

system, and also its failure to specify the field's still unanswered questions. There is, in fact, a great deal that one would not wish to quarrel with, and the book is of undeniable value to non-specialists. To read it in conjunction with the revisionist texts themselves (which have grown in number since this book was published) would give any Canadian historian a thorough grasp of penal development in Britain.

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HARRY KUHNEL in cooperation with HELMUT HUNDSBICHLER, GERHARD JARITZ and ELIZABETH VAVRA — *Alltag im Spätmittelalter*, Verlag Styria, Graz, Wien, Köln, 1984. Pp. 351 plus notes and bibliography. 430 illustrations, 48 in color.

This book is the work of four staff members of the *Institut für Mittelalterliche Realkunde Österreichs* located in Krems, Austria. Its goal is to study the material culture of *Sachkultur* and to interpret all sources on a systematic basis. The authors want to examine the variety of ways in which daily living took place and to understand the connection between social and economic structures and cultural values. They do not pose material and intellectual cultures as opposites. Furthermore they wish to understand material culture in terms of long term changes and how medieval people perceived them.

The authors avoid preoccupation with theoretical sociological or anthropological systems. They provide the reader with rich and detailed descriptions from written sources, from paintings and from material objects mostly very well integrated with the literature resulting from the research of others.

Harry Kuhnel's contribution is a description of concepts and measurements of time, organization of urban society, popular piety and pleasure and entertainment. The rhythms of daily life first followed the rituals of the church as its bells told people how their day was progressing. As townspeople needed more precise means of telling time their wheel clocks installed in the towers of their council buildings took over. One illustration has the baby Jesus striking the hours on a town clock. It is a symbolic joining of Medieval Europe's understanding of epochs (theirs being inaugurated by the birth of Jesus) with its needs to measure immediate time.

His section on popular piety shows the pagan remains in Christian practices and how devotional acts eventually themselves become secularized. Thus he suggests that tourism and souvenir collection grew out of the practice of going on pilgrimages. Pilgrims brought back mementos from the site to show that they had undertaken the prescribed penance.

Gerhard Jaritz gives us a thoughtful discussion of the stages in life. He begins with death because it dominated everyday life. Funeral processions, cemeteries, the plaintive cries of mourners, the daily prayers, masses and chiming of bells all reminded the people that someone had died. With the help of books on the art of dying one prepared one's soul for death. Through recipes, bath houses, bloodletting, medicines, rest houses and through faith in the miraculous healing power of saints, one hoped to delay death. Jaritz then discusses the conditions at birth, of childhood, youth and adulthood. Medieval people not only saw developmental stages in chronological terms but marked them also according to achievements such as marriage or the attainment of an academic degree.

Helmut Hundsichler describes the dwellings of late medieval people. The house served as a mediator between its occupants and the natural and social environment. It protected against attack and set the border between them and the wider society. The smaller wooden structures were seen as moveable possessions and were partially disassembled and taken along when one moved. He

describes the important place of the Stube, a distinctive feature of houses in the German towns. It was a large room with a tile stove which made it possible to keep the temperature above freezing day and night. For this reason it became the centre of most economic and social activities.

Much of the literature on the late medieval and early modern peasant focusses on his poverty. Hundsichler, in contrast, describes a relatively high level of material culture. The well-fed goose graced every landscape and even the peasants had goose-down filled mattresses and comforters.

Elizabeth Vavra's description of art helps us understand the feelings and attitudes of medieval people to art, music, literature and theatre. Increasingly the artist gained self-confidence and freedom partially through contacts with Italy. Actors and entertainers were relegated to the fringes of society together with the physically handicapped and the prostitutes. Nevertheless they provided all, from noble counts to peasants, with relief, entertainment, and news. Her discussion ranges from the high culture of the artists who painted and sculpted for the Church, the prince and the merchant to the popular reading and story-telling of the minstrels.

Overall the writers make an important contribution to our understanding of late medieval society by looking at its material objects both as they can be seen today and as they were described in medieval written sources. This collection is a convenient and up-to-date description of the social history of late medieval Europe east of the Rhine river. In addition it is a wealthy source of anecdotes and illustrations for the lecturer in medieval, renaissance, early modern or western civilization courses.

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W.R. LAMBERT — *Drink and Society in Victorian Wales, c. 1820-1895*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1983. Pp. 294.

Most historians of Britain will admit somewhat guiltily that Wales is the part they tend to ignore. Paradoxically, while theirs is the country most fully assimilated with England legally, administratively and statistically, the Welsh have the strongest claim to separate nationhood by the classic criterion, survival of a separate language. As W.R. Lambert shows in this well-executed study, the drink issue also played a major role in defining the Welsh identity in the nineteenth century.

"Drink" here effectively means beer, since unlike the rest of the Celtic fringe the Welsh were not imbibers of spirits. In an excellent opening chapter which surveys the social and economic dimensions of drink, Lambert suggests that beer played a particularly significant role in Welsh life. An example is the distinctive rural custom of the bid ale, a self-help feast at which beer would be sold for well above market price and gifts solicited to finance marriage on a version of the installment plan, it being understood that such assistance would be repaid over time by reciprocal gifts. Into this insulated peasant (the term is more appropriate to Wales than elsewhere in Britain) society, industrialization erupted with peculiar suddenness, producing in South East Wales at least, towns that came even closer than Engels' Manchester to the vulgar stereotype of the industrial revolution hell-hole.

Such a place was Merthyr Tydfil, a raw town wholly created by the coal and iron industries. The majority of its 1850 population of 50,000 was unskilled, crammed into speculative housing of the worst kind. It was a town with virtually no middle class, which meant no hospital, no fire engine, no workhouse, no Board of Health, no paving or lighting, ranking second only to Liverpool as the unhealthiest town in Britain. Its chief amenities were 506 legal (and many more illegal) drinking places. Over half of these were beerhouses, often no more than ordinary workers' cottages with perhaps a shed added on to justify the higher property rating needed for a beerhouse licence. Half of Merthyr's beerhouse keepers were employed in the iron works, often as foremen or subcontractors of labour. Thus the drinking places were job centres, pay offices and banks (cashing paper money