In the second chapter, “Magnificent Architecture,” Lindow continues the discussion of magnificence in relation to Cosimo de’ Medici, the motivations for building the Palazzo Medici, and its reception. This is well-trodden territory, and while the wealth of evidence surrounding Cosimo and his palace serves Lindow’s purposes, one wishes he had turned his attention to a less-known building.

The third chapter, “Going beyond the Palace façade,” aims to unite considerations of the interior and exterior features of the Renaissance palace. While the author correctly observes that this unity is rarely achieved, the evidence he compiles does not fully make the case. He does, however, provide a useful discussion of hospitality and of the varied spaces intended for guests of differing statuses.

The most original chapter is the last, “The Splendid Interior,” which goes into detail about the types and functions of rooms in a palace, as well as their furnishings. Here Lindow draws both on the Pupilli archives and on the practical advice contained in Alberti’s treatise. Lindow provides much detail about the objects that ornamented these rooms, including tantalizing mention of the taste for foreign and especially Islamic objects, brought from Damascus and southern Spain, and for locally produced objects that imitated the foreign ones (“alla domaschina,” 153–57).

While Lindow successfully evokes the sensuous and lavish objects found in a Renaissance home, these adjectives cannot be used to describe the book itself. The grainy black-and-white photographs and few color plates do not do justice to the subject. The visual qualities of the book could have been enhanced had Lindow made further use of paintings as sources of information about interiors, expanding on the work of Peter Thornton.

Despite these reservations, Lindow’s book makes substantial contributions to the literature on the humanist context and background of Florentine palaces, as well as to the understanding of the furnishings and function of Renaissance interiors. While the author draws on the rich documentation available for Florence, it is to be hoped that his book will encourage other scholars to expand the investigation in other cities.

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Notes
1. Other recent contributions to this field, along with Lindow’s book, are reviewed by Fabrizio Nevola in a forthcoming volume of Journal of Design History.

William D. Moore
Masonic Temples: Freemasonry, Ritual Architecture, and Masculine Archetypes
Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006, 272 pp., 59 b/w illus. $34.95 (cloth), ISBN 9781572334967

Masonic Temples is a groundbreaking interdisciplinary study in both architectural history and gender studies, illuminating both fields and the intersections between them. William Moore’s focus, evidence, and ethnographic approach to the architecture of Freemasonry departs significantly from earlier art historical work on the subject.1 His primary goal is “to untangle the webs of significance that the builders and inhabitants designed into these edifices” (xiv). He goes beyond the study of symbols to investigate buildings as vehicles for the making of meaning and masculine identity. The result is a significant contribution to the rich genre of urban building-type studies that have shaped study of the North American built environment in recent years, including libraries, summer camps, asylums, YMCAs, and hospitals.

The book, based on a deeply researched case study of Masonic temples in New York State, begins in the 1870s and extends through the 1930s. This was the golden age of fraternity in the United States, a time when the Masons and other secret societies enjoyed consistently high membership and had the resources to build vigorously. Fraternal life during those years was, in large part, a response to shifts in male identity that attended the rise of corporate culture. Men, particularly white men, confronted increased hierarchy in the workplace, decreased occupational mobility, and challenges to their authority and identity as women increasingly entered the public sphere, especially after the turn of the century. Moore suggests that many men were forced “to come to terms with existential ideas concerning the structure of reality and the nature of authority” (2). Freemasonry’s carefully scripted membership rituals and fancifully decorated lodge rooms provided a safe and enjoyable arena for men to “enter another cognitive reality” and productively redefine their identities.

The book is organized in two parts: an extensive investigation of interior ritual spaces and a brief consideration of the design and typological development of the temple building’s exterior. Proceeding from a clear and useful introduction to the legends and practices of American Masonry, four chapters detail the space and the ritual of the “degrees” of the society, including the Blue Lodge and the concordant bodies of the Knights Templar, the Scottish Rite, and the Shriners. Moore examines and nicely illustrates how men used costume, furniture, ritual, and architectural design to help them shape several timeless articulations of masculine identity: the artisan, the warrior, the wise man, and the jester. Through the development of varied degrees of Masonry, men could try on a variety of identities and negotiate the changes they faced in the real world.

In his discussion of each group Moore makes a connection between the design and use of the lodge rooms and larger social forces that shaped gender during the period. The chapter on the Knights Templar, for instance, links the development of this military order, with its drill halls and elaborate costumes, to the martial climate that arose during the Civil War and late nineteenth century. By the turn of the twentieth century, many Knights embraced a new concept of masculinity, embodied in the orientalist identity of the Shriner. The exotic, luxurious, and sensual mosque environments they created strongly contrast with the upright and moral conception of manhood that guided the designs of Knights and Blue.
Lodges. Moore explains that the designs of the Shriners can be explained as a rejection of Victorian ideals of manhood in favor of a new emphasis on leisure and consumption. By dressing in fez caps and robes and ritually journeying from the streets of Brooklyn to the Middle East, modern men could liberate themselves from the religious strictures of the past and justify a masculinity based on pleasure and self-satisfaction.

The linkage between the interior worlds of the Knights Templar and the Shriners and the larger social context of masculinity securely grounds this study of a “timeless” organization within a historical framework. Moore’s treatment of the architectural exteriors is, unfortunately, less detailed and nuanced. The final chapter, “An Order of Builders,” only briefly considers the purpose and meaning of the style, siting, and financing of Masonic architecture. Focusing on description of a few key examples from Sag Harbor to Oswego, Moore traces the physical development of the Masonic temple during a time when the typical antebellum practice of leasing space on the upper level of a commercial block gave way to emphasis on the construction and ownership of a dedicated space. Depending on local economic conditions, lodges built temples with rentable space to provide income, purchased and altered buildings to suit their needs, or, ideally, activated their metaphorical identity as masons by purpose-building their own temples in a variety of styles: Gothic, Classical, Egyptian, Colonial Revival, and other eclectic modes of the period.

Quoting both architectural and Masonic sources, Moore explains that styles were chosen for their ability to draw members out of their quotidian existence. While this explanation makes sense, it is important to consider the public role as well as the private meaning of this new building type. As Moore points out, the Masons understood their buildings as symbols of the group’s public spirit and municipal pride (124). Although he lightly touches upon public symbolism in this chapter and elsewhere in the book, additional analysis is needed to support this interpretation of the buildings.

How did a choice of style convey the identity and function of the Masons within the larger world? Where exactly were these buildings located within the cities they served? What was the meaning of those sites? How were they scaled in relationship to other buildings around them? How do they compare to other institutional building types developed in American cities and towns at the same time: the YMCA, the public library, and the opera house? To answer these questions the author needs to balance his thorough analysis of the buildings’ interiors with a more detailed and contextualized treatment of their exteriors.

The implications of Moore’s work extend beyond the study of an interior masculine space to a rethinking of the moral geography of gender in the late nineteenth century. Like the YMCA, Masonic organizations challenged the Victorian concept of separate spheres by offering a male space for the construction of character, upright manhood, and a better society. Between the Civil War and the Great Depression, Masons—symbolic builders—were involved in the actual construction of a moral and productive male sphere outside the home, the office, and, even more importantly, outside the church. In a brief but fascinating discussion of the role of women in Masonic fundraising fairs for building construction, Moore further challenges widely accepted ideas about gender and space, noting the active participation and even partnership of women in the construction of these moral male institutions in the public realm. Masonic Temples also complicates our understanding of American religious architecture. Along with Jeanne Halgren Kilde’s recent book on evangelical church design, Moore’s book offers insight into the important connections between ritual and leisure, suggesting new directions for the study of theatrical buildings, armories, and clubs.2

Examining a building type that can be found in nearly every community across the United States, Masonic Temples is an invaluable contribution to the field; one hopes that it will be a catalyst for further study. Moore offers one of the first serious explorations of the dynamic, evolving relationship between architecture and masculine identity. He convincingly shows that Masons built lodge rooms and devised ritual to shape male identity, but additional work needs to be done to complicate the issues of class and geography in the story of this national phenomenon. Although he is careful to note the largely white, middle-class identity of Masons in the introduction, he loses sight of this elsewhere in the book. It would, in fact, be more precise to attach the qualifier “Middle-Class” to the subtitle’s “Masculine Archetypes.”

It would probably also be more accurate to frame this book as a regional, rather than a national study. In his introduction Moore asserts that New York is “a microcosm of the national experience” because of its size and economic diversity, with the nation’s largest city, agricultural and manufacturing communities, and long established towns; thus New York can stand in for the nation. It is true that nationalizing forces in the Masonic movement, including manufacturing of furniture, publications, and conventions, helped to construct an increasingly unified Masonic culture in the years between the Civil War and the Depression. Such an explanation, however, glosses over the still-existing intricacies of national, regional, and local culture, especially as they pertain to gender roles and race. As recent scholarship suggests, masculinity meant different things to the laborer and the white-collar worker, and masculine ideals varied in the South, the West, the Midwest, and the East.3 These differences may well have affected the design of the buildings; they certainly would have colored their meaning, both to Masons and the community at large.

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Notes
3. Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States,
Sixteenth-century Ottoman ceramics are adorned with cypresses and roses, carnations, tulips, and hyacinths, to name just a few of the flowers that appear on these celebrated vessels. They are resplendent in color and suggest gentle scented breezes cooling long afternoons for patrons enjoying musical entertainments, literary discussions, and convivial meals. The margins of Mughal Indian manuscript and album pages from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are filled with meticulously drawn and colored flowers, and Safavi Iranian textiles from the same period present a profusion of gardens and blossoms. The Dubai palms are abstracted from this historic visual culture and are used to imply a unique past. Even if the wealthy and powerful in the Islamic world are no longer designers of gardens like the Ottoman sultans or the Mughal emperors, the garden is still a redolent image.

Over many years the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library in Washington has maintained a vibrant research program in garden history, and Middle East Garden Traditions: Unity and Diversity is the latest in a series of publications based on scholarly conferences. Edited by Michel Conan and published a year ago, this volume consists of sixteen essays, ranging over major issues in garden history and dispelling the simplistic division of Islamic gardens into two types—gardens based on the four rivers of paradise described in the Qur’an and gardens based on the mythical and hubristic wealth of the Arab royal garden of Iran. Previous scholars have focused attention on garden design, meaning, and history, but several essays here are directed at other concerns: the Islamic garden was a source of perfume and medicines, in particular of roses and balsam, while careful attention was paid to soils and pesticides. Contemporary agricultural and botanical treatises from Al-Andalus establish that patrons and garden designers did not strictly differentiate between decorative plants in formal gardens and produce grown in orchards.

In the constant or intermittent semiaridity of much of the Middle East, Iran, Central Asia, and India, gardens were only possible in association with skillful water management. With its intact remains, the gardens of the Alhambra provide a valuable and complex history that has been the subject of numerous studies. Much less well known are the gardens of contemporary rulers in the Maghrib from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries, who maintained elaborate reservoirs, aqueducts, and qanats (underground water canals) to maintain and nourish gardens. Gardens were also statements of power and prestige for rulers, as an essay by Mahvash Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens,” demonstrates. Alemi first examines the gardens of the Safavi capital Qazvin in the second half of the sixteenth century, and makes valuable use of rough plans by the seventeenth-century German scientist Engelbert Kaempfer, as well as a long poem by the Iranian court poet Navidi that defines three key garden elements: the plaza (maydan), the avenue (khiyaban), and the garden (bagh). The maydan was the center of political, social, and economic life in Qazvin, while the khiyaban was the focus of aristocratic social life. The public gardens were centers of rituals and celebrations. Alemi rejects the idea that the chahar bagh (four-part garden) was the only kind of garden design and argues that the Safavi garden could take many forms, just as it served many different purposes. Jean-Do Brignoli, who examines the vast royal gardens of Farahabad adjacent to Isfahan, also doubts the significant presence of the chahar bagh in Safavi Iran: axial orientation was the dominant mode, but it did not necessarily lead to a four-part organization. Gardens and palaces were deeply interrelated, and the garden dominated the architectural space. They were garden palaces rather than palaces adorned with gardens.

It was in Mughal India that the chahar bagh came into full form, closely associated with the dynasty and frequently rendered as a geometric landscape centered on a tomb. We find it brilliantly expressed in the tomb of Humayun, begun in 1562. The dynasty cherished the Bahurunna, the memoirs of the first Mughal king, Humayun’s father Babur, and even its harshest reader notices that the emperor finds little good to say about India or about its pre-Mughal gardens. In her essay Ebba Koch presents Mughal gardens pre-