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Immigrants and the Industries of London 1500-1700 (review)

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(Review)

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would return to stasis if those who disturbed it, such as usurers, regrators, and forestallers, were forced to stop their evil ways.

All of this is established through a large collection of usages that leaps nimbly across chronology and geography to make her points. At times, there are too many examples to remember the point of the example. More importantly, the book does not reach a clear conclusion about the relationship between prices and the idea of profit. Finkelstein concludes: we are still obsessed with just and unjust profits, so we do not have a single modern definition of the word. Economists do not even seem to use it much. This mirrors the confusing usages in the early modern period, and it does not make her study easy. Her conclusion seems to be that the term *profit* changes along with beliefs about *value added*. If, as the ancients and most early moderns believed, economies were static, then their concept of redistribution in advantageous ways worked. If, however, economies can grow, then all the old concepts must be redefined. As that sank in, different ideas of profit became popular.

The book is built almost entirely of printed sources, so it works mostly on the level of intellectual history. Even on that abstract level, however, Finkelstein depends on old collections like Tawney and Powers's *Tudor Economic Documents* rather than newer editions of things like the parliamentary speeches. It would have been interesting to test her question on the counting boards of merchants, and to compare profit with the evolution of terms like *debt*. Legal records might have been used, too, since they are a prosaic way of understanding how people thought of economic behavior. She makes some casual accidents, such as assuming Filmer wrote his *Quaestio Quodlibetica* in 1653, rather than in the late 1620s. All in all, Finkelstein displays the concept of profit in all its colors, but she leaves us unsure if inflation forced a redefinition of the concept.

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Lien Bich Luu. *Immigrants and the Industries of London 1500–1700*.

Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005. 366 pp. index. append. illus. tbls. bibl. \$99.95. ISBN: 0-7546-0330-X.

*Immigrants and the Industries of London* reflects the burgeoning historiographical interest in the English experience of Others before the era of imperial expansion. It does so very much from the perspective of economic and metropolitan history. Lien Bich Luu's starting point is Anthony Wrigley's contention that it was the remarkable growth of early modern London that stimulated England's transformation into a market — and eventually industrial — economy. She argues that while historians have certainly begun to explore the implications of that growth in terms of local and domestic trade, manufacture and industry, internal migration, and overseas mercantile activity, the demographic and economic significance of migrants coming to London from Germany, the Low Countries, and

France has been largely overlooked. The book suggests that in terms of the diffusion of new skills and the development of new productive practices the impact of immigrants was significant indeed.

In making her case she provides a conventional account of London's size, significance, and peculiarity (in terms of other European cities) in chapter 2; a more useful survey of how Tudor statesmen linked the skills and knowledge of immigrants with economic rejuvenation, and attempted to implement policies accordingly; and two general chapters on the place of immigrants in Elizabethan London and their treatment by natives. There then follows three case-studies of trades from the particular perspective of immigrant craftsmen: the silk industry, the silver trade, and beer brewing. In each instance the economic success of immigrants and their impact on indigenous practices is shown to be closely linked to the institutional structures of the specific trades and its attendant populations. The conclusion compares the positive economic impact of immigrants on sixteenth-century London with the troubled — and troubling — tenor of contemporary debates, noting that “metropolitan *greatness*” would seem to lie “in the sheer diversity of . . . people, cultures, and skills” (308).

This is, then, a useful book about an important and relatively neglected topic. There are problems nonetheless. One relates to the specific significance of immigrants to early modern London's demography and economy. There is an undoubted increase in the number of immigrants in London between 1483 and 1593 (from ca. 3,400 to ca. 10,000). However, because of the growth of London through domestic migration the relative size of the immigrant population declined from 6% in 1483 to 5% in 1593, with a peak of 12% in 1553. This need not detract, of course, from the specific impact that immigrant householders could have on economic production through the introduction of knowledge and skills. However, as Lien Bich Luu notes, between 1500 and 1700 the number of occupations and crafts in London rose from 180 to 721; this was a period of general diversification and innovation, and it is within this context that the (undoubted) contributions of immigrants need to be considered.

Another problem relates to chronology. Although the book purports to cover the period 1500–1700, there are only seventeen pages (or two discrete sections) in which the seventeenth century is discussed in any seriousness: the majority of the analysis, and almost all the statistical data, is concerned with the sixteenth century. If half the early modern period is effectively missing, then it is also unclear why immigrants in previous centuries were not as important — if not more so — to the London economy as those in the sixteenth century. The English wine trade was established by French entrepreneurs in the fourteenth century (to name just one example of skill diffusion before 1500) and continental craftsmen had long played an important role in the silver trade. Likewise Dutch beer brewers were already a serious economic threat to indigenous ale brewers by 1436. Indeed, the existence of medieval brewers in London requires Lien Bich Luu to emphasize an unlikely 200-year lag between the arrival of beer production and its adoption among

Londoners. Her explanation for the gap — that until the 1570s the majority of Londoners did not like beer because it was Dutch — is unsubstantiated and contradicts her earlier, more nuanced comments regarding Londoners' attitudes to aliens.

These interpretative limitations reflect, finally, an implicit and largely untested assumption of the book: that manufacture and industry were the key determinants of early modern (and modern) economic development. However, much recent work has emphasized the importance of commerce and consumption to the early modern economy; at the very least it would have been interesting to learn about immigrant contributions to these aspects of London's economic culture. Greater consideration of other immigrant networks — not least Scottish, Welsh, and Irish householders and dependents — would have added a further dimension to the study, and certainly integrated the seventeenth century into the account. That said, there are only so many questions that a monograph can try to answer, and it is a measure of this book's success that we now have a context for asking more.

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Patricia Fumerton. *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England*.

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006. xxvi + 238 pp. index. append. illus. chron. bibl. \$20. ISBN: 0-226-26956-6.

In this ambitious and richly detailed book, Patricia Fumerton examines how the economic instability of early modern England helped to produce a deeply felt experience of itinerancy and social displacement among the working poor. Looking at a wide range of sources, including pamphlets, ballads, parish registers, and the journal of seaman Edward Barlow, Fumerton argues that the period witnessed the emergence of what she calls the "unsettled subjectivity" of poor laborers, a sense of self defined by "economic, interpersonal, and spatial mobility" (50). By attending to low rather than high culture and to dislocated subjects rather than communities, *Unsettled* offers an original and theoretically astute cultural history of early modern vagrancy.

Fumerton divides her study into three parts. In the first four chapters, she mobilizes recent historical work on early modern vagrancy and wage labor in order to offer a theory of low subjectivity. Cultural and economic instability, she argues, was experienced not only by the physically homeless or legally vagrant, but also at times by those slightly higher on the social scale, including apprentices, servants, and housewives. In the second section of the book, Fumerton turns to Barlow's journal — a fascinating account of a seaman's life of personal and geographical itinerancy — as a case study to test her model of "elastic," unsettled subjectivity (5). In part 3, Fumerton considers ballads written about early modern seamen and,