

John D. Fudge, *Cargoes, Embargoes and Emissaries. The Commercial and Political Interaction of England and the German Hanse, 1450-1510* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1995).

No single book can do everything; no historian can attack each question from every possible viewpoint. Yet some manage to integrate and make sensible use of methods and questions borrowed from other fields and disciplines. In fact, social historians (to use an obvious example) cannot afford to ignore economic and demographic evidence relevant to their topic. Political economy, Fudge's approach, is a standard and proven set of methods and questions, but it is by no means sufficient unto itself. Fudge has tackled a topic that deserves attention, but he has dug a narrow trench in a broad field.

The history of trade and commerce, a specialized sub-discipline of economic history, has led a shadowy existence in the work of historians of early modern Europe. This has to do, in part, with the relative paucity of evidence for commercial dealings from the period. What historians do with the documents they find, much more than the documents themselves, tends to dictate what sort of history gets written. A very different book could have been written using the same documents Fudge mines for evidence concerning Hanseatic trade with England. His disciplinary focus, while admirable — and even necessary for a dissertation — precludes the writing of history that can engage the interest of the non-specialist academic reader.

Because (or perhaps although) he is interested in commerce and its ramifications in the world of international politics, Fudge takes for granted the extraordinary presence of a corporate body of privileged foreign merchants at the "Steelyard" in London. Their dealings with native merchants, agents of the Crown and of the city, and their overseas trade represent a chance to examine the cultural and social history of this much-resented, yet somehow necessary

alien element. The history and on-going justification for Hanseatic trading privileges in England receive only the most cursory of glances, though they could do much to elucidate late-medieval conflicts. Although he mentions it on occasion, he does not seem very sure that the resentment English merchants felt toward their Hanseatic competitors played a significant role in “Anglo-Hanseatic” tensions, perhaps because his gaze tends to rest on the Hanse, the Crown, ‘denizen merchants’, not the individuals he mentions.

Fudge’s explanations of political and commercial conflict between the semi-fictitious Hanse (he argues, against traditional German historiography, that it was falling apart) and “England” (variously: native merchants, the Crown, or the city of London) stand to gain depth and texture from an exploration of the trading (and general) culture of the participants. Cologne’s pragmatic flouting of the *Hansetag* (the corporate assembly) during the Anglo-Hanseatic War (1468-1474), for example, was not the act of just another Hanseatic commercial town among many, but of merchant-citizens of a proud and independent archi-episcopal mini-state who had, collectively and individually, very important trading interests at London. This latter point (the crucial importance of the English trade to Cologne’s merchants) is not made until page 129, though the special status accorded to Cologners is discussed on pages 55-56 and following. Contemporary Colognese evidence would have helped round out the picture: were Colognese merchants acting against the wishes of the Council and prince-electoral-archbishop, or did the authorities take their cue from the merchants? Likewise, Lowland attitudes toward English merchants, of which we get a tantalizing glimpse on page 155, could have been explored in an attempt to get closer to the dynamics of cultural interaction as it accompanied and helped determine trading relationships.

A few details detract from the overall impression of technical competence and thoroughness within the sphere Fudge has staked out for himself. Nowhere is the term “Steelyard” defined or explained (though there is a serviceable glossary). The final date of 1510 seems arbitrary, since the book really ends with the reign of

Henry VII. Some of the main reasons for dealing with this topic, such as the large volume of Hanseatic trade (it usually accounted for one-third of London's overseas trade), the importance of Hanseatic trade to English national interests, and of the English trade to Cologne's merchants, are spelled out in detail in the last two chapters only.

Largely fictitious reified entities such as the Hanse, England, Cologne, Lübeck, etc., are too often accorded the status of actors, as in traditional diplomatic history. To his credit, Fudge does argue that Hanseatic towns had differing interests — he does a good job distinguishing the Baltic *Esterlings* (traders in bulk goods, largely) from the Rhenish and Netherlandish Hansards, who dealt in higher-value items. Yet the reasons for such specialization and its influence on trading behavior receive no attention. He maintains that far from having cooperated more closely as a result of the Anglo-Hanseatic War, as conservative German historians have usually argued, Hanseatic traders and their towns pursued their separate interests more freely after mid-century. This is a real contribution to the field, and would seem to flow largely from Fudge's pioneering exploration of Hanseatic dealings in England. His solid archival work merits close attention. Yet he fails to engage in any depth the German political historiography on the Hanse, especially its supposed national importance for "German" culture, identity, empire.¹

The general academic reader can expect a reasonably detailed picture of Hanseatic transactions in England during these sixty years, but neither a close analysis of intra-Hanseatic relations nor of the larger reasons, motivations and consequences of trade between Hanseatic merchants and their English counterparts. Finally, neither the sort of profits such ventures produced, nor the role of the factors, sailors, and actual workers who produced the products

1 See Dirk Schümmerr's critique of Hanseatic history, "Geschichte alsWaffen-werk. Die Hanseforscher entdecken ihre Vergangenheit," in *expndtw Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitungexpndtw*, 21 July 1995, N 5.

traded ever breaks the surface of this history of international elites. Such histories are not obsolete, but they are merely and always partial in more than one sense of the word.

Andrew Colin Gow
University of Alberta

Suzanne Morton, *Ideal Surroundings. Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press 1995).

Dans *Ideal Surroundings*, Suzanne Morton offre une analyse détaillée de la vie domestique dans une banlieue ouvrière de Halifax, construite suite à l'explosion survenue en 1917 dans le port de cette ville. Faisant appel à une large variété de sources, dont les archives de la *Halifax Relief Commission* —un organisme mis en place après l'explosion pour planifier la reconstruction — l'ouvrage se situe au carrefour des préoccupations les plus récentes en histoire des femmes, de la famille et de la classe ouvrière. Tout en examinant l'interrelation entre la classe, l'âge et le genre dans la construction de l'identité des habitants de Richmond Heights durant les années 20, Morton accorde une grande importance aux contours de l'économie régionale, de même qu'à la place de la culture et de la consommation de masse. L'idéal domestique auquel les hommes et les femmes de Richmond Heights aspiraient est donc reconstitué en tenant compte de la prégnance des idéologies entourant la répartition des rôles sociaux de sexes, mais aussi de l'impact des transformations économiques propres aux Maritimes et de phénomènes plus largement nord-américain, comme l'avènement de la société de consommation.

Dans le premier chapitre, l'auteure s'attarde à décrire l'environnement physique et social dans lequel se situe son étude. Elle retrace tout d'abord les origines de ce premier projet de construction domiciliaire initié par des pouvoirs publics au Canada, puis elle dresse un bref portrait des habitants de cette banlieue et souligne le contraste entre le milieu, conçu pour élever les standards de vie de