

Immigrants and the Industries of London, 1500–1700. By *Lien Bich Luu*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. xiii + 366 pp. Illustrations, tables, appendix, bibliography, notes, index. Cloth, \$99.95. ISBN: 0-754-60330-X.

Reviewed by Beverly Lemire

At a time when America's cities have seen massive public protests by illegal immigrants in essential jobs, when the politics of immigration bedevil the major political parties in Western nations, and the fear of immigration provides fertile ground for radical right-wing political parties, it is timely to recall earlier immigration experiences and to track their impact on both immigrant and host communities. In an English parliamentary debate in 1592, the issues of immigration were also argued, doubtless with some heat. As migrants arrived in growing numbers on England's shores after 1560, their resettlement elicited responses running the gamut from warm welcome to riotous attacks. Lien Bich Luu's focus is on London, England's great metropolis and the recipient of the majority of the religious refugees and economic migrants. Recurrent hostility arose among artisans and laborers, who feared the competition of new arrivals, sometimes leading to public violence. Yet, in 1592, at least one parliamentarian was in no doubt of the rewards of welcoming migrants. As Luu notes, "Sir John Wolley urged a positive immigration policy because he believed that the 'riches and renown of London' stemmed from 'entertaining of strangers and giving liberty to them'" (p. 302). The examples of Venice, Antwerp, and Amsterdam stood as glittering illustrations of the profits to be gained by this policy. Yet England's procedures for handling immigrants, as well as those of London's governors, hindered immigrant advancement and compared poorly with those of Amsterdam, where citizenship was more easily and cheaply acquired. The ultimate success of England's immigrant families was typically a tribute to their determination, rather than the outcome of official assistance.

The territory Luu explores has been well studied, but she approaches it with a new historical agenda and a less explicitly national focus, both refreshing innovations. Looking at both the societies that provided the migrants and those that received them, Luu assesses the economic impact of immigration on London specifically, and on

England more generally, with an impressive array of quantitative data. The historiography for this period is voluminous in terms of trade, the origins of key industries (like silk and brewing), the growth of cities, and evolving government policy. Studies of immigrant reception have also multiplied, building on classic studies of late-sixteenth-century “Dutch” and later-seventeenth-century Huguenot migrations. The author shows mastery of this material, as well as of more recent theorizing about migration. Effectively employed, these theories help to differentiate the patterns of population movement that accompanied the turbulent, religious-based upheavals that gripped Europe over these centuries. These designations include the “step-migration” of those who arrived in London after one or more stops on the way; the chain migration, whereby family members followed behind the initial adventurer; and, of course, the mass migration precipitated by catastrophic events in the homeland. Nuance is maintained, even at this distance, and the difficulties of resettlement are thoughtfully explored. Studying two centuries of immigration, Luu recognizes the interactions between earlier antecedents and their followers, assessing the reasons behind hostile reception in some instances and more benign treatment in others.

The economic impact of immigrants is one of the central organizing themes throughout this volume, considered in terms of skills transfer and industrial development. Findings are carefully modulated and convincing. Chapters one to five lay out detailed arguments assessing migration and diffusion of skills, trade and consumption, government policy, and patterns of immigration to Elizabethan London. The following three chapters are case studies of three industries: silk, silver, and brewing. The immigrant impact on these three industries differed chronologically and in patterns of work. For example, generations of continental goldsmiths worked for periods of time in London as journeymen or as subcontractors. The tangible improvement in quality and sophistication of the silverware produced in this period is testimony to their labor; in the second generation, Huguenot goldsmiths took on more English apprentices, and their impact continued. The silk trade is closely associated with the arrival in England of immigrants—some have claimed this as the explanation for the launch of this trade in England. However, Luu does not accept that the silk industry developed “because” of immigration from the continent. The long-term market for silk, the growth of London,

and changes in demand are all given due weight, while immigrant impact on this trade is carefully explored. Opportunities were found in the silk trade by some immigrants, despite the fact that they had very different training—they learned to work with silk on their arrival in London. Critics' charges that immigrants were clannish and unwilling to train native Englishmen were recurring indictments. There is no doubt that immigrants looked out for their brethren, especially given the general unwillingness of authorities to regularize their citizenship in England, or, indeed, to admit them into many guilds or to recognize training taken abroad. The Weavers' Company admitted more alien silk weavers than did guilds in other trades; still, immigrants were often compelled to work illicitly, without the sanction of City fathers, regardless of their skills or training. Luu employs comparative statistics where sources allow, tracing the patterns and practice of immigrants in London and showing how migration shaped opportunities. The reception of immigrants also varied for a range of reasons, including the numbers and pace of immigration, the size of the receiving community, and the economic conditions that prevailed. In London, however favorable the circumstance, social mobility was limited for the vast majority of new arrivals. But Luu makes a compelling case for the contributions of immigrants.

It is clear that present debates on immigration inspired this work, but this motivation in no way distorts the structure of the argument. The generations of immigrants who arrived in London to work and live during the early modern era brought an essential dynamism to the metropolis, often changing tastes as well as introducing new skills. Yet there was a particular ambivalence among the English. On the one hand, they were curious about foreign lands and foreign goods; on the other hand, there was routine official resistance to immigration, and hindrances were commonly thrown up in immigrants' paths. This book speaks both of opportunities lost and of the incalculable gifts of immigration to early modern London.

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