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Review of Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr The Drama of Landscape: Land, Property, and Social Relations on the Early Modern Stage (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)

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Garrett A. Sullivan
The Drama of Landscape: Land, Property, and Social Relations on the Early Modern Stage
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. 292p.
£25.00 hardback
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Thatcherism emphasised the individual and the philosophy that there is no such thing as community, and Garrett A. Sullivan argues that in the early modern period there was a similar shift away from community concerning land ownership. The institutionalization of 'landscape', associated with English landscape painting and country-house poetry, marks the triumph of the private ownership of land. Prior to this there was a tension between what Sullivan terms the landscape of absolute property, and that of stewardship and custom. In the drama surveyed by Sullivan--Shakespeare's King Lear, Cymbeline, and Richard 2, Brome's A Jovial Crew, Heywood's 1 Edward 4, and the anonymous Arden of Faversham and Woodstock--ideas about absolute ownership of land are denounced in favour of the principle of stewardship. The book considers "the opinions of moralists and traditionalists" (p. 13) which explore the benefits of a paternalistic, land-based moral economy, and Sullivan admits giving little attention to texts advocating absolute property. Also considered are non-literary texts such as maps and surveys and accounts of traditional ceremonies. Aimed at a postgraduate and scholarly readership but of interest to any serious advanced undergraduate student, the inclusive nature of Sullivan's survey is one of its strengths and the study of neglected texts and documents alongside the more mainstream provides a comprehensive overview of debates surrounding the ownership of land in the early modern period.

Joan Fitzpatrick