

**The Fountain of Privilege. Political Foundations of Markets in Old Regime  
France and England**



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the family, where there could be seen, Carol Blum writes, a 'slow and imperfect shift from the concept of woman as a thing to be possessed to the modern model of an independent person' (p. 161), a shift aided by Montesquieu and Diderot with their studies of societies outside Europe. Women's rights of inheritance in two regions of France occupy Chapter 9, and Staves weighs up the claims of English daughters and younger sons. As she says, we have been forced to think of the family less as a natural entity, more as an 'artificial social, political, economic and legal creation' (p. 194). But law was coming to frown on parents' attempts to control their children's choice of partners. Part 4 is the most miscellaneous, though its headline, 'the construction of a self', indicates social psychology as the unifying theme. One topic is Rousseau and his conflicting views of property as corrupting the natural man, but as indispensable to civil society. Part 5 brings us to literary property, growing up since the days of King Lear when writers like Shakespeare stole without a blush. Michel de Servan, in pre-Revolutionary France, deserves to be remembered for his attack on the 'Cabinet Noir' in Paris where letters were opened by officials, much as today our telephones are tapped. J. Guillory devotes much of his space to Gray's 'Elegy,' and remarks that the question of copyright 'has compelled us to redefine some of the most basic concepts of literary history' (p. 389). Part 6 ranges from 'genetic capital' acquired from the animal-breeding innovations, and secretiveness, of the celebrated Robert Bakewell, to the Royal Africa Company of about 1700, with its controversial monopoly of the English slave trade. How much it meant to England is shown by an appendix of eight pages of economic writings on the Africa trade between 1689 and 1714. An intriguing essay by David D. Bien explores the finances of the late French ancien régime, based largely on government borrowings on the credit of chartered bodies like the brokers (*agents de change*), who held their offices and privileges by purchase, and enjoyed a higher credit rating than the king. In Part 7, on imperial themes, both Mario Pastore on the evolution of the rural labour force in Paraguay from enslavement to freedom, and Hilary Beckles on 'white slavery' or indentured labour in the English Caribbean, provide very instructive reading—as does this boldly experimental volume as a whole.

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Hilton L. Root, in *The Fountain of Privilege. Political Foundations of Markets in Old Régime France and England* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: U. of California P., 1994; pp. xv + 280. \$45), offers the reflections of a social scientist on the economic effects of two different political systems in the eighteenth century. He asks why a series of events in Georgian England did not occur in Bourbon France: 'the expansion of large English estates resulting from enclosure, price supports that encouraged high grain prices, the decline of guilds and urban trade monopolies, the creation of a highly efficient bureaucracy to collect excise taxes, and the shift of capital-intensive manufacturing to the countryside...' (pp. 10–11). Root theorizes about these subjects on the basis of some French archival sources, many books and articles, and the works of various economists and sociologists. We learn, for instance, about 'the redistributive role of the state' (Chapter 3); the difference between corruption in England and what he defines as 'cronyism' in France (pp. 49–50); and, most of all, the economic benefits of

parliamentary government and the defects of absolute monarchy. This is a lively contribution to what some might call a discourse. There is a refreshing absence of tendentious ideology, but a good deal of racy speculation in a jargon that is not always helpful. Two unfortunate errors: Antoine Crozat was simply not 'the master of all French maritime traffic' (p. 36). And 'marchands armateurs' were in no sense 'merchants in industries designated as essential to national defence' (p. 28). As shipping terms, the verb 'armer' and the noun 'armateur' have nothing whatever to do with armaments. In fields perhaps more familiar, Root has given careful thought to the problems that beset Turgot, Necker, and Calonne: the Crown's debts, its methods of borrowing, urban food supplies, popular riots, the guilds and their uses, the burden of venal offices, and the official monopolies here called 'mercantilism'. Many accepted versions of French history are challenged. George Rudé and E. P. Thompson might have enjoyed Root's ideas about 'the macroeconomic consequences and costs of successful crowd action' (p. 82). Alternative explanations for the behaviour of French peasants are developed in a lengthy discussion of Georges Lefebvre's writing. John Law's bank failed, Root contends, 'because of the Crown's inability to make credible fiscal commitments' (p. 184). The guiding purpose in all this is to determine the unconscious economic effects of political decisions and institutions. This is an interesting idea, and the reader soon finds himself playing Root's game. It might be fruitful, for instance, to investigate other political differences between France and England, such as the persecution of Huguenot merchants who fled to England in large numbers, with wealth and abilities that lent them an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. Root might find that the economic effects of the official Roman Catholic ideology were not, after all, negligible. But as they are, this book's adventures in ideas will certainly stimulate some readers.

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The Esterházyys may have been the greatest magnates of eighteenth-century Hungary, but we remember them for the activities of their humble (well, fairly humble) *Kapellmeister*, Joseph Haydn. Haydn's service at Eisenstadt and Esterháza furnishes a kind of leitmotif for Rebecca Gates-Coon's *The Landed Estates of the Esterházy Princes. Hungary during the Reforms of Maria Theresia and Joseph II* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1994; pp. xxi + 312. £40), and the detective work of generations of Haydn scholars supplies grist to her mill. Yet the originality of her book lies in its demonstration of just how unmemorable were Haydn's masters Paul Anton (1711–62) and his brother Nicholas (1714–90), how typical of Hungarian grand seigneurs of their age. Paul Anton was a Habsburg diplomat, briefly and unsuccessfully; Nicholas performed bravely as an officer in the Seven Years War, and later cut a stylish figure as Captain of Maria Theresa's new Hungarian life-guard in Vienna. Within Hungary they functioned as successive high sheriffs of the county of Sopron, implementing royal policies and dispensing patronage over a territory roughly the size of Shropshire. But mainly these Esterházy princes were landowners, managing twenty-nine separate estates (among them more than half of Sopron) in what Dr Gates-Coon shows to have been thoroughly conservative fashion. Though outwardly loyal to their reformist Austrian sovereigns, they maintained a traditional agrarian regime, taking in their stride both the peasant disturbance