

Summaries of articles

Models of Demand under the Ancient Regime

J.-Y. GRENIER

This article studies demand for consumer products in a pre-industrial economy. This is done in two stages: firstly a certain number of hypotheses are presented and examined which should allow us to grasp the exchange mechanisms from which the principles of the functioning of demand are deduced. These deductions are then compared with statistical data comprising a large number of runs. This comparison brings to light a number of explanatory regularities which constitute a framework representing the functioning of certain aspects of the market. This paper has two goals: (1) to find results concerning the determination of prices and the amounts demanded as well as the cause of certain cyclical fluctuations, and (2) to propose a more analytic approach to this economic conjuncture which can complete the empirical investigation by elucidating problems which the latter was able to pose but not resolve.

Wheat Price Changes in Certain Western European Towns from the 15th to the 18th Centuries

M.-J. TITS-DIEUAIDE

This article aims at describing the main characteristics of wheat price changes in towns for which there exist extended price records: Amsterdam, Utrecht, Köln, Anvers, Bruges, Paris, Grenoble, Toulouse, Aix-en-Provence, Béziers, Milan, Sienna and Valencia (Spain). As concerns the overall price trend—whose general outlines are already well known—one finds that the steady rise in the sixteenth century was approximately twice as great as that in the eighteenth. Cyclical variations slowly dropped from about 30% in the fifteenth century to 20% in the eighteenth. It is of interest that particularly serious cyclical crises affected almost all of the cities under consideration: a total of 10 in the sixteenth century, but only 7 in the seventeenth and 3 in the eighteenth. We found that there was a slight tendency toward unification of price movement in French towns starting in 1670, though absolute differences remained very marked. This comparative study of prices allowed us to isolate global factors which clearly affected all prices, as well as specific factors which had only local effects.

Economic Calendar among the Lipez Indians of 19th Century Potosí (Bolivia)

T. PLATT

Conflicting interpretations have been offered of South Andean participation in the Potosí mining market. Some posit the mercantile “subordination”, by a combination of fiscal and commodity pressures, of ethnic groups with a cultural preference for “self-sufficiency”. Others see an indian “market rationality” capable of weighing extreme price fluctuations against the corresponding advantages of non-monetary exchange-circuits (trueque). Among the Indians of Lipez during the 19th century, support can be found for both hypotheses: a solution requires attention to local calendars, which organize complex strategies of social reproduction and regulate monthly rhythms of monetary demand. The latter themselves generally respond to rhythms of tributation and market expenditure, rather than to the insistent needs of the mining sector: price maximization becomes a goal during certain periods only, while in others non-monetary exchange through seasonal migration may be preferred beyond any windfall increase in monetary income. Such behaviour is contrasted with that of a group of specialist drovers eager to prolong market participation throughout the year. The growth of free trade policies towards the end of the century leads to the disruption of established strategies and the demonetization of the indian economy: trueque swells not through any mechanism of price advantages, but through the marginalization of indian market activities. The mid-century liberal image of the “irrational” indian, inherently resistant to the market, thus appears to misread a situation which would only emerge with the partial success of Bolivian liberalism itself.

Conflict and Contradiction in Contemporary France

M. AGULHON

The teaching of contemporary French history has only recently been introduced into the Collège de France. As there is but one professorship, its holder must deal with what is most essential: French identity and unity. France is going through a period of crisis, object as it is of impassioned controversies in which the French Revolution and the immigration of Third World peoples figure prominently. The positions adopted by the left and right in these two debates involve glaring internal contradictions: the left’s ’89-style universalism is incompatible with its complacent cultural indifference concerning the Third World, and the right’s defense of French identity is incompatible with its invective against the French Revolution.

According to the author, these contradictions exist because the areas of contention go beyond the rational framework of ideologies, bringing into play collective mentalities which generally work more slowly and confusedly at deeper and unconscious levels.

His conclusion is that the history of mentalities can legitimately prove its mettle and test its models on contemporary political problems.

Collapsing Spheres in Flaubert’s Sentimental Education

D. LA CAPRA

This article attempts to show how Flaubert’s Sentimental Education places in radical jeopardy the role of the binary opposition between private and public spheres in the organization of life and thought. More generally, it offers a critique of narrowly

documentary uses of literature in historiography, and it argues instead for a more complex reading of literary texts—a reading that does not simply reinsert a text in its empirical contexts but indicates how a text responds to its contexts. In this manner, one may arrive at an understanding of how a text is itself a historical event that may have critical as well as documentary relations to its various empirical contexts.

Burial, Baptism and Community in the New-England 1730-1790

J.-L. BROOKE

This article examines the social and religious context of the symbolism and ritual of death in a backcountry region of eighteenth century Massachusetts. It places an analysis of orthodox and dissenting religious cultures within the framework of both the French literature on “attitudes toward death” pioneered by Philippe Aries. Over the long eighteenth century between the 1670s and the 1790s, orthodox Congregationalists, established by law in each town and district, developed and elaborate culture of death which reversed significantly Puritan anti-ritualism. In an ornate tradition of grave effigies placed in carefully situated corporate graveyards, and by inclusive funeral processions, this culture of death became an important means of reasserting collective unity. Conversely, evangelical Baptists, in separating from orthodox churches during the Great Awakening, rejected this culture of death, replacing earthly burial with the watery burial of baptism by immersion as a central summarizing ritual. Evidence examined includes settlement patterns, funerary sculpture, kinship, church membership, and sermon literature.