This collection of essays in honour of Barrie Dobson is linked more by its coverage of the subjects to which Professor Dobson himself has made notable contributions than by its overt connecting theme which, in practice, turns out to be more a device than a real thread running through the essays. Two interesting chapters on early modern religious history by Patrick Collinson and Claire Cross apart, those familiar with Professor Dobson’s academic career and work will realize how well the subjects covered here mirror his very broad interests in medieval history. Just one of them (Derek Pearsall’s) reflects his advocacy of an interdisciplinary approach to medieval studies, demonstrated most significantly by his involvement with the York Medieval Centre. The essays then move through the religious orders and the universities (Janet Burton, Robert Swanson and Roger Lovatt), urban history with an admixture of the history of ideas (Jeremy Goldberg and Sarah Rees Jones), justice and outlaws in late medieval England (Anthony Musson and Tony Pollard) and, finally, as far as the medieval contributions are concerned, religion and devotion (Peter Biller, Margaret Aston, Miri Rubin and Colin Richmond). One might have wished for an essay which reflected Professor Dobson’s important work on the economic history of towns but otherwise, given that Musson’s essay handles the lower orders whose demand for justice was made so powerfully in 1381, we are reminded here of the entire Dobson œuvre.

Also alluded to, and rightly honoured, are his heroic efforts in establishing an art cinema in York: this is in Miri Rubin’s essay on Christine Carpenter, the medieval anchoress, and Chris Newby’s feature film based on her life. As someone who has been, for obvious reasons, very aware of this lady’s various manifestations in and
out of the academy, the present reviewer might point out that Newby got to her
quite late, after she had been the subject of a play by Arnold Wesker and an opera
based on the play by Robert Saxton. An interesting subject for study would indeed
be the cause of the fascination of her story for a certain type of (male) creative artist.

Two of the medieval contributions to the collection should be singled out for their
particular quality. They are those by Margaret Aston, which takes further her long-
standing exploration of the relationship of the word and the image in late medieval
and early modern devotion, and by Sarah Rees Jones, which, from the perspective
of Thomas More the London worthy, brings a novel and potentially fascinating
light to bear on the language and ideas of the very first ‘Utopia’.

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Mark Jackson (ed.), Infanticide: historical perspectives on child murder and
£47.50.

This excellent collection of essays, edited by Mark Jackson, brings together new
research on the history of infanticide that should be of interest to historians of crime,
gender, and medicine. Jackson provides a cogent and helpful introduction to the
collection by tracing changes in legislation and attitudes from the early modern
period to the twentieth century. The twelve essays that follow include what Jackson
calls ‘microstudies’, specific case histories that illuminate broader themes, as well
as several broader analyses of regional or national developments, most notably
J. R. Dickinson and J. A. Sharpe’s overview of new data from Cheshire court cases
in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The essays are rather more narrowly focused than the very general title suggests.
Most deal with infanticide in England between the mid-seventeenth and the early
twenty centuries. The exceptions include Johanna Geyer-Kordesch’s rather
wide-ranging comparison of infanticide in Prussia and Scotland, Patricia van der
Spuy’s study of two cases from Cape Colony in the 1820s, and Luc Racaut’s
discussion of accusations of infanticide levelled against the French Protestant
community in the sixteenth century. Racaut’s essay, in particular, provides some
interesting contrasts as it is the only one to deal with the broader constructions
of infanticide, in this case its use as a propaganda tool against marginalized or
threatening communities.

The remaining essays focus primarily on the gendered politics of infanticide in
law, popular representation, and medicine. These themes appear in most of the
‘microstudies’, including Margaret L. Arnot’s excellent discussion of the trial of
Hannah Sandles, an older woman convicted of murdering her youngest illegitimate
child, and Amy L. Masciola’s intriguing essay on Elizabeth Canning, an eighteenth-
century servant suspected of infanticide despite the absence of any concrete
evidence that she had even been pregnant. Masciola’s discussion reveals the ways
in which ideas of female respectability informed both accusations and defences in infanticide cases.

Among the general themes that emerge from the collection, the most important involves the ‘idiosyncratic’ nature of the crime of infanticide, with its innate contradiction between constructions of murder and of motherhood. Several of the essays show the problems presented to courts by the growing sympathy for accused mothers, who were often portrayed as the passive victims of either societal disapproval or the dangerous effects of pregnancy and childbirth. Dana Rabin’s fascinating discussion of the connection between ‘new epistemologies of emotion’ (p. 78) and changing defence pleas in eighteenth-century London court cases perhaps best illuminates this theme.

Several of the essays explore the evolution of the concept of puerperal insanity and its use to resolve the contradiction between ideals of womanly nature and infant-murder. Hilary Marland analyses cases from mid-nineteenth-century Warwickshire to show the development of insanity as a legal defence, while Cath Quinn examines medical journals and, in an intriguing use of an unusual source, psychiatric photography to explore the medical community’s role in defining puerperal insanity. An essay by Jonathan Andrews considers the discharge of offenders confined in two British institutions for the criminally insane. Andrews raises two important problems with much historical analysis of infanticide: the lack of a fuller context for understanding the crime when most studies end with the court proceedings, and the lack of consideration of the connection between infanticide and other cases of violence against infants and children. Finally Tony Ward provides the legal perspective in his thought-provoking discussion of the changes in British law on puerperal insanity and the cases which shaped the 1938 Infanticide Act. These articles not only contribute to the wider discussion of connections between constructions of gender and constructions of crime but also provide useful reminders that infanticide was committed by both single and married women.

Although these essays, as Jackson points out, reveal both continuity and change, the continuities are most striking. In the last essay, Julie Wheelwright discusses her interviews with a young woman, identified only as Kate, who was charged with murdering her newborn in 1993; this account resonates in surprising ways with other case studies in the collection. Like the suspected servants in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Kate concealed her pregnancy and gave birth alone. Kate’s sense that she could explain her actions only in the context of being either ‘mad’ or ‘bad’ suggests the extent to which, even at the end of the twentieth century, understanding of infanticide is inextricably bound up with constructions of feminine nature.

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The seven contributions to this short edited volume originated in a conference held in 1998 at the British Centre for Historical Research in Göttingen and focus primarily on the perceptions of national identity and on the political role of the nobility. The book falls into two uneven sections, the first of which is the more coherent and contrasts German perceptions of England with English ideas of Germany and the Germans. Michael Maurer summarizes his extensive work in this area by arguing that the German interest in England was ‘mainly the product of enlightenment propaganda and publication strategy that formed the image of England as a model country’ (p. 23), rather than admiration for British economic development of growing international status. Frauke Geyken’s focus is rather different, arguing that Britons were not interested in Germany for its own sake, but as an issue in the construction of their own national identity. This is demonstrated through a detailed examination of the political controversy surrounding the political ties to Hanover which peaked during the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years War. The next two contributors subject their predecessors to penetrating critiques. Volker Depkat contrasts their differing methodologies, criticizing Maurer for equating the growth of knowledge of another land with that country’s cultural significance. As Geyken shows, the British interest in Germany did not extend beyond reiteration of stereotypes and only became an important topic when international conflict forced a reappraisal of Britain’s own place in the world. Depkat uses this argument to challenge Maurer’s assumption that enlightened discourse *produced* German notions of England, reversing this relationship to argue instead that knowledge of England structured the German Enlightenment. Certainly, there is good evidence elsewhere to support this suggestion. In another recent study, Maiken Umbach (*Federalism and enlightenment in Germany 1740–1806*, Hambeldon Press: 2000) has convincingly demonstrated the breadth of English influences on German enlightened thought and practice. Tony Claydon’s contribution continues the discussion of the relationship between knowledge and identity by examining the arguments of the ‘country’ opposition to William III, whose use of images of the Dutch Republic as a rhetorical device in many ways mirrored the later role of Hanover in British political debate. Claydon shows that stereotypes could not be divorced entirely from their associated place of origin due to ‘an irreducible core of fact and an ingrained fixity of mental tradition’ (p. 94). There were thus limits to the extent to which debates on national identity could shape knowledge of abroad by manipulating images of other peoples.

The second part of the book is devoted to two studies of nobility which are subjected to a single critique. Hermann Wellenreuther examines the political role of those he explicitly deems the English ‘nobility’, arguing that the peers retained their immense political influence because ‘they cared for local needs’ (p. 103). Landed estates played a significant role in the unreformed parliamentary system.
not simply as arenas for patronage, but as vital links between the country’s political centre and its localities. While Parliament was able to deal effectively with national issues like colonial trade, it proved less responsive to those intractable yet pressing local concerns such as parish rates or turnpikes. These problems were settled by the prudent intercession of landowning peers, who thus constituted an extra-parliamentary element of the representative system, as well as a significant part of the formal constitutional structure. As is often the case with the contributions of continental scholars on British history, Wellenreuther is able to offer a fresh approach to an important question and his findings tend towards minimizing claims for English ‘exceptionalism’ within early modern European politics. Ernst Schubert provides an extensive and more broad-ranging comparison (in German) of north-west German nobles with south German imperial knights, taking in their place in territorial governments and military institutions, as well as the church, marriage and education. The piece is most useful as a critique of explanations of social change which rest on contrasts between relatively undifferentiated models of ‘noble’ and ‘bourgeois’. As Schubert shows, the German nobility were too diverse to be encompassed within stereotypical generalizations, especially not those based on anachronistic images of the Prussian Junkers. Also writing in German, Günther Lottes offers only brief comments on the last two contributions, pointing to elements of English exceptionalism without coming to definite conclusions.

The volume offers many useful insights on its two main themes, but could have benefited from a fuller introduction or an overall conclusion to integrate its findings in the wider comparative discussions that have taken place on eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Britain and Germany in recent years.

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Ken Roberts, Class in modern Britain. (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001.) Pages ix + 270. £15.99 (paperback).

In Class in modern Britain, Ken Roberts provides a forceful introduction to the sociological study of class in contemporary Britain. In a well-organized and energetically written text, Roberts discusses competing models of the class structure and the impact of recent economic trends prior to surveying the various classes present in British society. The book proceeds to address the question of social mobility before closing with an examination of contemporary politics in the light of class analysis.

The structure of Roberts’s book thus flows from his account of the class structure of contemporary Britain. This is founded upon the work of John Goldthorpe, which combines market and work situations in its grouping of occupations into classes. It is presented by Roberts as a successful marriage of Weber and Marx which captures the clustering of occupations into coherent classes. Roberts stresses in his discussion of Goldthorpe that the divisions
between classes, while real, are not rigid and that class should be understood relationally not gradationally. He rejects alternatives to Goldthorpe which derive class position solely from work situation (Marxism) or which conceive class gradationally.

In turning from how to who to classify, Roberts addresses the question of gender, acknowledging the limitations of traditional approaches which assign the class position of households entirely on the basis of the occupation of the primary (usually male) breadwinner. Roberts argues that neither individual nor household classification is wholly adequate. It should be noted, however, that some key tables in the book, particularly those directly derived from Goldthorpe, classify purely by head of household.

The focus of Class in modern Britain is thus firmly upon the occupational structure of society. Economic change is addressed in terms of its impact on working life, and higher unemployment and increased part-time work are taken to characterize the current dispensation. The changing shape of the occupational structure is clearly discussed and its consequences for the class structure outlined. Roberts is sceptical about the supposed benefits of flexible labour markets, focusing rather upon the growth of income inequality and the concentration of jobs into fewer households.

The emphasis of Roberts’s discussion of the working class is clearly upon its disorganization. This chapter includes a fine sketch of the affluent-worker debate of the 1960s. Roberts’s analysis of the disruptive impact of increased job insecurity upon the working class is preceded by what he calls ‘a digression into history’. This progresses from the ‘original working class’ forged in the industrial revolution through the altered (but not embourgeoisified) working class of the 1960s. Roberts is alert to the prevalence of nostalgia for close-knit working-class communities, but less aware of recent historical work which suggests that the traditional working class of Michael Young and Peter Wilmott may have been less ubiquitous than is often suggested.

Roberts rejects attempts to divide the middle class according to occupational level or sector. His account of the upper class stresses its credentials as the best-organized class in British society. In a helpful discussion of social mobility, he examines the relationship between changes in class structure and mobility levels before addressing attempts to abstract mobility from structural change and demographic differences between classes. He rightly emphasizes the shock value of mobility research which suggests that relative mobility varies little across time and space, and nicely displays the paucity of good explanations for this putative result.

Roberts is alive to the weight attached to politics in arguments for the end of class. He acknowledges that the class–party link has weakened. His argument, however, is that it is the very disorganization of the working class and the growth of the educated middle class which explains trends such as de-alignment and declining partisanship. Alternatives to class as a foundation for politics are somewhat cursorily dismissed.

This is a robustly argued and effectively structured work that advances a Goldthorpian view of social class. Its concern is consequently primarily with
occupational class positions rather than class identities. Roberts’s account of the characteristic consciousness of his various classes is rather brief, and less convincing than his analysis of occupational structure. Relationships between social structure and perception are more asserted than established. Roberts’s view of class as relational rather than gradational would benefit from further support, and some of his evidence, notably on mobility, suggests the opposite. While *Class in modern Britain* would benefit from a less stylized approach to history, it provides an accessible introduction to the sociological analysis of class in contemporary Britain.

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The main value of this book derives from two things: firstly, the decision by the editors to commission chapters covering a period embracing the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (although contributors interpret this very loosely, with some ending in c. 1800 and some in the middle of the nineteenth century); and secondly, the drawing together in the volume of material in the English language on a wide range of countries, thereby creating the basis for a richer comparative dimension than previous work has permitted. Much of the existing work on the press imposes a clear division between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. In recent years, as further work has emerged on the later eighteenth-century press, this periodization has seemed less and less helpful; in Britain, in any case, the bigger transformation by far came in the twenty years or so after 1855. Genuinely comparative work on the press in this period is rare, and has tended to focus exclusively on the British and French press, as the present reviewer did in a short study published in 1996. By no means all the contributions in the volume represent or draw on new work. Jack Censer’s chapter essentially recycles material to be found in his 1994 volume *The French press in the age of the Enlightenment*. Barker’s chapter on the English press will also be very familiar from her *Newspapers, politics and English society 1695–1855* (2000), a volume which itself contained little original material, apart from that which had formed the basis of an earlier monograph on the English press during the 1780s; more disappointingly, the chapter fails to exploit the possibilities for new insights created by the decision to examine a period not normally considered as a whole. Barker makes several eminently contestable claims. Is it really helpful to describe the English press by 1815 as ‘populist’ (p. 108)? Surely, the world of the press in this period was much more diverse and fractured, in content and influence, than this suggests.

Readers familiar with the widely available literature on the British and French presses are likely to find more rewarding the chapters on Russia, Italy, the
Netherlands and Germany. Burrows’s chapter on the cosmopolitan press is also very informative and useful. This was an elitist press which grew in stature in the course of the eighteenth century, but which was undermined by the revolutionary struggles of the period and their consequences; its considerable importance emphasizes how size of circulation and influence were not necessarily the same thing. What connects the different chapters is not just the common focus on the changing role of newspapers, but Jurgen Habermas’s notion of the ‘public sphere’. Since his famous work on this concept was published in an English translation in 1989, its influence on work on this area has been enormous – perhaps too great, some might argue. Habermas’s concept appears unevenly throughout the volume. On occasion, it seems to deflect contributors into areas of speculation that are not very profitable. Douglas Simes, for example, uses much of his chapter on the Irish press to emphasize the distance between Irish newspapers and the model of ‘rational-critical’ discussion posited by Habermas as a key component of the developing public sphere. In Ireland, from the 1790s, the press ‘reflected and facilitated’ a political culture starkly divided by religion. But was this really different in kind rather than degree, at least in respect of the divisive influence of the press, than in many other countries? The chapter on the United States, for example, stresses the transition from information to partisanship as a (perhaps the) key change in the American press caused by the American Revolution. Barker observes, with Habermas in mind, that newspaper readership in England was far from confined to the middle classes. This perhaps did not need pointing out, but the relationships between the middle classes and the press, particularly as they developed in the early nineteenth century, might have been explored more fully. In his theory of the public sphere, Habermas tends not to distinguish very clearly between different sorts of periodicals and newspapers, focusing rather on their shared role in stimulating so-called ‘rational-critical’ discussion predominantly amongst the middle classes.

The definition of newspapers adopted by contributors varies substantially among the chapters in this volume. One might argue, as the editors reasonably do, that this reflects the importance of national frameworks for understanding the development of the press, but it does raise the question of what is being compared. It also serves to focus attention on another fundamental question – what was the distinctive contribution of the newspaper to the political turbulence and transformations in political culture of the era? There is considerable assertion on this topic – to the effect that the newspaper did become an increasingly important, if not dominant, influence in this sphere – but several doubts remain. As some of the contributions make very clear, the interventions of government remained critical in determining the nature of the press and its ability to play a political role in continental European states; under Napoleon, press control was more formidable and restrictive than that which existed under the ancien régime. Developments in this sphere were, in short, far from unilinear. In Britain, where the newspaper gained a breadth, depth and continuity of influence probably unmatched elsewhere, the continuing importance of pamphlets and periodicals as vehicles of information and propaganda would have been underlined by a brief reference to the
print wars of the 1790s. In France before 1789, pamphlets were the main form of political argument and propaganda in print. Handbills were another form of print propaganda which were produced in growing volume, and by a growing number of groups in the period covered by the volume. Much depended on intended readership and purpose, but the new political salience of the newspaper needs to be probed a bit more carefully than it is in some of the chapters here.

Barker and Burrows have done a useful job in bringing together this collection of papers on the press, although in some respects the result emphasizes the scale of the challenges facing any genuinely comparative study of this topic. It also suggests the continuing influence on press studies of a narrative of achievement which can, certainly in Britain, be traced to the later nineteenth century when the press sought to historicize and celebrate its newfound place in society as a highly capitalized industry boasting a mass readership.

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David S. Powers, Law, society, and culture in the Maghrib, 1300–1500. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.) Pages x + 267. £45.00 (US $60.00).

Law, society and culture in the Maghrib, 1300–1500 is a valuable new addition to the corpus of studies on Islamic law and its interaction with society and culture, as well as a worthwhile contribution to the social history of Marinid Morocco. The primary source used by Powers is the Kitāb al-Mi‘yār of Ahmad al-Wansharisi (1430/1–1508), a collection of approximately 6,000 legal opinions (fatāwā) produced in the Islamic West between 1000 and 1500. However, as his extensive bibliography shows, he consults an impressive range of other Islamic legal works enabling him to also locate the Kitāb al-Mi‘yār within the wider context of Islamic law and Islamic legal studies. Indeed, one of his objectives is to respond to some of the issues raised by the work of the great western scholars of Islamic law such as Snouck Hurgronje, Bousquet, Goldziher and Schacht, and contemporary scholars such as Rosen and Gerber.

These issues include the degree to which the Shari‘a was a ‘real’ set of prescriptions and procedures used to regulate society or an abstract intellectual exercise; the implications of its identity as sacred law; its supposed procedural and substantive irrationality demonstrated by the role of the qādī; and the matter of juridical creativity or the absence of it symbolized by the juxtaposition of ijtihād, independent reasoning, with taqlīd, emulation or adherence to the positions of earlier jurists. While addressing these general matters, Powers also presents a detailed analysis of a particular Islamic legal system in operation, that of Marinid Morocco between 1300 and 1500.

He does this by selecting six cases from the Kitāb al-Mi‘yār and analysing them in detail. The cases are extremely varied and cover contested paternity, divorce
and fornication, village water rights, endowments and inheritance, slander of the Prophet, and *tawlij*, the making of a fictive gift to circumvent Qur'anic inheritance regulations. In each case he leads the reader from the historical and legal background to the specific case and then presents the legal opinions generated by it. He finishes his analysis by placing the case in its socio-historical context.

In this way Powers reveals a great deal about Marinid society and its norms but also elucidates the role played by the *mufti*, a legal scholar requested by a *qadi* to give an opinion on a case in the form of a *fatwa*. He characterizes the *mufti* as an individual positioned on the cusp between the abstract and the concrete: between the Qur'an, the Hadith and the writings of the founding fathers of the Maliki school of law, and the realities of daily life. By thus highlighting the bridging role played by the *mufti*, a generally neglected character in studies of Islamic legal systems, Powers seeks to show that Maliki law in the medieval Maghrib was not rigidly rooted in earlier doctrines or divorced from social reality, but nor was it procedurally irrational or dependent on the whim of the *qadi*. On the contrary, the *qadi* paid considerable attention to both the law and the social context of a case and when faced with complex issues sought the opinion of the *mufti* who used his knowledge of the sources and the vast corpus of earlier opinions and rulings to present his own legal opinion.

The strength of Powers' approach lies in his close reading and analysis of his cases and the insights they give into the procedural and substantive complementarity of the *mufti* and *qadi*. However, the small nature of the sample does raise questions, as does Powers' focus on one particular aspect of the legal system. One is left speculating as to the representativeness of the case studies and the number of cases which actually involved a *mufti*. That being said, *Law, society and culture in the Maghrib, 1300–1500* sheds new light on the role of the *mufti* in the medieval Maghrib and is an important contribution to the growing corpus of works on the interplay between law and society in the Islamic world, works which dispel earlier prejudices about the supposedly dysfunctional aspects of Islamic law.

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