

In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England.
Keith Thomas.

The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018. xvi + 356 pp. \$45.

During this reviewer's sojourn at Oxford in the early 1980s the highly localized variance in customs and manners was driven home to him by an ancient don (coincidentally at the then-college of the author of the work under review, who had invited me to dinner), asserting in offended tones that one never passed the port to the left a third time. Nearly four decades later, such small points of table protocol seem absurdly precise. Manners, which in earlier centuries were understood to embrace broader customs of behavior and even, during the high tide of Puritanism, moral and sexual comportment (a link largely broken, the present book notes, by the end of the eighteenth century except among the most fervent of evangelicals), are very much the constructions of time and space, as the Enlightenment philosophers knew, and earlier writers such as Montaigne sensed. Indeed, extreme differences in customs and behavior, observed in foreign travel during the early modern era (and as far back as Herodotus's accounts of non-Greek "barbarians"), especially in descriptions of alien terrains and their indigenous occupants, provided a valuable mirror for contemporaries, and eventually a stimulus to systematic speculation about what the sociologist Norbert Elias would call "the civilizing process." The social evolution of humanity was itself a much older problem. It perplexed medieval writers such as Gerald of Wales, occupied the time of several Renaissance and seventeenth-century thinkers, and was more fully historicized by Enlightenment proponents of stadial theories of progress, such as Lord Kames and Adam Ferguson.

All of these commentators, along with hundreds less well known, populate the landscape of Keith Thomas's latest book. *In Pursuit of Civility* is focused on the particular changes in notions of civility in England between the late Middle Ages and the early nineteenth century. The breadth of reference to printed sources reflects a lifetime of indefatigable collection of materials, displayed in a style that has become notably lighter since Thomas's masterpiece, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, was published nearly half a century ago. Readability, if not reference, is here greatly enhanced by confining the supporting materials to eighty-six pages of endnotes, thick with citations and commentary, while the occasional footnote is reserved for more immediate digression or further example. Coal-face archival work is entirely absent, but there is more than enough evidence in the printed sources to support the book's arguments. It builds on very solid foundational studies, including some by Thomas's former pupils, all duly acknowledged.

Thomas's overarching thesis is itself uncontroversial—that England during the three centuries under discussion gradually evolved the modern manners that one associates with the period from the Victorians through the 1960s—and that this transformation

was reflective of many underlying social changes, including subtle shifts in hierarchy which in turn brought about alterations in language and forms of address. Thomas is too subtle a scholar to regard this process as simplistically linear, and indeed some of the most fascinating passages in the book concern anomalies—relics of past forms of behavior that lingered on, or examples of surprisingly bad behavior at a time when social hierarchy was more highly rigid than it later became—for instance the sundry episodes of lords and ladies being jeered at or mocked by their inferiors in the streets of London. Thomas organizes his materials topically rather than chronologically, with chapters respectively discussing the changing relations of manners and the social order; the evolving signs and marks of the “civilized condition”; how civilization progresses; and how civility became a commodity to be exported to, and enforced upon, the eventual British Empire, starting close to home with the Irish and highland Scots but eventually spreading overseas to the transoceanic empire. Along the way, countercurrents and challenges to prevailing mores are discussed: the Quaker objection to marks of inequality in contemporary dress and address, for instance; or critiques of the effeminacy of certain foreign practices and of the more pretentious habits of the nouveau-riche or the sometimes financially challenged gentry and aristocracy—the real-life antecedents of Sir Walter Elliot, Bart. These countervailing examples strengthen rather than undercut the impression of the English having become both polite and commercial by 1800.

In a work covering as much ground as this, some subjects are necessarily neglected or given short shrift. Secondary source coverage is less comprehensive in some places than others, and some readers will doubtless find the book rather Eurocentric in its frame of reference. But one must be grateful for the highly enjoyable, largely persuasive, and immensely recondite work on offer. To do otherwise would simply be bad manners.

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Scholastica colonialis: Reception and Development of Baroque Scholasticism in Latin America, 16th–18th Centuries. Roberto Hofmeister Pich and Alfredo Santiago Culleton, eds.

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The aim of *Scholastica colonialis* is not only to present the proceedings of the fourth International Conference of Medieval Philosophy, held in Porto Alegre (Brazil) on 12–14 November 2012, at the Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul. It is also the first outcome of an ambitious and long-term research project bearing the full title “*Scholastica colonialis: Reception and Development of Baroque Scholasticism in Latin America in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries.*” This twofold