

English summaries

Holiness and Savagery: Two Images of Medieval Peasants

P. FREEDMAN

It is often remarked that peasants in medieval literature, art, and historiography are depicted as coarse, fit only for labor, even as bestial. There was also a tradition emphasizing the suffering and simplicity of rustics who were portrayed as closest to God and salvation by reason of their wretched but virtuous condition on earth. Aspects of this dual image could be reconciled by invoking a supposed harmony between terrestrial obedience and heavenly reward. Particularly in the period after 1350, however, the contradiction between favorable and unfavorable images sharpened. Late-medieval denunciations of servitude and even justifications for peasant revolts are related to the lamentations and praise of rural labor found in earlier discourse.

Alimentary Symbolism in the Medieval Novel

A. GUERREAU-JALABERT

In medieval novels, details related to food reflect not a concern for realism, but a rigorous symbolic code which transforms actual practices in order to express the social meaning of food: for example, the importance given to venison and the denial of the opposition between meat and fish are both informed, on the alimentary level, by a specific representation — secular and aristocratic — of society. Similarly, the themes of the Round Table and the Grail, involving as they do an implicit reference to the eucharistic model, also contribute to the formation of an ideal world in which the values of chivalry are invested with the spiritual and sacred legitimacy which in reality characterises the Church.

The author applies the methodological analysis of a body of « details » to reveal the coherence of the system of expression at work in these novels, and to establish the fact that the search for a « description of concrete realities » in these texts can only lead to a dead end.

The Female Body and Objects in Polecia

G. KABAKOVA

Polecia, situated North of the Ukraine and South of Bielorrussia, is a culturally conservative region, considered by many specialists to be the birthplace of Slavic civilization. Local perceptions of the human body — and in particular of the female body — allow us to reconstitute a coherent mythological system which still persists today. An analysis of oral literature, of social rites and of linguistic data results in the discovery of the basic structural codes — including, among others, clothing, recipients

and habitat — informing this system. Basing her analysis on certain key objects (a shirt, a pot, a kneading trough, an oven) charged with symbolic values both in the ritual context and in daily life, the author reveals the details of a form of discourse regarding the social and biological functions of the women.

The Political Economy of Franco-British Exchanges

J. V. NYE

Recent research indicates that conventional wisdom regarding the relative openness of British and French trade policy in the nineteenth century has been mistaken. Average French tariff levels were substantially below those of Great Britain till the 1870s, and traditional work has been too narrowly focused on trade in manufacturing to the exclusion of agriculture and wine. This essay reexamines our historical understanding of British and French economic development in the light of these findings and seeks to integrate this work with the revisionist literature on the relative sizes of the eighteenth century British and French states. We see how trade and tax policy in the first half of the nineteenth century was inevitably stamped by the course of political developments from the time of Louis XIV to the end of the Napoleonic Wars and how in Britain, the nature of her fiscal structure was affected by the trade wars engaged in with France. We speculate on how misinterpretation of commercial history has distorted our views of the two countries and we further speculate on how political and economic developments in the eighteenth century that had hitherto been treated as separate interacted to shape and influence the political economy of the nineteenth century.

One, Two, Three, Four Markets?

Capital Market Integration the US and the UK (1865-1913) R. CULL and L. E. DAVIS

This paper contrasts the degree of maturity of the London and New York Stock Exchanges between 1865 and 1914. Relying on data on capital calls in the London market and daily prices in New York, it argues that the scope of UK portfolio investment in the US was substantially greater than the scope of American portfolio investment offerings on the New York Stock Exchange. Further, although the total contribution of British capital to American development was not large, the marginal contribution was substantial — substantial because, at least until the late nineteenth century, the more mature British market was able to direct financial resources to regions and industries that were not served by the still embryonic NYSE. By the early twentieth century, however, the New York exchange began to emerge as a truly national domestic capital market servicing a wider array of both regions and industries.

Continuity and Renewal of the Monetary Debate

M. AGLIETTA

The central bank is a major institution of market economies. As the outcome of a long evolutionary process, the central bank is a creation of the market, not a creation of the state. The modern transaction theory of money and payments systems, coupled with historical evidence drawn from American British experiences, can help show this basic result. Because interbank payments have to be centralized, the best way to solve the trade-off between efficiency and security of payments is the settlement of clearing balances on the books of the central bank.

This insight leads us to refuse the manicheism of hayekian doctrine with regard to the debate between Free Banking and Central Banking. Because it is the center of the payments system, the central bank has differentiated itself from other banks through a learning process. Concern for systemic and global stability emerged in the Bank of England during the half century prior to World War I. The Bank developed both the lender of last resort principles and the guidance of the money market by bank rate in order to achieve convertibility.

In the 20th century, powerful social and political trends have nationalized money. The prominence of convertibility has given way to economic policy. However the monetary authorities must have legitimacy to carry out their responsibilities towards the general public. For this involvement to be credible, the central bank shall not support any special interest group. Independence of central banks in the institutional implication of these requirements.

Medieval Social Groups and the Beginnings of Contemporary Sociology O. G. OEXLE

Among the questions which, in the works of F. Tönnies, E. Durkheim, G. Simmel and Max Weber, have constituted the foundation of the social sciences since the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, there are two which have played a primordial role in classical sociological thought without receiving sufficient recognition. These are (1) the problem of the Middle Ages and the « modernity » of the contemporary period, and (2) the role played by groups in society, seen within the context of this same opposition between the two periods. The present article describes the positions of the four « classical masters » of sociology and emphasizes the current value of Max Weber's research on medieval « sworn associations » (guilds and the communes) in relation to the history of private law and « arbitrary law » (« Willkür ») and of the brotherhood contract (« Verbrüderung »). Weber offers a theory of the process of modernization and develops a broad historical perspective which links Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the modern and contemporary periods in the Occident, while it also integrates other civilizations into a comparative perspective.

Armand Colin 1992

Le Directeur de la Publication : Marc Augé

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Armand Colin éditeur. Paris — Dépôt légal : 1992 — N° 6396 — N° 3, juillet 1992

IMPRIMERIE NATIONALE (FRANCE)

N° 2.565.003.5 — Printed in France

N° commission paritaire : 73 172