Unfortunately, every one of the latter qualities listed in Segar may be found, three hundred years earlier, in Lull.

Apart from jargon about "social structure," clichés about the "gentry," and various historical commonplace, the reader will find merely short summaries of a limited selection of primary sources, several of which have been published in such "not readily available" collections as the Early English Text Society. Despite Uhlig's work, there is certainly room for a book on the subject proposed in Mirrors of Courtesy. Sadly, Mirrors of Courtesy is not that book.

SYDNEY ANGLO, University College of Swansea


Eight essays, five of which have been published during the last decade and are fairly well known, describe "the interaction between Society and Culture and the balance between tradition and innovation" in Early Modern France. A more accurate if clumsier description would be aspects of the lives of some of the non-elite in France between the late fifteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with emphasis on the sixteenth. There are many limitations imposed by the author's interests, sources and approach and most of these are admitted in the introduction. Professor Davis concentrates on the menu peuple and has learned much more about those who lived in the cities, especially those who lived in Lyon, than about the peasants; even in Lyon she has learned more about the practitioners of the newer and more skilled trades and their relatives than anyone else. The findings are presented as "a set of case studies" rather than as a unified essay. A comparison of this book with other recent attempts at popular history shows that Professor Davis's approach is the better one. At this time only fragments of the lives and attitudes of "the people" are known for the Early Modern period. Attempts at unified approaches such as those by Mandrou or Kamen, to mention only two, have the same result: bits and pieces used to try to sustain a full-scale theory. It would seem that European popular history in the Early Modern period is still in the article stage. But since that is the time when much of the best work is done the interested reader should put aside his desire to have everything explained and enjoy the bits and pieces being offered.

Now that all the caveats have been put, it can be said that a very vivid picture of life in sixteenth-century France emerges from this book. The city did not understand the country nor did those from different social levels understand one another. Cities were growing and with them developed an urban crisis which came from a combination of the age-old problem of poverty, as well as population growth and economic expansion. Civic leaders found ways of handling these problems from their own practical business experience and from the writings of the humanists. While the city fathers were at work the people in the cities exhibited a social creativity that changed older social forms such as informal youth groups to fit their new needs. Printing played a definite role in giving scope and depth to the experience of city dwellers.

The Reformation had a distinct influence on French cities, though it offered little to
the peasants who preferred their habitual oral and ritual culture. Those most attracted to Protestantism were a cross section of the practitioners of the more skilled, complex, literate and newer trades and occupations. The city women who joined the Protestant ranks did not necessarily lead or follow their husbands but tended to be from the same groups in society as the male converts. Women who because of their personal circumstances were more independent (or perhaps more lonely?) such as widows, the self-employed or those with curious nicknames were attracted to Protestantism, but the most learned women were not. On the whole, Protestant religious commitment seemed to complement in a new sphere the scope and independence already existing in the lives of the female converts.

All of this did not happen without problems. Printers' journeymen in Lyon could return to Catholicism to seek economic gain. But for many, religious difference brought violence because religion was an intimate part of the fundamental values and self-definition of a community.

Europe was changing and the menu peuple, particularly those in the cities, were both adapting to and furthering the change. Sometimes the argument is hard to follow, as in "Women on Top." Sometimes the conclusions are commonplace. Perhaps theory gets too much in the way of research in some of the middle essays. Stanford University Press must be censured for its continuing practice of putting the footnotes at the end of the book, but the fact remains that this is not only a book that cannot be ignored; it is a book that is a pleasure to read.

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McNeill's book is likely to take unsuspecting readers by surprise. It is not the concise overview of Venetian history which one might expect, but a probing inquiry into relations between Latin West and the Greek, Turkish, and Russian East, pegged to the rise and decline of Venice as a Great Power. McNeill conceived of the book as a pendant to his Europe's Steppe Frontier, 1500-1800, published a decade earlier. It turns out a far richer, more comprehensive, and more stimulating study. Partly this is because the Eastern Mediterranean, even after becoming a "naval backwater" (p. 138), remains intrinsically more interesting than the Danubian and Pontic plains. But one also senses that McNeill is now more cheerfully prepared to present tentative syntheses and to entertain bold hunches, thanks, no doubt, to the growing weight of the Annales tradition, which he acknowledges.

As regards Venice proper, McNeill's chief concern is to define the economic, social, and military strengths which explain her rise to international power and, beginning in the sixteenth century, her decline. The explanations he advances range from the convincing to the frankly speculative. Thus he suggests, for example, that Western merchants and mercantile cities may have had an edge over their Greek and Muslim competitors owing to the ease with which they set up "ad hoc corporations," a habit he explains as acquired in agricultural collaboration, where the moldboard plow required pooling draft animals (pp. 15-