multidimensional in their functions and structure. The theoretical frameworks of Foucault and others allow relatively little leeway for ambiguity and multiple roles.

Finally, the claim by the editors that “neither the hospital, nor the insane asylum, nor the penitentiary was invented by those who had to live in them” is at best a partial truth (4). It is not at all self-evident that only elites and/or the state played a role in their formation. Inmates (and often families) were by no means passive agents; they helped to shape the internal environment of these institutions.

I do not wish, however, to close on a negative note. Many of the essays in this volume provide fascinating data about the origins of institutions that played (and continue to play) significant societal roles. But by placing their data within a limited (though highly appealing) theoretical framework, they have ignored alternative explanations that might have been more appropriate. Perhaps other scholars will use their data to build a more persuasive (albeit limited) interpretive framework.

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Medieval Society and the Manor Court. Edited by Zvi Razi and Richard Smith (New York, Oxford University Press, 1996) 709 pp. $130.00

The price of this book is up to date, but, in most other respects, this is an old-fashioned volume. Few publishers today would touch a collection of this sort, with many pages devoted to reprinting articles readily available in journals and many others given over to essays first printed in this book but completed long ago. The dust jacket promises “novel approaches,” but the essays mostly work over well-tilled ground. What might be one of the most novel developments of recent years—the study of peasant women through manorial courts records—is strikingly ignored; one essay even notes the special suitability of its source (the Dyffryn Clwyd court rolls) for the study of women, but fails to undertake the task (296). As an “essential reference tool” (another claim on the dust jacket), the volume also falls short. The bibliography—apparently meant as comprehensive (104)—is incomplete, and, even more seriously, one entire approach to the study of manorial court rolls is effaced by exclusion. Except for chance references to the work of the so-called “Toronto School,” readers would be unaware of the past innovations and continuing contributions of such scholars as Raftis, Edwin Brezette DeWindt, and Anne Reiber DeWindt.¹ Readers will have to judge for themselves the full veracity of these complaints. As

¹ For examples of the early contributions of these scholars, see J. Ambrose Raftis, Tenure and Mobility: Studies in the Social History of the Mediaeval English Village (Toronto, 1964); Edwin Brezette DeWindt, Land and People in Holywell-cum-Needingworth (Toronto, 1972); Anne DeWindt, “Peasant Power Structures in Fourteenth-Century King’s Ripton,” Mediaeval Studies, XXXVIII (1976), 236–267.
both a researcher into the lives of medieval peasant women and an alumna of the University of Toronto, I might be especially sensitive to these particular exclusions. There can be no doubt, however, that this is a very expensive, very idiosyncratic, and, to some extent, very outdated collection.

The best essay in the volume is buried at its end. In it, Harold Fox reads an old source—listings of a tax paid by young men (*chevagium garcionum*)—in a new way. Postan had thought these were fines paid by emigrants seeking permission to live off their manors, but Fox shows that they were actually paid by resident, but landless, men. Since, in most cases, landless men who lived with their parents were exempt from these fines, Fox is able to use these listings to explore the early history of servants in husbandry. Arguing that the employment of servants was common long before the labor shortages that followed the Black Death, he links service not only to “heavy manorialization” but also to parental selfishness (561). According to Fox’s calculations, the labor of a child was more costly than the labor of a servant, and householders therefore might have colluded in discouraging grown children from living and working at home. Fox’s essay is just a preliminary report, but in its innovative analyses and startling conclusions, it whets the appetite for more.

Essays by Razi and Smith, Paul Hyams, and Lloyd Bonfield (writing both alone and in tandem with Lawrence R. Poos) address court rolls from legal perspectives, placing peasants and manorial courts in the broader context of developments in English common law. Essays by Smith and Rodney Hilton examine commercialization in the countryside, as seen, respectively, in rural markets and market towns. Other essays present analyses of particular manorial records (for example, the manor of Thorncroft by Ralph Evans, and the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd by A. D. M. Barrell, et al.) or of particular subjects (such as charity by Elaine Clark or peasant resistance by Peter Franklin). No principles of selection seem to have guided the editors, and some essays do not even focus on manorial court rolls, the putative theme of the book. More than seventy pages are devoted to reprinting a debate from the 1980s about population estimates from court rolls. This heated, technical, and largely negative debate seems to have had a deadening effect on research, and it is much to be regretted that the editors, who took different sides in the controversy, eschewed the opportunity to offer a joint—and perhaps encouraging—retrospective.

The appendix to the volume contains a highly selective list of manorial court rolls in English archives, compiled by Judith Cripps and Janet Williamson in 1976. If this list had been appended to a shorter, less expensive, and better-collected group of essays, it might have stimulated a revived interest in court rolls among students and young scholars.

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Instead, this volume will find its rightful but humble place, sitting among other scholarly tomes on the dusty shelves of research libraries.

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This book is based on a wonderful question: How did divines, townsfolk, and villagers react to the body of ritual outlined in the Book of Common Prayer from 1549 to 1662, in both discourse and practice? The information is derived from a wide range of sources—high theology, popular ballads, church-court records, letters, sermons, diaries, and plays. Cressy wants to link the high culture concerns of church and state to the experiences of ordinary individuals and thus integrate social, cultural, religious and political history. The book, which covers all social ranks, was conceived as a “history of transactions and engagements” (9). Cressy is deliberately attentive to difference. He forgoes classifying human behavior; he prefers listening to individual stories. His method is to supply plentiful documentation and let the personal experiences speak for themselves.

Cressy brings together a great deal of useful information about the rites and rituals surrounding birth, marriage, and death. He examines such topics as the management of pregnancy; female fellowship around the childbed; postnatal celebrations; the ceremonies of baptism and churching; courtship and marriage rituals; and deathbed, funeral, and burial practices. He explores the issues from a variety of perspectives. Concerning childbirth, for example, he includes the views of the church, of women diarists, and of medical writers. Moreover, he carefully teases out the multiple meanings of rituals, fully aware that individuals participated for a variety of reasons. He also emphasizes the significance of customary religious rites; as he puts it, they served as “primary points of contact between family and community, centre and periphery, and between men or women and God” (2).

For Cressy, rituals are worth studying primarily for what they reveal about social and cultural tensions. Ideally, the religious ceremonies of Tudor–Stuart England worked to promote harmony, but, in practice, each of the major rituals was potentially an arena for argument and dissent. Conflict arose over many issues, including the ring in marriage, upsetting festivities, placing the dead in church, walking with the funeral procession, and ecclesiastical fees. Baptism and churching proved to be the most contentious and divisive ceremonies. With reference to baptism, for example, laity and clergy argued over the timing of the act, whether it should be for adults or infants, whether it could be performed