could speak, John himself refused the inquests and made it clear he would accept none. John the Carpenter (215) was not "arrested on manifest suspicion of sins (*peccarum*) and because of this he was returned to prison where he remained in penance"; he had been arrested with "pieces" (*peciarum*) of a stolen chalice, which remained in the keeping (*penes*) of the sheriff. Neither sins nor penance are mentioned. The inaccuracies extend to printed sources. We are told (44) that *The Mirror of Justices* "states specifically that it is an abuse of power to load a prisoner with more than twelve pounds in weight . . ." The page reference is wrong, and the text, once found, says that "the fetters must not weigh more than twelve *ounces*," a significant difference (W.J. Whittaker, ed., *The Mirror of Justices*, Selden Society 7 [1893], 52). Carelessness can also lead to contradictions. The insistence that "most approvers lived out their days in prison," is followed a few lines later with "Most approvers ended up hanging from the gallows." Either of these statements may be true, but they cannot both be (282).

Finally, the index, largely a mixture of subjects and names (the latter largely those of authorities, medieval and modern), is wholly inadequate. In a long book, finding the names of the suspected and convicted criminals who are its principal subjects becomes a wearisome business. Overall, a revised edition seems called for.

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Tom Johnson, *Law in Common: Legal Cultures in Late-Medieval England.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xii, 324. $105.00 hardcover (ISBN 9780198785613).
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Law in Common is a fascinating study of "legal engagement" in medieval England, exploring "local legal cultures" and "common legalities" (6–7). Embracing theories of legal pluralism and legal culture as well as legal geography, Johnson examines the diverse experiences of people in an array of jurisdictions (some peculiar to their geographical locations) using pertinent examples drawn from myriad local court records. Not surprisingly, the book focuses on 1381 as "a watershed in political culture" (9), with resonances and ramifications for the long fifteenth century. The main theme, however, is how legal practices (one could add legal ways of thinking) had

consequences for social and political relations: how law organized them and was the "lingua franca through which these dialogues took place" (53).

Part 1 examines "local legal cultures" associated with rural, urban, maritime and forest jurisdictions, which are explored through discourses of "peace," "repair," and "ordaining." Although the jurisdictions are considered separately, their interconnectedness stemmed not just from geographical locality but also from the common legal traditions upon which they drew. Johnson underlines the vitality of rural courts in the face of socioeconomic change and the pliability and porousness of both secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions. The logistics of urban legal culture, including the governance of physical space and intense scrutiny of daily life, are explored primarily with reference to the "middling"-sized city of Hereford. Johnson highlights the density of urban jurisdictions and the comparative frequency and visibility of their court sessions. He draws attention to emphatic moments in the legal calendar and the convening of special or occasional courts, as well as opportunities for "forum shopping" and thereby challenges to authority. Comparing rural and urban experiences, Johnson finds that the latter afforded (perhaps not surprisingly) "a broader circulation of formal legal knowledge. . .and broader legal perspectives" (83). Maritime legal culture was shaped by the institutions and traditions (including the laws of the sea) affecting the ports and upriver communities, and in turn by the transnational experiences of mariners and the nautical expertise of shipmasters. Finally, Johnson demonstrates how the historiographical story of decline in the administration of forest justice is mistaken and that, similar to maritime legal culture, the landscape and resources ("vert and venison") of the forest and seignorial parks were managed and accounted for by specialist local officials.

Part 2 explores "common legalities." The legal landscape, the focus of Chapter 5, is characterized by its "hybrid knowledge" (155) articulated in the perambulating, viewing, bounding, and naming that demonstrated jurisdiction (usually ceremonially) and was encapsulated in claims and customs. It is argued, though, that material infrastructures and the environmental and ecological aspects of the landscape took legal experience beyond notions of memory and custom; for contemporaries, "consciousness" of law was not purely psychological or cultural, but rather a "physically proximate presence" (181). The following chapter synthesizes the intertwined experiences of the legal cultures (explored in Part 1) to show how legitimate legal knowledge was produced by the courts; driven by the ethical duty of jurors and witnesses to watch, remember, value, and inquire; and ultimately recirculated in the communities that assisted in its co-creation. This is considered a form of labor (210), although the author misses the opportunity to link this to the contemporary pun on "labor" of a jury (an abuse of process). Chapter 7 on legal English importantly examines the contexts of vernacular documentary production, the "ecology" of language change, and the pervasiveness of English, indicating

that "if we can begin to understand everyday vernacular communications. . .as part of public discourse in fifteenth-century England. . .its political culture would begin to look rather different" (240). In the final chapter, Johnson argues that legal documents were possessed by more people than in previous eras, with a greater move toward documentary identification and verification. Part 2 affords a well-managed contextualization of the jurisdictions and legal traditions set out in Part 1. In espousing the terminology of transformation and revolution, though, the author rather overemphasizes the fifteenth century as witnessing "momentous" changes in the development of the bill as a genre of legal complaint, given Alan Harding's pioneering work (not referenced) on bills and oral plaints in the thirteenth-century general eyre.

Ambitiously, Johnson sets out his stall for a "common constitution," picking up his point about vernacularization and arguing that local courts brought ordinary people into the political sphere and were crucial focal points of solidarity against the ambitions and demands of government. There is little sense of the role of the "supra-local and national connections," other than the fact that urban litigants found it "expedient to take litigation to national forums" (84). Moreover, the author's concentration on legal institutions somewhat neglects the people involved, including those employed at different levels and between jurisdictions, as well as those who were both "central" and "local" judicial agents, another significant factor in (and context for) the development of legal cultures. These are minor matters, however, and should not devalue the essential rebalancing of perspectives achieved in this refreshing study of local courts and their wider significance.

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Catherine L. Evans, *Unsound Empire: Civilization & Madness in Late-Victorian Law*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2021. Pp. 304. $65.00 hardcover (ISBN 9780300242744).
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In situating law as the central organizing feature of British imperialism, this important book makes a stimulating and innovative contribution to legal history. It does this by examining nineteenth-century debates about who was sufficiently mentally fit to be convicted in the criminal courts of the British Empire, where the assumption that most criminals were sane came up against racialized beliefs