

English Economic Thought in the Seventeenth Century: Rejecting the Dutch Model.
Seiichiro Ito.

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viii + 216 pp. \$160.

Already in the fifteenth century Dutch fishermen were catching herring on the open sea, gutting and salting them onboard factory ships (*haringbuiszen*), and exporting valuable preserved fish to foreign markets. By the second half of the sixteenth century, the herring busses numbered more than four hundred and the *Grote Visserij* of the North Sea was a leading factor in the rise of the Republic to commercial superpower status. The waters exploited by the Dutch stretched into the Dogger Bank and up to the eastern coasts of England. English observers, seeing herring as a glaringly apparent cause of their relative commercial inferiority, were gripped by the desire to “catch up”. This rivalry (or, more precisely, the English view of it) ably serves Seiichiro Ito as the jumping-off point for *English Economic Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, a well-researched and sometimes compelling intervention in what have become increasingly important debates about economic emulation and the so-called jealousy of trade, debates given unabating contemporary relevance first in 1989 and now—as Ito corroborates in a short but searching and personal postscript—in the uncertain global future surrounding the conceivable windup of American economic hegemony and the rise of China.

In the early seventeenth century, Ito argues, English merchant-writers and pamphleteers presented the Dutch herring industry, and then Holland more generally, as a model for England to follow. To a mostly technical catalogue of piscatory desiderata, one rounded out by easy tropes of Dutch thrift and English idleness, were added whole lists of Dutch advantages like low interest rates and the registration of landed estates. By midcentury, it had become clear that Dutch institutions could not simply be transplanted onto English soil but had instead to be adapted to the English character, developed on and in English terms. By century’s end, the Dutch model had been rejected and a properly English economic discourse emerged. English economic thought was, Ito contends, “fertilized in discussions on fishery and hatched in the ensuing controversies over monetary matters” (10). Ito seems always painfully aware of having entered an especially well-ploughed scholarly field, repeatedly framing his own claims in relation to simplified summaries of the works of other historians.

Even though these monetary matters do ultimately come to the fore in the rejection of the Dutch model, Ito would have this insight—about the primacy of fisheries in Anglo-Dutch emulation—set his work meaningfully apart from that of recent scholars, e.g., Craig Muldrew or Carl Wennerlind, who refocus the historiographical discussion around credit and finance. Yet Ito’s concept of the Dutch model, with its cafeteria menu of options (skip this, try some of that), is not coherent enough to justify demanding that the parts of it remain grafted together.

English jealousy of Dutch fisheries was long ago highlighted by Charles Wilson. And Joyce Appleby, forty years ago, already identified rivalry with and emulation of the Dutch as the essential context for the development of seventeenth-century English economic thought. The importance of economic emulation has, however, come to be most strongly associated with the work of the late Istvan Hont, or perhaps now of Sophus Reinert, whose important book on emulation and national economic models is strangely missing from Ito's apparatus. Ito distinguishes his view of emulation from that of Hont, who had argued that, in a world of interstate relations driven by commercial competition, emulation could serve as an alternative to outright aggression, indeed that it could negate it, substituting the marketplace for the battlefield. In the Hontian scheme, these ideas vindicated *ab ovo* something like post-Cold War liberalism, with its idealized vision of self-perpetuating superiority without malice, against a Roman (or Skinnerian) liberty, with its fateful wars of empire and conquest.

The writers he studies, Ito suggests, believed no such thing, using emulation not to resolve the jealousy of trade (as in Hume or Smith) but as a prompt for internal reform. Ito's sixteenth century is, in some quintessential way that sets it apart from earlier and later centuries (until our own fraught moment), "uncertain, unsure, unsafe and unreliable"; and emulation is how nations can make their way in a world with "no clear picture of the future" (195). In this view, the English emulation of the Dutch is a paradoxical success, an ultimately self-subverting act of imitation that produces autochthonous institutions. A Dutch model with English characteristics.

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Imagining Ireland's Pasts: Early Modern Ireland through the Centuries.
Nicholas Canny.

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The early modern period was arguably the most formative in Ireland's history, not least for the ways in which later writers contended with it. Nicholas Canny's *Imagining Ireland's Past: Early Modern Ireland through the Centuries* offers the first assessment of the many ways in which those centuries were considered, from contemporaries through writers in the generations to come. As such, the book provides a brilliant picture of Irish historical writings as sharing continuities across the *longue durée* even as they remained heterogeneous, contested, and deeply of their moment.

A short review cannot do justice to the depth and range of Canny's study, but a few themes may be highlighted. The first is Canny's emphasis on historical visions of early modern Ireland working in dialogue, even as they followed their own trajectories. Richard Stanihurst, for example, drew on Gerald of Wales to assert the success of the