rapid, less radical and less conflicting than in the German one where they were interpreted and experienced as a deep crisis of municipal self administration' (p. 414). Although the extension of his initial results to a wider and more general model as applied to both the German and British middle class still requires

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further studies Michael Schäfer's *Bürgertum in der Krise* is a revealing, concise and excellently written research study.

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John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. 441pp. Notes. Index. $65.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805322619

John Lear's *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* offers an excellent, and much needed history of the Mexican revolution from an urban perspective. Many books have been written about the revolution, but most concentrate on the countryside, especially the 'peasantry' and, secondarily, the rural working class. The preponderance of scholarship makes sense given the rural base of the largest insurgent armies in that massive upheaval, and the unprecedented agrarian reforms, however problematic, that followed. Lear's work, though, broadens our vision of Mexican society at that time, deepens our understanding of the revolution and paints a vivid picture of both urban planning and everyday life in one of the hemisphere's premier cities. The author concentrates on the major period of tumult, from the eve of the outbreak of armed conflict in 1910 to the consolidation of a post-revolutionary state in the early twenties. The urban working class takes centre stage in this story. The variety of their experiences are explored through an analysis of the process and impact of industrialization that transformed work, spurred internal migration, transformed communities and the use of urban space and altered relations between workers and the state. The book would be a valuable contribution as a history of those processes alone, but Lear also shows how they contributed to the disintegration of the old regime and the creation of a new order in both the city and the nation. One of this book's most important contributions is the use of primary sources to demonstrate that the prominence of labour after the revolution was not a product of an elite-orchestrated top-down effort at cooption but, instead, the result of largely autonomous workers' organizations that preceded, contributed to and survived the revolution. Lear recognizes that many of the most radical goals for social transformation went unrealized due to massive repression, but that fact only supports his contention that the changes that did come for labour were due to the efforts of the popular urban sectors themselves. It is true, of course, that those organizations and much of the urban labour movement were later subsumed within the project of an overarching 'revolutionary' state, but that only confirms his argument that the accommodation of urban working-class goals was reached primarily because of pressure from the bottom up.

This book is a good labour history that considers the evolution from mutualist societies and cultural groups into broader ones like the Casa del Obrero and other formal organizations, but it moves beyond a strictly material analysis to explore working-class communities as places to live, and the ways in which different groups and different parts of the city were shaped by economic processes and how they, in turn, reshaped society. Beginning with a vivid description of how economic

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and social change during the Porfiriato (the regime of President Porfirio Diaz from 1876–1910) led to the geographical separation of the city along class lines that laid the ground work for what can still be seen today, the author shows how city space was transformed and considers the cultural adaptations with regard to work, home, gender relations and larger market interactions. It was a process taking place in the other major cities across Latin America, and so the work has comparative value, but what makes this case particularly compelling is the role the city's denizens played in Mexico's revolution, and the enlightened policies they won from the new state. Lear shows that though foreign, especially Spanish, anarchist individuals and ideas provided a compelling ideological framework, leadership and language that nourished organizations like the Casa del Obrero and pushed beyond traditional mutualism, Mexican workers transformed those inputs to meet their own needs and circumstances. Chapter 5, entitled 'Direct action', offers empirically based and thorough examinations of the city's transportation and textile workers that shows this larger process in action. The author also explains an important paradox in the revolution that contributed to the ultimate defeat of the main 'popular' forces led by Francisco Villa in the north and Emiliano Zapata in the south, both of whom failed to garner the full-fledged support of Mexico City's urban sectors. Lear argues that failure was more than just the result of a cultural gap between rural revolutionaries and urban workers, and demonstrates that it came about for practical reasons. When the Zapatistas and Villistas, both of whom had important rural working-class elements, occupied the city they offered rhetorical support, but did not institute concrete policies that addressed the most pressing needs of urban labour or the poor, nor did they actively attempt to recruit those elements into a larger popular movement. Lear's book is a model for the kind of work that can be done by those interested in the early stages of post-revolutionary Mexico and state formation in general. Rich in detail, well researched and very readable, this book is highly recommended to anyone interested in Mexican history in general, the revolution in particular or in comparative studies of urban planning and the impact of rapid industrialization and working-class formation in third world societies.

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Michèle Dagenais, Irene Maver and Pierre-Yves Saunier (eds.), *Municipal Services and Employees in the Modern City. New Historic Approaches*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. xii + 238pp. Bibliography. £49.50.
doi:10.1017/S0963926805332615

This welcome collection of 10 essays by distinguished international academics fills a yawning gap in the literature on the role of municipal institutions and employees in administering public services during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The individual area studies address common themes concerning the appointment and responsibilities of municipal employees and the creation and diffusion of professional values and identities. Skilfully edited, this collection brings the wealth of published research on municipal history on the European continent (especially the vibrant tradition of Italian research) and the Americas (North and Latin) to an English readership that has much to learn from comparative studies of municipal experiences. The inclusion of an extensive bibliography further strengthens its contribution to municipal research.

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Critics will, with some justification, doubtless warn that too many of the contributors focus on the minutiae of their case studies at the expense of drawing broader thematic conclusions about the municipal experience. There is little attempt to draw links between the two chapters on Italian municipal engineers, which is a shame because both contributors (de Pieri and Ferretti) provide stimulating surveys of the development of professional bureaucracies. Moreover, where broader conclusions are attempted there is an inclination towards oversimplification of international nuances, not least in Greenberg's study of the origins of the American municipal fire department, which includes two pages on the European experience more as an after-thought than any real contribution to comparative analysis. Despite her insistence that the American model of municipalization largely holds true for the European experience, Greenberg overlooks the crucial differences in the relationship between fire protection and the insurance industry in both 'models', whereby fire insurance was a response to municipalization in North America, while in areas of Europe (Britain and the German states) the earliest brigades were organized and funded exclusively by insurance companies.

Aside from the splendid introduction by Dagenais and Saunier, which makes a compelling case for the repositioning of municipal employees from their traditional 'shadowy presence' (p. 9) to a central position in studies of urban development, Dagenais' chapter on municipal management in Montreal during the 1930s is the strongest. Her argument that the increasing rationalization of administrative procedures and the pursuit of aggressive municipal and fiscal policies to combat the ensuing depression helped retain, indeed strengthen, the independent urban variable during the 1930s, offers ammunition for municipal studies beyond the American continent. By focusing broadly on municipal reform, Dagenais certainly realizes her objective of contributing to 'a (re)interpretation of this overlooked period in local government history' (pp. 126–7). Other contributors, notably Christina Mehrtens, also focus on the 1930s as a pivotal decade in the systematization of municipal professional values, including the provision of technical education, the creation of managerial administrative standards and hierarchical grading schemes and, crucially, an overriding loyalty to the profession, rather than the municipality. This is key to all studies in this collection: the professional engineer, fire-fighter, town clerk and accountant have all been repositioned within ongoing debates about the nature of municipal autonomy and the shifting relationship between the elected and appointed officers of municipal government. Administrative history certainly offers considerable scope for understanding municipal and urban development and the editors should be recognized for placing municipal employees within a broader social context.

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Nick Tiratsoo, Junichi Hasegawa, Tony Mason and Takao Matsumura, *Urban Reconstruction in Britain and Japan, 1945–1955: Dreams, Plans and Realities*. Luton: University of Luton Press, 2002. viii + 100pp. 16 plates. 4 tables. £20.00 pbk.
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This volume, based on six case studies, is primarily an argument that reconstruction planning in both Britain and Japan 'largely failed to achieve [its] objectives' (p. 93).

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Plans developed for Coventry, Lansbury (a London neighbourhood), Portsmouth, Tokyo, Osaka and Maebashi (a provincial town north-west of Tokyo) all started from the premise that the pre-war cities were fundamentally flawed. Wartime bombing thus presented an opportunity to facilitate modern traffic by widening and straightening streets and arteries, reduce population densities, create new squares, parks and green belts and modernize housing as well as commercial and cultural buildings. These planning goals were typical of the great flurry of reconstruction planning that took place all over Europe and Japan. Instead, the authors (writing as a collective rather than signing individual chapters) argue that a combination of factors frustrated those plans. The difficulties of the post-war economies deprived both city and central governments of the money needed to acquire privately owned land in order to put up new buildings, create open green spaces or widen streets. Conservative politicians and vested property owners preferred rebuilding along pre-war lines. The citizenry tended either to lose interest in the new plans or focus on individual concerns, like housing, rather than the larger scheme that looked to the future. In both countries, law and tradition gave bureaucrats in the central government, rather than local officials, the authority to make key decisions, and those bureaucrats backed away from innovative and extensive reconstruction planning.

The authors are surely right that the planners' greatest dreams were not realized. There is, however, much more to be said about rebuilding the bombed cities of Britain and Japan. First, the evidence presented here about these six cities is not as negative as the conclusion suggests. Osaka did manage to raise the ground level in the harbour and make some other improvements; here local inititives and persistence did bear fruit. Lansbury might not have been a breakthrough for others to emulate, but the authors admit it was still a modest success. Coventry started with a fairly radical plan, and while it was not fully implemented, the rebuilt city centre is hardly identical with the pre-war city. All this suggests we need more discussion on what was actually accomplished. Second, the range of explanations for both relative disappointments and successes bears expanding. The crucial role of key personalities is slighted, especially for Britain. In some German cities, Hanover, for example, politically savvy and persistent planners were able to overcome great obstacles and accomplish much. The authors tell us almost nothing about Donald Gibson's struggle to implement his Coventry plans. Indeed, the chapters on Britain's planners are largely and somewhat strangely impersonal. Where is the influence of the great planners like Patrick Abercrombie? Why were planners in Tokyo less successful than those in Osaka (or Hiroshima) in winning over bureaucrats in the central government? How effective, or ineffective, were planning laws? Why didn't the main Japanese planning tool, land readjustment, work better? The authors complain of the lack of democratic planning in both countries. This is perhaps easy to accept for Japan, emerging from an autocracy under erratic tutelage of American occupation forces, but Britain was a democracy of long standing. Nonetheless, this is a useful addition to the body of literature on post-war rebuilding and on town planning. The attempt to compare the two disparate cultures is admirable. One should note that this book is longer than it appears; it is printed on large paper with double columns.

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