

tance of infanticide and induced abortion in England's demographic history before the late nineteenth century.

These criticisms are not intended to detract from what is by any standard a triumphant achievement. Here is a book that no one interested in the social history of western Europe can ignore. It would be a signal service to students if the authors could produce an abridged paperback version, supplemented by a glossary defining the key technical terms.

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CLAUS-PETER CLASEN. — *Die Augsburger Weber: Leistungen und Krisen des Textilgewerbes um 1600*. Augsburg: Verlag Hieronymus Mühlberger, 1981. Pp. 460.

The weavers of Augsburg helped make their city the principal textile producer in Central Europe from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. Yet weaving went hand in hand with poverty, a fact ably demonstrated in this detailed study of the industry at the high point of its productive capacity and international fame. Explanation of what he considers an ironic social situation thus becomes one major theme for the author, Claus-Peter Clasen, who is known best for several articles and two books on the history of Anabaptism. That earlier topic brought him quite naturally to the Augsburg City Archives, where he was impressed with the rich collection of sources for an examination of the city's population and social structure. Despite their numerical and general economic importance in the textile centre, however, the Augsburg weavers had scarcely been touched by modern researchers. Hence, Clasen decided to begin what is presumably an even larger project with this monograph on the weavers.

The author has given us as concrete and detailed an analysis of the Augsburg weaving trade as any specialist in early modern economic, industrial, or German urban history would ever desire. There are lacunae in every piece of research, of course, but Clasen inspires confidence that he has unearthed everything the documents will allow us to know about his subject. The book is based almost exclusively on primary sources and represents a kind of assiduous archival research rather uncommon among historians on this side of the Atlantic. But it is also written so closely to its sources and focussed so exclusively on the weavers, without much concern for placing their situation in the broader framework of Augsburg history, let alone of comparative urban or industrial developments in Central Europe, that Clasen's work faces the prospect of being used only by determined specialists who already know much about Augsburg or about premodern industry and wish to draw on this case study for particular information useful for their own purposes. Such a limited audience would be understandable but unfortunate, because the patient reader of this dense, four-hundred-sixty-page volume — even the impatient user only of its excellent indices — can discover a mine of information, both descriptive and analytical, about the lives of ordinary working people in an early modern city.

Clasen discusses a whole range of topics related to his weavers. Not only does he address the old issue of timing local economic decline in the seventeenth century and conclude that an initial faltering in the second decade left the fustian industry remarkably strong until its virtual collapse in the 1630s. He examines family

and household size, estimates wealth from tax payments, explains the process of cloth production, records governmental regulation of the industry, explores the values and interests that informed economic policies, presents statistics on production levels and costs, and finds, as I noted above, a glaring discrepancy between the poverty of eighty percent of the Augsburg weavers and their city's reputation as the great textile center of the German Empire. Clasen's analyses are lucid and judicious, and few of them will evoke strong disagreement or much surprise. The strength of his book lies in its concrete picture of day-to-day problems and practices rather than any methodological or even interpretive innovations. Here are graphic discussions of institutional arrangements and working conditions in a craft carefully overseen by municipally appointed supervisors. Kinds of cloth and the operation of looms are well explained. Clasen delineates the precise roles of women and apprentices in the trade, and he carefully examines the different groups of weavers that influenced industrial policy in Augsburg. The give-and-take between city council and craftsmen in forging policy is appropriately highlighted, as is the government's basic concern with protecting less wealthy masters so they would not need public poor relief. That viewpoint informed the council's opposition to any large-scale organization of the trade as well as its cooperation with efforts to limit admissions to the craft after the 1560s. Clasen explains the widespread poverty among Augsburg fustian producers as the result of overcrowding, overproduction, and the failure of cloth prices to keep up with the costs of flax and food, with inflation rates of 98 percent vis-à-vis 204 and 300 percent, respectively, from 1500 to 1619. This explanation is well documented here and, of course, widely accepted by early modernists elsewhere. The absence of the domestic system (*Verglasssystem*) in the city lends weight to Clasen's analysis, though it does not necessarily support his view (p. 419) that the notion of early capitalism is inapplicable to the Augsburg weavers, whose fustians did move, after all, in the great international markets of the period. The connections were none the less real for being indirect, and, in fact, Clasen presents some valuable information about the economic nexus, especially regional but also international, of which his weavers and his city were a part.

Perhaps more important for readers of this journal, however, are the social statistics on family and household size, wealth, and housing assembled on the weavers in comparison with the entire population (including many propertyless people) entered in the tax registers and muster or grain-consumption rolls in the first decades of the seventeenth century. The author's surprise at the small size of weavers' families (p. 45) will puzzle his readers, I suspect, as will his initial explanation for the shortage of female servants. Rather than an inadequate supply of women (p. 47), the problem lay in the fact that women could earn more working as independent spinsters, washers, or carders than as servants in masters' households (p. 133). Likewise puzzling is Clasen's assertion that the poorest weavers probably practiced birth control, something not impossible but also not demonstrable with the kind of source this meticulous historian has used here. But these are rather minor problems in a book that offers such rich social description and whets our appetites for a broad analysis of the entire Augsburg population at this critical juncture of its history.

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