Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

Patricia Fumerton

*Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor
in Early Modern England*

Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006. Pp. xxv, 237.

Patricia Fumerton avers that she began *Unsettled* as an act of “scholastic penance,” but the result is a rewarding, even enjoyable, examination of the practices and perceptions of the working poor in early modern England. Focusing on the subsistence mobility of vagrants, itinerant laborers, and the housed poor, Fumerton outlines a fundamentally spacious subjectivity that may have been available to lower-order participants in an emerging fluid market economy.

Fumerton divides her study into three parts. Part 1, “Unsettled Subjects,” begins with an exploration of the world of vagrants. Wandering, and sometimes driven, from town to town, frequently changing jobs, and forming and re-forming relationships, itinerants were detached, either forcibly or voluntarily, from any sense of stable community or family. The housed poor may have shared similar experiences of displacement, if only on a figurative level. Servants and apprentices lacked the security of an assured place, as positions were often lost, indentures broken, and sexual and familial attachments discouraged. Lower-order male, and especially female, householders increasingly engaged in intermittent, makeshift, and multiple forms of labor, in and out of the home, in order to stave off destitution. Such domestic multitasking, argues Fumerton, was the geographically placed equivalent of itinerant labor. The working poor need not have been homeless to have experienced the conditions of unsettledness, including persecution by a society reluctant to acknowledge the legitimacy or exigency of mobile labor in the new market economy. Fumerton’s analysis of Thomas Harman’s *Caveat for Common Cursitors Vagabondly Called Vagabonds* reveals Harman’s attempt to mollify social anxiety by portraying the diversified working poor as role-playing rogues, deceitfully swapping jobs and disguises for undeserved material gain. In scapegoating the poor, Harman aimed to conceal the early modern economy’s promotion of, and dependence on, a lower-order mobile workforce. Though the working poor could scarcely afford to engage in the sort of theatrical role-playing posited by Harman, Fumerton suggests that the frequent role-speculation involved in spatial and occupational mobility may have produced feelings of physical, economical, and/or psychological dislocation—a detached, provisional, and unsettled subjectivity, which may have been experienced by some of the working poor, some of the time.

To further explore this emergent lower-order subjectivity, Fumerton turns in Part 2, "The Case of Edward Barlow," to an examination of seamen, who by the very nature of their occupation epitomize the "landless" or displaced early modern subject. Focusing on the journal of Edward Barlow, a poor seaman, Fumerton delineates a multiple and alternating experience of unsettled subjectivity, at once a kind of affective, economic, and spatial freedom, and an enslavement to an urge for continual displacement. Born into the ranks of the very poor, Barlow embarked on a life of perpetual physical and psychological itinerancy, moving from ship to ship, harbor to harbor, and relationship to relationship, even as he remained "settled" in his occupation as seaman. The coastal sketches that accompany Barlow's narrative, which unfailingly depict ships entering and leaving various ports, demonstrate the disconnection and dislocation inherent in Barlow's unsettled habits of mind. Fumerton's analysis of Barlow's charts, usefully augmented by numerous illustrations and an appendix "On the Variation of the Compass," is clear and insightful, a valuable contribution to the growing field of research on early modern cartography. Fumerton's reading of Barlow's text is likewise convincing; however, the extent to which Barlow's account reflects a common experience of lower-order unsettled subjectivity is not entirely clear. As Fumerton acknowledges, writing itself makes Barlow atypical, given his lowly origins and lack of formal education. Accounting elsewhere for the scarcity of written narratives by the working poor, Fumerton suggests that unsettled subjectivity did not encourage self-reflection. Although Barlow's journal is not, according to Fumerton, particularly reflective, the very act of creating a narrative for an imagined audience indicates a level of introspection that may have separated Barlow from his contemporaries and is not accounted for fully enough. Fumerton's assertion that Barlow's journal reflects an unsettled subjectivity shared by some, not all, of the working poor, if only on an intermittent basis, is plausible, but somewhat evasive.

Fumerton moves from a private to a public expression of unsettled subjectivity in Part 3, "Toward a Lowly Aesthetics of Unsettledness." Early modern sea ballads, particularly those concerned with what Fumerton terms the "constant parting" of seamen and their lovers, contain the dual expressions of stability and displacement, commitment and mobility that Fumerton associates with the unsettled subjectivity available to poor wage laborers on land and sea. Most interesting is Fumerton's discussion of an early modern audience's interaction with such ballads. Sold cheaply and sung aloud on the streets and in the alehouses, ballads offered a range of voices, perspectives, and identities for readers and listeners to take up, participate in, and discard at will. In this sense, the multiple and diverse role-speculation involved

in occupational mobility is mirrored in a lower-order audience's interaction with ballads, but without any psychological cost to the participants. While Barlow's sketches are, in Fumerton's analysis, unsettling in their depiction of perpetual itinerancy, ballads provide a benign version of unsettled subjectivity that could be freely imagined and cast off as it could not be in real life. Though Fumerton maintains that ballads offer the fullest expression of unsettled subjectivity, an examination of other forms of cheap and ephemeral literature might shed additional insight onto the perceptions of the poor. It is, as Fumerton herself acknowledges, a field worthy of further exploration.

Overall, *Unsettled* is an original, intriguing, and carefully researched foray into the practices and mentality of early modern England's working poor. Fumerton's closing remarks, which compare the position of the working poor in seventeenth-century England with those in modern America, underline the relevance of her work, not only for scholars of the early modern period, but also for citizens of our "new" global economy.

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Grace Tiffany

Love's Pilgrimage: The Holy Journey in English Renaissance Literature
Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006. Pp. 217

This lucid and compelling study explores the "various transformations of the holy journey—to amorous, military, and capitalistic adventuring and to inner spiritual travel" through the best-known English writers of the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Beginning with the observation (already common in Chaucer's time) that pilgrimage was one of the few opportunities for travel afforded to all classes, Tiffany charts the salient features of the "holy journey" as it winds through post-Reformation English literature, with chapters devoted to Spenser, Shakespeare, and Donne. The controversial argument of her concluding chapter on Milton—that in many ways he was less Protestant than Donne—is both arresting and cogent. Tiffany's volume is a necessary point of embarkation for students attempting to unravel the religious language behind this literary and dramatic trope. Her bibliography of both primary and secondary sources is excellent and up to date, and her acute analyses—especially of Donne and Milton—will doubtless underpin future studies. The volume closes with a succinct "coda" that provides an overview of the terrain she has traversed from the Catholic pilgrim on a voyage meant to assist his individual salvation to the