A significant item on the recent research agenda in Roman social history is the problem of understanding how the matrix of core values informed social behavior, honor being high on the list of the values concerned. Barton’s book is another attempt at an explication of this knotty problem. Those who have read her first monograph on Roman values, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans* (Princeton, 1992), a work that exploits the extremes offered by dwarfs and gladiators, will find themselves on familiar terrain. Those who have not might have to steel themselves for an idiosyncratic method. Readers of a traditional scholarly disposition may prefer to consult other recent works, such as Ted Lendon’s more orthodox approach to the same subject, *Empire of Honour* (Oxford, 1997). Nor is the matter without other current resonances in the field. Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, in their massive anti-Braudelian essay—*The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000)—have designated honor as one of the touchstone values of Mediterranean antiquity.

A thorough investigation of the Roman species of honor should therefore contribute to a better understanding not only of Roman behavior but also of its place in current debates about “Mediterranean values” in Graeco-Roman antiquity. These objectives might be difficult to attain with this book in hand. The reason is not for any lack of scholarship or interdisciplinarity, or of plentiful data. There is much evidence on display in this work to show that the author has read profusely and widely, and often far beyond the “normal limits” of Roman history. The core difficulty, rather, lies in the method, which might be described as personal and highly eclectic. Everything from Cher’s diet and exercise regimen, as reported in *People* magazine, to Cal Ripken’s obduracy and the rose of Saint-Exupéry’s “Prince” is arraigned in support. The author pursues this path self-consciously, deliberately eschewing what she describes as analyses that are linear in nature or causal descriptions that are sequential in kind (289). When married to the desire to let the Romans speak for themselves (15), the consequence is that the argument not infrequently slips into long pastiches of quotations (142–143 provides as good an example as any).

Despite all the pushing of envelopes, the lasting impression is that the book does not have much new to offer. The author subscribes to the same general view expounded over the past three decades (at least) by Veyne—that the dominant values of the Roman elite in the republic were those of warrior aristocracy whereas during the principate, these values were subverted to the tamer values of a service class (13, 277, 281–82)—a process which, to Barton, betokens an “infantilization” of Roman culture (278).1 This view might be true if, as Barton asserts, Ro-
man society was fundamentally a “contest culture” (67, 86, 99–102, among repeated claims), or one essentially characterized by recourse to vendetta (18, 22). Although evidence for these claims can be found, the hard question is whether “contest” or “vendetta” were as determinant and as centrally defining as is asserted. Is it really true, for example, that “no study of Roman laws and institutions can tell us as much about how the Romans governed themselves as can a study of their mechanisms of shame and honor” (19)?

This reviewer dissents. Julius Caesar in his literary memoir on *The Gallic War* does highlight personal honor as a motivating force for individual Roman soldiers faced with desperate battlefield situations and also, in the end, for the generalissimo himself (53–54). But from this same narrative, it is manifest that the mundane organizational forces of logistics and material support provided his soldiers, his ideologically showcased heroes, with the essential framework of their heroic and honorable actions. It also affirms that the values of restraint, calculation, foresight, planning, and cool ratiocination that underwrote the supply operations serve just as well to explain the nature and success of the collective Roman social actions in Gaul. So too, honor does not at all explain, *pace* Barton (49)—who buys far too easily into Livian ideology—why the Roman republican state was able to survive so many unmitigated military disasters. The organization and management of manpower resources made the difference. The paradoxical fact is that, unlike other ancient states, the Romans could lose, not win—and could lose on a staggering scale. This basic fact has little or nothing to do with honor.

Since there is no reasonable doubt that honor of some type was a pervasive social value in the ancient Mediterranean, finding abundant evidence for its existence is not a difficult task. The deeper problems, which this work does not seem to address, are to discover where the social forces of the codes of honor began and where they ended. But not even this matter begins to touch the more difficult questions concerned with the relationship between ideology and practice. Consider the heart of Barton’s high tide of honor in Roman society, the epoch of the middle republic. Although a sense of honor can explain much about the behavior of one of its best-documented figures, Cato the Elder, there is just as much that it cannot—from his marriage to the young daughter of a former slave and his training in Greek letters and rhetoric to his deep involvement in trade and manufacturing—all disreputable and dishonorable acts in the high honor code of the political elite. Cato’s writings and talk poured forth a stream of declarations on honor and shame, as in his famous speech to the Romans (as constructed by Livy) of 195 B.C. about the weak and dishonorable behavior of Roman men when he, as consul, opposed the repeal of a law limiting the property rights of Roman women. The mass of the Roman male citizens, however, voted solidly against him, apparently already “infantilized” in the heart of the most honor-bound era of the Republic.

As a host of anthropological studies of “Mediterranean honor” have shown, any meaningful study of honor must confront the fact that the
concept and the value were thoroughly contested, opposed, and even ignored. Historical analysis cannot pornographically isolate this or that particular value to the exclusion of the alternatives that critically informed and tempered its existence and defined its meaning.

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Medieval Children. By Nicholas Orme (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001) 387 pp. $39.95

Scholarly interest in the history of medieval childhood has not abated during the forty years since Ariès first published his history of childhood. In recent years, a number of new studies have corrected Ariès’ characterization of medieval childhood as ending at age eight—as soon as the child could enter the great world of men. The newer studies have also challenged his conclusion that the Middle Ages did not have a concept of children as such. In the tradition of these scholars, Orme has devoted his book to pointing out Ariès errors. Although Orme cites recent studies of medieval childhood, in his introduction, he does not integrate those studies into his discussion of various aspects of childrearing. These rich studies would have enhanced this book with a broader interpretive framework and more information about the nonelite and uneducated classes. The title, as well, is misleading; the book treats only medieval English children.

The book follows the life cycle of children from birth through adolescence, relying heavily, as many other works do, on the learned treatises about birth and babies from medieval England. Orme supplements them with information taken largely from sources describing the birth of elite children—princes and princesses and other members of the nobility. Baptism and naming, as described in penitentials, as well as other sources, are discussed in detail. The most original chapters deal with children’s words, rhymes, songs, and games. Orme explores the linguistic origins of da-da and pap, arguing that medieval children were taught with baby talk to get them to form words. The rhymes and songs were often tongue-twisters and riddles. Some of the songs accompanied games. Adult songs and chronicles often contained snatches of these early childhood rhymes, and children’s songs often included specific events from the adult world of wars and politics. Play included ball games, dolls, and the many other familiar toys that appear in medieval illuminated manuscripts or turn up in archaeological sites. As might be expected from an author who has written on training nobility and edu-
