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Race, Gender and the Body in British Immigration Control: Subject to Examination

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to value ratios and minimum deposit requirements). Samy identifies a shift among these societies from “relationship” to “transactional” lending—that is, lending without the detailed information on customers’ trustworthiness and resources that had underpinned the earlier extension of mortgage lending to the working classes. Rapid expansion of the leading building societies required a proliferation of branches in order to maximize deposits growth, breaking with the relational lending role of their traditional agency networks. This was accompanied by increased risk taking, which Samy attributes to the self-interested actions of the large societies’ directors, who realized that their incomes were strongly related to the size of their deposits and became “bent on maximizing their personal wealth at any cost” (263). Thus, when the Second World War provided a major “shock” to the sector, the result was a spike in mortgage defaults (though this did not threaten the solvency of the movement).

The Building Society Promise has all the strengths that characterize the Oxford Historical Manuscripts series, providing a wealth of new evidence on the changing behavior, customer base, and impacts of the building society movement. It represents a significant advance in our knowledge of how building societies operated, but, inevitably, the advance in knowledge also raises new questions. For example, Samy provides evidence of a spike in building society repossessions during the Second World War, but it is not clear whether the War constituted a “normal” economic shock, given that it led to the effective conscription of most of the working population (military and civilian), while housing assets were subject not only to economic depreciation but physical danger (bomb damage). Further research might also be undertaken on the motivations of expansionary building society directors and their relative remuneration (Samy shows that their salaries were high relative to directors of large companies, but it would also be useful to know how the time devoted to the institution by typical major company, and building society, directors compares).

However, these are quibbles and do not detract from what is a particularly impressive monograph based on an equally impressive doctoral thesis. Samy now lives in the United States, where he is studying for the Catholic priesthood. Given the long history of people combining holy orders with academic study, we can only hope that he will follow this tradition.

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EVAN SMITH and MARINELLA MARMO. *Race, Gender and the Body in British Immigration Control: Subject to Examination*. Migration, Diaspora and Citizenship Series. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Pp. 196. \$110.00 (cloth).
 doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.227

Evan Smith and Marinella Marmo’s new book, *Race, Gender and the Body in British Immigration Control: Subject to Examination*, finally gives full attention to a fascinating but often forgotten moment in the history of British immigration control: the virginity tests of South Asian migrants in the 1970s. From 1968 to 1979, immigration officers intermittently ordered gynecological exams for South Asian women whose marriage or engagement status was under review. As Smith and Marmo effectively show, these exams underscore the violations of civil rights that regularly occur in immigration control, and present an opportunity to understand border zones as sites where gender and marriage roles, state power, and perceptions of the body are negotiated. In a number of brief but well-organized chapters, Smith and Marmo explore the implications of these exams for understandings of the border zone and the body in states with increasingly stringent immigration barriers. Ultimately, they effectively exhibit that virginity testing was one particularly invasive function of a British immigration control system that distrusted Indian and Pakistani migrants, expected them to be both

deviant and submissive, and scrutinized women's bodies to separate "desirable" and "undesirable" migrants.

In chapter 1 Smith and Marmo use previous histories of immigration policy and Hansard debates to provide background on the British immigration control system. They synthesize the work of such scholars as Randall Hansen, Kathleen Paul, Laura Tabili, John Solomos, and Zig Layton-Henry to show how policy makers privileged white laborers and from 1962 began to balance a "numbers game" that purportedly effected harmonious race relations between migrants of color and native Britons (30). With each new set of legislation, immigration loopholes tightened to separate those migrants deemed useful and appropriate from others. In chapters 2 and 3 Smith and Marmo move from policy to practice, noting that new restrictions in the 1971 Immigration Act not only made South Asian women the largest group of incoming migrants, but also those under the most physical scrutiny to prove their value to the state. Immigration officers assumed wide powers of discretion and discrimination under the Act, and could interview incomers, impose fines, refuse entry, and revoke papers and passports. Warned by their superiors that Britain had become a destination for the world's disadvantaged peoples, immigration control officers ordered medical exams for women that looked first for disease and medical disability. But, importantly, virginity tests examined women for physical signs of sexual activity or pregnancy to ensure they came as proven wives and mothers for working South Asian men. As "proper" wives, they improved the well-being of their husbands or fiancés and supposedly contributed to the broader ill-defined goal of improved race relations by keeping South Asian men from sexual relationships with white women. According to this logic, medical examinations helped determine the fitness of women migrants to build monogamous nuclear families within ethnic communities separate from white society.

In chapter 4 Smith and Marmo recall the government's response to the exposure of the practice in a February 1979 report in the *Guardian*. In reviewing Home Office and Foreign Commonwealth Office files, they reveal that denials by James Callaghan and Margaret Thatcher were outlandish and bogus. Both leaders claimed the practice happened only overseas at British High Commissions, and Thatcher's administration obfuscated an investigation by the Commission for Racial Equality. In chapter 5 Smith and Marmo trace India's unsuccessful bid to call for condemnation by the United Nations. Britain eventually negotiated a half-baked public apology to the victims after considering, and then rejecting, the possibility of paying settlements. In chapter 6 they extend consideration of migrant women's bodies to other medical examinations, including the development of DNA evaluation to establish familial lineage. They retell the story of Anwar Ditta, a Pakistani-British woman who fought for four years to bring her children to the United Kingdom. She succeeded only when DNA evidence proved their relation. In exploring the ramifications of early DNA testing, the authors appropriately return to theorizing the female migrant body as a site of scrutiny, discrimination, and value-assessment.

One of the impressive strengths of the work is Smith and Marmo's chosen interpretive framework, especially given the paucity of academic investigation into the topic. Though a rereading of Foucault's "biopolitics" is to be expected, they also effectively incorporate Giorgio Agamben's premise that in managing mass populations, states exercise power by assuming bodies are *zoés* (bare life) until they prove economically viable or politically useful enough to become *bíos* (political life). They regularly suspend migrants' rights in a "state of exception" where state intervention becomes both commonplace and accepted. In borrowing these concepts, they better flesh out the notion of Britain's ever-expanding immigration "threshold" and how the requirements for joining the citizenry constantly shift given current political conditions and priorities. States exercise their authority, Smith and Marmo suggest, when they police the threshold, judging how individual bodies (and not just migrant groups) can be detrimental to fictional visions of British societal "health."

Importantly, Smith and Marmo also stress that the long development of immigration policy is not just the result of political jockeying or anti-immigration sentiments, but also has been

influenced by diplomatic, legal, economic, cultural, and humanitarian concerns (22). They assert that chief among states' goals is the desire to keep order, a concept borrowed from Roxanne Lynn Doty. Due to shifting economic demands and new dynamics in a postcolonial, globalizing world, immigration control provides a fictive sense of order to address the fragmentation and contradictions that these global mechanics generate. In the end, the astute use of a wide variety of theorists and sociohistorical frameworks help position the topic at the intersection of biopolitics, racism, and statecraft.

A few minor debilities present themselves. First, because the number of documented examinations is so few—roughly 140 at the most—some of the chapters feel more theoretical and interpretive than fully fleshed out. Smith and Marmo make the most of previously unfound documents as their evidentiary base, but some chapter sections feel short and lacking in voice. Second, their claim that this episode in British immigration control worked to reinvigorate the division between colony and metropole established in the Victorian empire is often asserted rather than demonstrated with concrete evidence. Despite these minor blemishes, the work is surely a wonderful addition to British histories of immigration.

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EMMA VICKERS. *Queen and Country: Same-Sex Desire in the British Armed Forces, 1939–45*. Gender in History Series. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013. Pp. 202. \$110.00 (cloth).
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With a small book, Emma Vickers attempts to fill a big gap in the histories of the military and of sexuality. In *Queen and Country: Same-Sex Desire in the British Armed Forces, 1939–45*, Vickers explodes the myth that individuals who desired members of the same sex did not participate in the Second World War by exploring the interaction between those desires and the practices of the British government. She argues that the British armed forces had a pragmatic attitude towards same-sex activity that created a temporary and conditional tolerance for expressions of same-sex desire during the Second World War.

The book is organized topically, and in the first chapter, Vickers gives a historical overview of the medical boards inspecting British recruits since the Boer War to demonstrate that physicians were not interested in excluding homosexuals. Instead, their main concern was excluding unstable individuals who might receive pensions for war-induced mental disorders. She attributes this lack of concern about sexuality to the demands of mobilizing 10 percent of the population for military service and to the widespread belief that effeminate men would be “straightened out” by military discipline and exercise. Her key insight is that British law, medicine, and popular culture viewed same-sex desire as acts in a moral and criminological framework rather than as identities. Homosexuals, in other words, had not yet emerged in Britain.

In the second and third chapters Vickers looks at the experience of soldiers with same-sex desires on and off duty in order to show the war provided greater opportunities for expressing their sexuality. She explains that the Navy promoted homosocial ties with the buddy or “oppo” system, which assigned new recruits to a more senior colleague and to a recruit who was approximately the same age. In the Army, the Royal Air Force, and the women’s services, a more informal buddying up system made close emotional bonds between members of the same sex the norm. Vickers uses the concept of “homosex,” same-sex activity that makes no