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Borsay, Peter. *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. Pp. xxii, 416. Appendices, bibliography, index, illustrations. \$103.50

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complemented by regular explanations of their meticulous research methodology.

Nonetheless, Ladd and Yinger do a fine job documenting trends and factors affecting fiscal health in American cities between 1972 and 1982. They do not, however, delve into motivations for the observations they make. This is where the authors fall short, for the reader is left with an incomplete sense as to why state and local policy developed as it did.

Motivations for economic policies are not beyond the scope of Thomas Beito's study of tax resistance during the depression of the 1930s. Though the focus of this work is on both positive and negative responses to local taxation, Beito also examines the process of policy making and the structure of taxes levied in the 1930s. Although his efforts focus primarily on Chicago, he does make efforts to demonstrate the typicality of the activities of the Windy City to other cities of the time.

Generally, Beito finds that when tax resistance became institutionalized, in the form of taxpayers leagues for example, many of its goals were achieved. During the middle of the decade tax resistance gave way to tax promotion. Beginning in 1933, urban power brokers, politicians, and institutionalized reform movements spearheaded media campaigns to encourage the payment of taxes "to save the city." In the case of tax generation as well as in the case of tax resistance, organization brings results, according to Beito.

In an interesting introduction and conclusion, Beito attempts to place the popular movements of the thirties in a larger historical context. He reminds his audience that popular responses to taxation have played a central role throughout history. As one example, Beito points to the colonial and early national efforts in this regard. This is an interesting parallel and one that might have yielded yet more profit had it been more fully developed.

Instead, *Taxpayers in Revolt* remains closely focused upon the incidents and activities of Chicago's citizenry during the 1930s. Beito defends this emphasis by arguing that while Chicago's popular tax resistance was typical of what happened in other cities, the public reaction to taxes in the Windy City was extraordinarily widespread. Naturally, more extensive study of the municipal taxpayers activities is needed both regionally and historically to confirm the typicality of this work. This is not to indicate that *Taxpayers in Revolt* delivers less than it promises; it is a thoroughly researched analysis of a heretofore understudied aspect of a much studied period, and is a valuable addition to the historical literature.

Together, Beito, Ladd and Yinger add much to our understanding of taxation policy and public response. Though these two books have little in common in terms of method, subject, or content, they both provide insights into urban fiscal processes that may be useful to the lobbyist, decision maker and scholar of the urban experience.

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Borsay, Peter. *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. Pp. xxii, 416. Appendices, bibliography, index, illustrations. \$103.50.

Peter Borsay's book *The English Urban Renaissance* is a significant work in several ways. First, it integrates the study of architecture and social history in a satisfying and comprehensive manner; and second, it sheds light on a huge area of eighteenth-century history we know little about — the nature and culture of provincial towns. That is not to say, of course, that there has been no monograph work on this topic, but until

Borsay's account there has been no *general* framework of explanation that has attempted to consider common changes that occurred in many urban places throughout Great Britain. Finally, Borsay's work provides provocative suggestions and will aid further research into the perplexing and understudied field of the history of manners, and the relationship between that history and larger social and economic changes.

Borsay's work is structurally, one might almost say architecturally, satisfying. Each of the book's four sections (an historical introduction which considers changes in town life from the early Stuart period, a discussion on the landscape of provincial cities, a consideration of changing leisure activities and a general investigation of the changes in England's social structure) is divided into subsections that are both logical and useful in following the analysis. In the section on landscape, for example, Borsay discusses changes in the individual house, in the larger structure of the street and square, and in the growth of town planning and a concomitant commitment to the erection of public buildings. While this section is the book's least general, with its concentration on architectural design and detail, it is the necessary backdrop for a subsequent discussion (in the final section) of the manner in which building styles served to create a cultural unity among England's "better sort" while simultaneously creating a distance between polite and popular culture.

Borsay's analysis is both synthetic and original. While using earlier works on individual towns in an interesting and comprehensive manner, Borsay's own scholarship is most evident in his treatment of what has previously only been considered to be a frivolous topic told largely in an anecdotal manner; namely, the importance of sport, and especially of horse racing, to the life and vitality of the eighteenth century city. Similarly, his analysis of the new culture of gentility, its accoutrements and accomplishments, rests both on his own research, and on that of many early scholars.

Perhaps most stunning about this discussion of culture is its range; within his model, Borsay can discuss both the growth of theatre and the fears that that growth had gone too far, both the importance of games as areas of competition for status and the notion that many of those games (such as cock fighting or gambling) were antithetical to true urban civility, both the harmonizing effects of newspapers, clubs, etc. and their tendency to promote factionalization.

This, of course, is not a perfect book. Such things are unlikely, if not impossible. A perfect book would perhaps have discussed the interaction between the metropolis and these provincial towns; Borsay acknowledges, but does not develop, the importance of London as a centre both for fashion and for "urbanity." A perfect book would also have distinguished between urban styles, if such existed, within England. Was there a "northern" style or a "resort" style? What was the role of gender in this new culture of consumption and what changes, if any, occurred in this sphere over the century covered by this book? Though not unimportant questions, perhaps posing them is carping. Borsay's book is a splendid example of what clear and imaginative thinking and scholarship can accomplish. He is to be congratulated for what he has done.

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Snyder, Robert W. *The Voice of the City, Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. \$19.95.

Like most successful things, vaudeville was based on a simple idea: a variety stage show which gave something for everyone. Vaudeville — literally, the voice of the city — was much more than a theatrical phenomenon, for, as Robert Snyder points out in *The Voice of the City, Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York*, it was also an

agent of assimilation, a bridge between cultures in the new world and a venue for the mixing of the classes. It transformed the performers and their audiences by exposing them to the music and humour of many cultures; through vaudeville the common elements of the immigrant experience were affirmed and the underpinnings of a new North American culture were laid down. Without vaudeville, one wonders, would North American entertainment and popular culture have evolved as it did?

Snyder's book provides a well written and carefully documented history of vaudeville. He traces the evolution of this entertainment genre from its antecedents in the rowdy concert saloons frequented mostly by working and middle class males — places described by one report in the 1860s as "the most abominable nuisance and vilest disgrace of the metropolis [of New York]" — to the more decorous and respectable variety theatres "made tasteful for middle class women and men and their families by removing the smoky, boozy, licentious male atmosphere."

This metamorphosis was engineered by showmen who managed to produce an entertainment refined enough to attract the middle class Victorian family, yet one which still maintained an element of raciness in order to attract the patrons of the old concert saloons. Among them, Tony Pastor played a leading role in forming and guiding the new form of theatre. He and other theatrical entrepreneurs showed an astute appreciation of social psychology, audience demands, marketing strategy and the crucial nature of theatre location.

Of course, although entertainment, vaudeville was also big business. Snyder chronicles the formation of the "Vaudeville Trust" which grew out of a syndicate of theatre owners and booking agents, and which came to exercise a virtual monopoly control, regulating performers' salaries, taking a five per cent commission on each booking and

blacklisting entertainers who booked acts at theatres owned by independent entrepreneurs who remained outside the booking syndicate.

Not surprisingly, managerial control generated opposition from the ranks of the players who formed a union *cum* fraternal order, one clearly influenced by British union actions. The "White Rats" traced their lineage to the Grand Order of Water Rats, a society of British music hall artists. The confrontation between artists and managers followed the usual path of early union fights for recognition: employment of strikebreakers, establishment of company unions, police protection for theatres, firing of all non-company-union members and blacklisting of union activists, and eventual victory by the forces of monopoly capital.

Vaudeville was, as Snyder contends, a social barometer. Its history reflected social change, of which it was itself both a part and a catalyst. This book is therefore more than a narrative history of a theatrical phenomenon. It is also a social history, and a most enlightening one too. Nevertheless, it has a couple of minor but irritating shortcomings. A persistent question running through the book was the difference between "vaudeville" and "music hall." Were they synonymous American and British terms or were there significant differences? To those familiar with the topic the answer may be obvious but the casual reader will not readily be enlightened. The author also assumes an easy familiarity with New York and its neighbourhoods. The inclusion of a map showing theatre locations, neighbourhood boundaries, and the placement of streetcar lines, subway routes and stations would make much of the argument more easily comprehensible to the non-local reader; so too would a map illustrating the various "booking routes" among theatres within and beyond the New York area.

Like the concert saloons they replaced, vaudeville theatres fell victim to changing times. The advent of motion pictures led