power and recognition. Curiously, once the architectural and urban sites for the storage and display of the relic were definitively completed, the desire to display lessened. The tightly bound relationship between relic and dynasty was dealt a severe blow during the Napoleonic occupation between 1798 and 1814. In the nineteenth century, the Shroud receded as its space was occupied and transformed into a Savoy pantheon. Left behind when the dukes of Savoy became kings of the united Italy and moved first to Florence and then to Rome, the Shroud of Savoy became the Shroud of Turin, and was slowly integrated within a modern and nonmonarchic context. The loss of the relic’s dynastic association was then matched by irreparable damage to the building that identified it. Nonetheless, the “common political identity” that the Shroud performed for the inhabitants of the duchy from the sixteenth century survived to reinforce the identity of Turin as a modern tourist and religious destination.

Successive chapters bring the story up to the present, showing the transformation of the chapel from reliquary to dynastic pantheon and describing its recent incineration. The introduction of large funeral monuments of white marble altered the chapel from a “courtly devotional space” into a “patriotic tourist site” (290), while the drastic reduction of the processional component of nineteenth-century ceremonial ostensions, so important in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, signaled the relic’s diminished political importance. The historiography of ostensions began in 1931, when the Shroud was accompanied by an exhibition on its historical displays, followed in 1973 by the first televised ostension, and in 1998 by a large-scale public display. The view into the fire-damaged space is now masked by a trompe-l’œil painting by the scene designer of La Scala, which ironically captures the original visual effect and resembles the forty-hour ostensions that inspired Guarini in the first place (326–28). Echoing in his writing Guarini’s suggestion for an architectural design that pleases the senses, John Belden Scott has offered a thoroughly fitting memorial to the ravaged building.

MARTHA POLLAK
University of Illinois in Chicago

England

Clare Graham

Ordering Law: The Architectural and Social History of the English Law Court to 1914


English law courts have been an integral part of popular literature over the past century with scenes ranging from dramatic revelations in Dorothy Sayers’s Peter Wimsey novels to more subtle confrontations between the waggish barrister Horace Rumpole and a host of lugubrious judges in London’s Old Bailey. A familiar venue for suspense and wordplay in novels and films, English courtrooms nonetheless have had few chroniclers to describe their evolution or explain particular forms such as the prisoner’s dock and magistrate’s platform. Court procedure, language, costume, and fittings suggest the timeless quality of a conservative legal culture steeped in tradition. The gowns worn by the judges and the barristers conform to dress codes established in the seventeenth century. Yet, as Clare Graham asserts in Ordering Law: The Architectural and Social History of the English Law Court to 1914, the apparent fossilization of the law court is deceptive. Like so many other institutions, the English legal system has clothed itself in outmoded rituals even as it has abolished ancient forms such as grand juries and assizes. Court buildings too, have changed dramatically in the four hundred years since they first appeared as a distinctive building type. Graham’s account of this transformation is cast as a cultural history of the English legal system, concentrating on how shifting perceptions of the law and its role in society affected court design.

This study divides the architectural development of English law courts into four distinct periods. The first appears at the time when legal redress ceased being delivered by the peripatetic retinue of the king and began to be conducted by professional judges in fixed locations in London and major royal strongholds. In the late medieval and early modern period, the English law court generally functioned smoothly in a variety of surroundings. Court business was a seasonal activity that required little in the way of specialized fittings and was conducted in castles, guild halls, or other administrative centers long associated with royal or provincial authority. Even in the late seventeenth century, the high courts in Westminster Hall in London sat in makeshift fittings little better than temporary fair booths. By the late sixteenth century, Graham sees these ad hoc arrangements giving way to more permanent structures with specialized fixtures to accommodate the increasingly bureaucratic procedures that came to guide the conduct of civil and criminal trials. As royal castles lost their prestige and were allowed to decay following the civil war, borough governments built costly shire or county halls to attract the lucrative business associated with the assizes—the regional courts composed of judges from Westminster Hall who traveled a circuit of counties to administer the king’s justice.

Investing in civic structures promised handsome dividends in an age when the business of the law courts became integrally bound up with the social pursuits of a rising genteel society. Graham’s second period of development—the century following the Restoration—is better-known than her first, since the classical buildings erected in most major county towns have been explored by Peter Borsay and Mark Girouard in recent studies of the social landscape of Georgian cities.¹

¹ The assize courts not only provided
the main channel through which the central government's authority flowed out to the provinces, but they also allowed local grandees the opportunity to sit with the circuit justices in the administration of local affairs. The construction of pretentious buildings such as the Derby County Hall, the Abingdon Town Hall, and the Northampton Sessions House in the late seventeenth century not only conveyed the majesty of the law and reflected favorably on local justices of the peace, but also provided a splendid venue for myriad social events such as assemblies, balls, and concerts, which accompanied the busy social calendar that coincided with the meeting of the assizes. Imposing stone buildings richly endowed with legal and regal iconography stood proudly in the center of many provincial towns. Large and elaborately finished assembly rooms became essential parts of new designs. In some cases, courthouses occupied only modest space in buildings that served as pleasure palaces for polite society, as is evident in John Carr's design for the 1770s for the Newark Town Hall, where the assembly room wing nearly doubled the size of the building.

Graham locates the origins of the modern law court in the period between 1790 and 1840, when nearly all the existing court buildings had to be rebuilt or substantially modified to meet increasing need for efficiency as England's population more than doubled and new industrial cities arose. Courts continued to be built in structures that also served as town halls, assembly rooms, and market houses, but demand grew for specialized and segregated accommodations. Architecturally, circulation patterns within buildings became more complex and special care was taken to separate the public, public officials, and prisoners into discrete spaces, out of a sense of social and moral propriety and accommodation of professional sensibilities.

Within the courtroom, officials sought to add a novel level of decorum. Magistrates no longer tolerated indiscriminate seating of the public and court participants but carefully devised plans that segregated them into different sections of the courtroom. The rising status of members of the bar was reflected in the new designs. In some of the new courts, lawyers had their own corridors, robing rooms, dining rooms, and entrances into the courtroom. Prisoners were completely isolated from public contact, being forced to enter buildings by separate entrances, kept in holding cells below the courtroom, and only brought into public scrutiny when they ascended small winding stairs into a central dock that was often railed in or secured by spikes. It was public spectacle, as before, but more carefully choreographed. Needless to say, architects were harder pressed to lay out such a warren of passages and special rooms efficiently. Many failed, leading law courts to balloon in size.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the impact of industrial development and urbanization forced a reformation of the legal system with new courts devised to handle the growing caseload of petty crimes and civil disputes. Unlike earlier seasonal courts, these new courts functioned full-time. Graham focuses on the rise of police courts, county courts, and coroners' courts to show how Victorians responded to the professionalization of the legal system and struggled to find the appropriate architectural character for these more specialized buildings. Some advocates favored a rich ornamental vocabulary derived from historical precedent and symbolism. At the upper end of the legal system, assize courts in places such as Birmingham took on a baronial appearance as pseudo-medieval iconography and detailing suggested the hallowed origins of the legal system in a misty past of Anglo-Saxon moors and the sacred field of Runnymede. With far more modest budgets, local courts of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods were often indistinguishable from other small-scale institutions and businesses and their interiors often had the feel of a suburban parlor or schoolroom. The London County Council went so far as to eschew the use of heraldry in its courts, which was seen as costly and undesirable civic pomp.

Graham is remarkably successful in teasing out these themes from voluminous and varied documentary evidence, drawings in municipal and county archives, and images of courtrooms and public buildings. In linking architectural developments to changes in attitudes toward the law and the mechanics of the legal system, she describes a process that would be unintelligible if addressed as a traditional narrative tracing architectural pedigrees and stylistic changes. As a history of a building type whose meaning and function has shifted dramatically over four centuries, her study features a small number of well-documented buildings, used as case studies to describe the way in which they were designed and used. She has also produced a gazetteer of 850 English court buildings erected before 1914 that will be a valuable source for future researchers.

The outgrowth of a dissertation, this study has all the merits of an investigation that has ranged widely and deeply in a number of sources. The text is slightly marred by too many reminders of previous themes and chapter roadmaps, which impede the flow of the narrative. Graham has not been well-served by the production of the book, as there are a number of mislabeled images and a disparity of five to ten pages between a number of text references to images and the illustrations themselves. Many plans, especially those of large Victorian court buildings, are too small to allow the reader to distinguish many of the courtroom details described in the text. Even so, those who study English public buildings will benefit from this monumental undertaking.

CARL LOUNSBURY
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Note