

MARK GIROUARD. — *Life in the English Country House*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978. Pp. v, 344.

Life in the English Country House is designed to explore how country houses “operated or what was expected of them when they were first built,” to discover “how families used the houses which architects and craftsmen built for them” (p. v). Mark Girouard argues that these houses were “the power houses of a ruling class ... [whose] power was based on the ownership of land.... Land provided the fuel, a country house was the engine which made it effective” (pp. 2-3). To which he adds: “country houses were designed for pleasure as well as power” (p. 5). Within this broad continuity of functions, however, the “qualities at a premium varied over the centuries, and so did the people who needed to be entertained, and the kind of entertainment which they expected” (p. 3). For this reason the book is chiefly concerned with change — in the architectural styles of the houses and in the social demands of their denizens, of which the changing styles were in part a reflection. The book further attempts to relate these changes to the broad patterns of social development in society as a whole. Eleven chapters, progressing from “The Mediaeval Household” to “The Indian Summer: 1900-1940,” and including two “Interludes” (one on “Virtuosos and Dilletanti” and one on “Early Country House Technology”), constitute the formal structure of the study.

This work delights the reader with its detailed descriptions of how country house design responded to the changing social priorities of the owners of the houses. It wears its learning lightly, whether the source is Shakespeare or Pückler-Muskau, whether the subject is plumbing or the “ceremony of the void” (the formalities devised to occupy the time during which the trestles were being cleared away after the meal), whether the question is how the new circuit of rooms in the eighteenth century facilitated novel social relationships or how the bachelors’ quarters in the nineteenth century inhibited old ones. The book impresses in a manner similar to that of the seventeenth century closets it describes, furnished with choice objects skilfully arranged.

The attempts to relate specific changes in country house function and design to general patterns of change in society at large are less uniformly successful. Although it is not difficult to accept the author’s view that developments such as the replacement of the “extended” by the “nuclear” family (terms mercifully absent from the text), the growth of the central government’s capacity to enforce its peace throughout the realm, the rise of a “class” society, and revolutions in agriculture and industry all played their parts in the evolution of country house design, difficulties emerge as soon as one attempts to determine what those parts were. One problem is the prevailing uncertainty among historians over the dating of some of these general social developments. Girouard accepts, albeit in a qualified form, the Tudors’ boast that they brought peace to a land long plagued by turbulence. He credits this accomplishment with contributing to a situation in which the “qualities of the courtier and the lawyer became more fashionable than the qualities of the soldier” (p. 186), thereby helping to create a set of revised cultural values that in turn influenced the design and use of country houses. Yet there are reasons to question both the Tudor claim and the deductions drawn from it. Certainly men protested in the thirteenth century against precisely the transformation of social values that is here assigned to the sixteenth century. And arguably political stability, and the peace that could not obtain without it, actually became characteristic of English society first in the eighteenth century, and not in the sixteenth. Shifting chronological sands indeed on which to lay the foundations of a social explanation of the great Elizabethan prodigy houses. In like manner Girouard finds the agricultural revolution of the eighteenth century helping to “boost the prestige of country pursuits” (p. 217), thereby attaching men more firmly to the

country side and contributing to the "golden age of the country house" (p. 218). Perhaps. But this is to ignore serious recent claims that the agricultural revolution happened late in the sixteenth century, and not in the eighteenth. In instances like these the author tends to overlook the fact that the chronology of some English social developments is much less firmly established than the chronology of her architectural evolution. Certainly no one would expect a writer versed primarily in architectural history to arbitrate these vexed questions, but, when he treats as settled arguments that remain unresolved, he undermines the explanations that depend on such assumptions. The book's weakness, at least for the social historian, lies in the too great assurance with which it dates the social processes to which it relates architectural developments.

The chief value of the book is the success of its pioneering attempt to provide a survey description of how changing social uses influenced the design of the English country house. Its urbanity (may one use the word?) and wit contribute in no small measure to the pleasure and profit of reading it.

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RICHARD VAN DÜLMEN. — *Reformation als Revolution*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1977. Pp. 387.

The author is in his element when he combines the history of ideas with an analysis of the social and economic realities of early modern Germany. He has already tackled the later eighteenth century *Illuminati*, the earlier seventeenth century protestant visionary, J.V. Andreae, and has produced the best collection of readings on the Anabaptist political experiment in Münster, 1534-5. The book under review here is subtitled "Social movement and religious radicalism in the German Reformation," and it is best read together with the author's Anabaptist documents. Dr. Dülmen's intention is to steer a line between Marxist evolutionary anachronism and traditionally narrow interpretations based on Reformation theology. In order to achieve this he relies on sociological language borrowed from mentors like Max Weber, producing a dynamic systems analysis modelled upon *systemimmanente* factors and upon what he sees as an ultimate sixteenth century drive towards *Konfliktlösung* (i.e. resolution of conflict by the traditional ruling authorities).

The book deals with the crucial issue of how to subordinate the Reformation to a wider understanding of the social dynamics that made the Reformation. As such it is a pioneering study in German social history and especially useful for seminar discussion. The three parts of the book deal firstly with evaluations of the place of Luther in the practical politics and public opinion of his own time, and secondly with the role of Thomas Müntzer. The third section is a long account of the immediate stages in the rise of the Anabaptist Kingdom in Münster. Here we have the high point of what Dr. Dülmen regards as the truly revolutionary moment in the German Reformation. What is particularly welcome is that Dr. Dülmen seems to be establishing a framework of questions for further detailed research, a grid based upon the cosmology and codes for morality and actions of the people who lived at the time, which is unsubjected to notions of transition, evolution and break with the past. He pays the historian's full and careful attention to archives and facts, and yet he also manages by means of sociological theory to tie together events with synchronic and diachronic analysis. The result is an enormous leap