



BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Waddell, Brodie (2021) The evil May Day Riot of 1517 and the popular politics of anti-immigrant hostility in early modern London. *Historical Research* 94 (266), pp. 716-735. ISSN 0950-3471.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/45493/>

Usage Guidelines:

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>
contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

or alternatively

The Evil May Day Riot of 1517 and the Popular Politics of Anti-Immigrant Hostility in Early Modern London

Brodie Waddell
Birkbeck, University of London

Abstract

London experienced repeated outbreaks of popular xenophobia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the worst coming in the Evil May Day riot of 1517. This article illuminates the hydra-like nature of the stereotype of the immigrant at this time, which rhetorically combined the diverse population of aliens into a single material and political threat. It begins with a close analysis of the riot itself, before examining the continuing relevance of this distinctive caricature. It shows how the perceived 'privileges' afforded to several different sorts of strangers in early modern London made them a special target for popular hostility.

Journal: *Historical Research*

First Submitted: 8 January 2021

Accepted: 8 June 2021

Published: 12 August 2021

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Brodie Waddell, 'The Evil May Day Riot of 1517 and the Popular Politics of Anti-Immigrant Hostility in Early Modern London', *Historical Research* (online 2021), which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1093/hisres/htab024>

This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions. This article may not be enhanced, enriched or otherwise transformed into a derivative work, without express permission from Wiley or by statutory rights under applicable legislation. Copyright notices must not be removed, obscured or modified. The article must be linked to Wiley's version of record on Wiley Online Library and any embedding, framing or otherwise making available the article or pages thereof by third parties from platforms, services and websites other than Wiley Online Library must be prohibited.

London was tense and bitter in early 1517. A chronicler recounted the poisonous atmosphere spreading through the city's streets:

the Genowayes, Frenchemen and other straungers sayde and boasted them selves to be in suche favoure with the kyng and hys counsaill, that they set naughte by the rulers of the citie: And the multitude of straungers was so great about London, that the pore Englishe artificers coulde ska[r]ce get any living: And most of all the straungers were so proude, that they disdained, mocked and oppressed the Englishemen, whiche was the beginning of the grudge.¹

In the eyes of many Londoners, the 'straungers' increasingly threatened every aspect of their lives. It was time, thought some, to take action to defend themselves, their families and their livelihoods from the 'aliens' in their midst.²

On the eve of May Day that year, after weeks of complaints and threats, aggrieved Londoners took to the streets. A crowd more than a thousand strong marched through the city, attacking the enclaves of foreigners over the course of several hours. They destroyed houses and shops, wounding many of the 'aliens' they encountered. Flemish artificers, Italian merchants and the French royal secretary all suffered at the hands of the crowd. The violence lasted until about three o'clock in the morning, when the crowds at last broke up and many were captured, resulting in at least fifteen executions.

Even in this very brief summary of the events of this year, a few obvious points stand out. Seen through the eyes of Londoners at this time, 'the stranger' was undoubtedly a radically simplified stereotype. He was stripped of his individuality and even his nationality, becoming instead merely a sinister foreigner who might be rich or poor, French or Italian. Yet, he – they were all described as men – was not an entirely one-dimensional bogeyman. In fact, what made the strangers so dangerous was the many-headed nature of their threat. Their labour threatened the employment of local artisans. Their trading threatened the profits of London merchants. Their criminality threatened the properties and households of all upright citizens. And, worst of all, their royal patronage and privileges threatened the very foundations of just governance. The riot was in fact an attack on an impossible creature, an alien threat that stitched several distinctive groups into a single fearsome 'Other' who seemingly enjoyed the support of the political elites.

This article will show how these different facets in the foreigner stereotype illuminate the violence of 1517 and how they repeatedly resurfaced in the two centuries that followed 'Evil May Day'. As will be seen, most previous interpretations of the riot have tended to explain it as either a spasmodic outburst of generalised xenophobia or a simple case of economic rivalry.³ In contrast, after an attempt to trace more precisely the series of events that unfolded that spring, my analysis suggests that resentment of the immigrants' supposed 'privilege' offers a better explanation the virulence of the hostility and the diversity of the crowd's targets. Furthermore, grasping the importance of this vicious dynamic in the early sixteenth century allows us to see its continued relevance to later cases of anti-immigrant complaints and violence in the metropolis.

I. The Rising

The events of 1517 are worth examining more closely. The specific fears circulating in advance of the riot, the individual targets chosen by the crowd and the carefully-calibrated response of the government in the aftermath can all contribute to our understanding of the nature of xenophobic conflict in early modern England.

The longest and most frequently cited source of information about Evil May Day is Edward Hall's chronicle of *The Triumphant Reigne of Kyng Henry the VIII*, first published posthumously in 1548.⁴ At the time of the unrest, Hall was probably studying at Cambridge, but later became a lawyer and Member of Parliament.⁵ Hall devotes ten folio pages to the tumults of 1517 and provides a very full account, though of course it is unknown how much is based on his immediate knowledge and how much on hearsay or later recollections, some perhaps added by his publisher Richard Grafton. Happily some of the key details are confirmed by the much briefer narratives in three other contemporary chronicles, including that of the Grey Friars of London which offers another local perspective.⁶ By contrast, the letters sent home by the Venetian ambassador and papal nuncio provide an outsider's view from the time, as does Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia*.⁷ Unsurprisingly, their tone is very different and some of their claims may well be hyperbolic, but they do mention several plausible details that add significantly to our sense of the dynamics that led to the outbreak of violence. Together, these chronicles and reports allow us to reconstruct a reasonably clear picture of how the events unfolded.

The resentments that boiled over in the spring of 1517 had been simmering for years. Complaints about aliens in the capital appear regularly in the chronicles and official records of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Sometimes this hostility sharpened into collective violence, most spectacularly during the revolt of 1381 when a London crowd murdered at least thirty-five Flemings, partly due to a long-running dispute between English and Flemish weavers.⁸ There were further fatal collective attacks on the Flemish and Dutch in 1435-6 and 1470, while rioters assaulted Italian merchants in 1457 and the Hanseatic enclave of the Steelyard in 1493.⁹ Such violence was usually foreshadowed by complaints or lawsuits alleging that these immigrant groups were plotting sedition or monopolising trade.

By the early sixteenth century, tensions were rising again. In 1514, for example, Londoners and other English tradesmen petitioned against the 'grete Multytude' of poor aliens working in country and demanded tighter restrictions on the strangers.¹⁰ Two years later, in April 1516, someone posted handbills on the doors of two prominent London churches against foreigners buying up 'much wool, which was the undoing of Englishmen'.¹¹ Then, over the winter of 1516-17 or thereabouts, a series of incidents had set the city on edge. As noted at the outset of this article, Edward Hall claimed that the insolence of the aliens reached its height at that time, and he specifically recounted three cases where assault, murder and kidnapping committed by strangers was treated leniently or ignored by authorities.¹² Meanwhile, in early March, the Mercers' Company asked Thomas Howard, then Earl of Surrey, to 'help theym ... to subdue all Straungers that be brekers of the previleges of this saide Citie'.¹³

In April, the already heated atmosphere became even hotter thanks to a London broker named John Lincoln. He wrote a furious denunciation of the aliens and persuaded Thomas Bell, a canon at St. Mary Spital, to agree to read it out at the pulpit in Easter Week. Lincoln then 'went from man to

man, saying that shortly they should hear news, and daily excited young people and artificers to bear malice to the strangers'.¹⁴ On April 14th, Easter Tuesday, Bell read the incendiary bill from his pulpit before 'the whole city', a crowd that included the mayor and other magistrates, and followed this with a sermon that 'subtly moved the people to rebel against the strangers'.¹⁵ Such talk emboldened Londoners to start to speak more publicly about their grievances against the aliens, and their fury was stoked further by an incident on the following Sunday at Greenwich. On this occasion, prominent citizens attending a sermon there witnessed several notorious strangers enjoying themselves in the king's gallery, laughing and joking about crimes for which they had gone unpunished. A mercer named William Bolt warned them, saying 'you whoreson Lombardes, you rejoice and laugh, by the masse we will one day have a day at you, come when it will'. News of the strangers' insolence in the royal gallery and of Bolt's stark threat 'was reported about London', and locals began swearing that 'they would be revenged' and would celebrate May Day by plundering and murdering the city's foreigners.¹⁶ They rejoiced that a day of reckoning was finally coming.

On April 28th, some Londoners began to resort to violence. According to Hall's chronicle, on that day, 'diverse young men of the city assaulted the aliens as they passed by the streets, and some were stricken, and some buffeted, and some thrown in the canal'. In response, the mayor had several men arrested and imprisoned in Newgate and other city gaols. Yet the threats and predictions of a massacre continued to circulate. Such talk left men like Sebastiano Giustiniani, the Venetian ambassador, deeply worried. Giustiniani thus approached Cardinal Wolsey, the king's most powerful councillor, who rashly promised to ensure that no such rising would take place. On the last day of April, still worried for his safety, Giustiniani went to Richmond and spoke to the King himself, who apparently 'promised to take every precaution'.¹⁷ However, by this time it was too late. At around half past eight o'clock, the royal and civic authorities finally took action, announcing that every man should 'keep his doors shut, and his servants within'. But of course not everyone heard the proclamation in time, and this led to a confrontation between an alderman and a group of young men playing in the street. When the alderman attempted to arrest one of them, the others resisted and cried out for apprentices to take up their clubs.¹⁸ So began the riot.

By eleven o'clock, hundreds of people had gathered in Cheapside and St. Paul's churchyard.¹⁹ From there, they marched through the city, growing in number to 1,000 or 2,000 as they went.²⁰ The crowd first moved northwest to Newgate prison, where they broke it open and freed the men who had been imprisoned two days earlier for assaulting strangers. The mayor and sheriff confronted them there and ordered them to disperse, 'but nothing was obeyed'. Instead, they proceeded east to the gate of the Liberty of St. Martin le Grand, wherein many foreigners lived and worked. At the gate the crowd were met by Sir Thomas More and other civic officers who again entreated them to return to their homes, but More's efforts proved in vain when some of the residents of the Liberty began throwing stones and bricks. Then, according to Hall, 'the misruled persons ran to the doors and windows of saint Martin, and spoiled all that they found, and cast it into the street, and left few houses unspoiled'. From here, they rushed east across the city to Leadenhall Street where they attacked a grand house called Green Gate, owned by the king's French secretary, John Meautys. The Londoners not only sacked his house, but also would have dismembered the Frenchman himself if not for his lucky escape to an adjoining church belfry.²¹ They then turned south-east and headed for Blanchapleton, an area with a large number of immigrant shoemakers,

situated at the corner of Mark Lane and Fenchurch Street. Here the crowd 'brake[d] the straungers houses, and threwe shooes and bootes into the strete'. The 'ryotous people' also attempted to attack the houses of several Italian merchants, probably on Throgmorton Street near the Priory of Austin Friars, and of the Spanish ambassador. Although the Londoners 'insulted' them, their houses were too well guarded to be pillaged.²² By three o'clock in the morning, some rioters were beginning to disperse of their own accord and others were arrested, so that two hours later when the Earls of Shrewsbury and Surrey arrived in the city with troops they found that 'all the ryot was ceased'.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Over the next two weeks, the city was occupied by thousands of soldiers and a special trial was held. Fifteen to twenty of the rioters, including John Lincoln, were hanged, drawn and quartered, but the hundreds of other prisoners were pardoned by the King in an elaborate ceremony on May 12th.²³ This traditional combination of bloody exemplary punishment and theatrical royal mercy seems to have quieted the city, despite occasional plots and attempts to launch an 'insurrection' against aliens in the months and years to come.²⁴ The gibbets and mass pardon brought an end to the largest riot ever experienced by Tudor Londoners.

II. Deciphering Evil May Day

The turmoil that shook London in 1517 was violent, criminal and deeply xenophobic. Yet it was also much more than that. By analysing the rhetoric of contemporaries, the composition of the crowd and the targets of the riot, it becomes clear that this was an expression of a broader social dynamic rather than a mindless outburst of fear or desperation.

Some previous histories of the riot have dismissed it as merely a spasmodic 'race riot' in which 'a mob of angry young men' were inflamed by 'high spirits' and 'went on the rampage'.²⁵ For Steve Rappaport, it was apparently a momentary aberration, remarkable chiefly for its brevity, spontaneity and 'singularity'.²⁶ In contrast, my interpretation draws on scholarship that has illuminated the long-standing tensions within the city, particularly research highlighting how late medieval and early modern confrontations with aliens often focused on specific practical grievances while also being linked to domestic political struggles.²⁷ The voluminous work of historians of protest also provides useful models. Riots could be 'rational', carefully targeted acts, driven by a sense of social legitimacy.²⁸ Crowds were, in essence, sometimes attempting to enforce the rules rather than break them.

The events of 1517 combined all these elements. They were spurred by specific economic grievances against both poor and rich immigrants, as well as resentment of their reputed criminal proclivities. Moreover, these diverse concerns were tied together by a sense of injustice at the apparent favour and protection enjoyed by aliens at the expense of London's citizens. Whereas previous accounts of Evil May Day have tended to downplay the significance of the rising or present it as a simple case of financial self-interest, by surveying the range of contributing motives we can see their shared link to 'privilege' and its continued relevance long after the executions and pardons.

The economic reasons for the protest are perhaps the most obvious. After all, resident aliens competed directly with native Londoners in multiple ways. The arrival of foreign workers appeared to flood the metropolis with a supply of cheap labour and new expertise, which seemed to undercut the livelihoods of local artisans.²⁹ The number of overseas immigrants in London at this time was large enough for this to be a plausible concern. In 1500, the city had about 3,000 aliens, approximately six percent of its 50,000 residents, and the rhetoric of the time suggests that the number was increasing in the 1510s.³⁰ Moreover, the living conditions of labouring people were visibly declining. Wages for both skilled and semi-skilled workers in the capital were stagnant in the early sixteenth century but the price of necessities rose significantly. In 1517, prices were higher than they had been for over twenty-five years due mostly to rapid inflation in the cost of flour for bread.³¹

This fear was articulated most strongly by Edward Hall, who condemned the rioters but who nonetheless wrote sympathetically of the condition of his poorer neighbours. As we have seen, he claimed that by 1517 'the multitude of straungers was so great about London, that the pore Englishe artificers coulde ska[r]ce get any living'.³² John Lincoln, who wrote the seditious handbill that inspired much of the 'malice', voiced similar anxieties. He expressed his dismay at 'howe miserably the common artificers lyved', unable to find work to support their families thanks to the growing numbers of foreign craftsmen.³³ When Doctor Bell preached from the pulpit at Easter, he too claimed that 'naturall born' workers were 'brought to beggery' by aliens who stole their opportunities for employment.³⁴ Each of these educated men had other complaints about the 'stangers', but they all suggested that poorer Londoners might have a direct material interest in ridding the city of economic competitors.

Many Londoners who earned their bread by the sweat of their brow seem to have agreed with this assessment of the situation. The petition of traders and artisans in 1514 was an early example. They claimed that the country was so overcrowded with strangers selling their own wares and employing their own countrymen that the King's 'naturalle Subgiectis, their wyffes, Chyldren, and servauntis' were 'utterlye decayed, enpowryshed, and undon'.³⁵ Although the voices of labouring people in 1517 are unrecorded, their levels of participation in the unrest reveal their concerns. With few exceptions, the people who took to the streets were exactly the sort of people who Hall, Lincoln and Bell claimed had been reduced to poverty by the strangers. All contemporary observers – including the Grey Friars' chronicler, the Venetian ambassador and the papal nuncio – agreed that apprentices formed the largest contingent in the crowd that night.³⁶ Indeed, according to Hall, it was a cry of 'prentyses and clubbes' that first brought people into the street.³⁷ The key role played by apprentices was probably partly due to the fact that their youth and gender made them especially likely to resort to violence.³⁸ However, another reason for their involvement is surely the fact that it was their economic futures which appeared to be most endangered by the growing presence of alien workers. Foreigners usually avoided serving apprenticeships in London yet still competed directly with natives who hoped to find employment and perhaps set up their own workshops after finishing their seven years of arduous training.³⁹ Economic resentment was thus inevitable. A substantial number of Thames watermen also took part, and a skinner named Stephen Studley was one of the men who assaulted aliens a few days before the riot began.⁴⁰ Women joined in too, with at least eleven of them arrested for rioting and others insulting the strangers even while the city was occupied by soldiers.⁴¹ Although we cannot be certain, these women were likely the same 'wyfes' of

artificers who Lincoln cited in his earlier complaint.⁴² The fact that these particular groups had such a prominent role in the attacks suggests that the economic threat posed by an influx of foreign labour was a one of the driving factors in the conflict.

Just as most of the crowd was composed of English workers, most of the victims of the riot were alien artisans. Giustiniani described how the Londoners attacked 'French and Flemish artificers and mechanics, sacked their houses and wounded many of them'.⁴³ Specifically, contemporary chronicles suggest that French wool-carders and immigrant shoemakers bore the brunt of the crowd's wrath that night.⁴⁴ These aliens represented competitors in a challenging labour market. Their mere presence and willingness to work – especially if combined with distinctive skills learned overseas – was seen to push down wages and steal employment opportunities from native artisans. Notably there is no evidence from the riot of attacks on recent arrivals from elsewhere in England – who were born within the kingdom but worked outside the guild system in London – showing that this was indeed a xenophobic conception of economic competition, rather than a purely practical one. This helps to explain the prominence of concerns about immigrant labour in the vitriolic rhetoric leading up to the riot, and why most of the violence consisted of English workers attacking their alien counterparts.

The 'stranger artificer' was, however, only one of the heads of the foreign hydra. As the events of 1517 make clear, the economic danger came not only from relatively poor immigrant labourers and artisans but also from rich merchants and traders. Wealth and cunning – rather than raw labour – is what made the latter group so worrying. According to Lincoln, these prosperous interlopers undermined the livelihoods of all ranks of English society. For example, 'the Duchemen' in London imported manufactured goods such as locks, baskets, chests and painted clothes, which would otherwise have been produced by native craftsmen. Greedy strangers also encircled 'the city rounde about', buying up vital goods to 'forstall the market' through profiteering and driving poorer Londoners to 'want and sterue'.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, higher up the social scale, alien merchants brought in luxury goods so 'no man almoste byeth of an Englyshman' and they sent out raw materials so that native exporters 'can have no lvyng'.⁴⁶ Previous denunciations, such as the anonymous sheets set on church doors the previous spring and the Mercers' petition in February similarly attacked aliens for their supposed commercial encroachments.⁴⁷ These 'merchaunt straungers' were thus threatening because they seemed to be undercutting native producers by importing foreign goods, pushing up prices by monopolising London markets and stealing Englishmen's trade by dominating overseas commerce.

It is difficult to know how closely these worries matched the reality of commerce in the 1510s. On one hand, cloth exports from London were declining, having shrunk from nearly 66,000 pieces in 1513-14 to only 57,000 in 1516-17. On the other hand, this was not as severe as many other shocks to metropolitan trade in the sixteenth century, nor was it accompanied by a rise in the proportion of cloth exported by aliens.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, there was a sharp rise in the number of 'denizations' and 'naturalizations' of wealthy strangers from 1512 to 1515, which gave them commercial rights nearly equal to those of Englishmen.⁴⁹ Moreover, two of the people most responsible for stirring up the city to violence against aliens had every reason to be deeply concerned about commercial encroachments. Lincoln, the man who wrote the fiercest denunciation and who had his polemic read at the pulpit, was a 'broker' involved in retail or wholesale trading.⁵⁰ Likewise, William Bolt, who

soon after insulted some prominent strangers and predicted a day when the English would take revenge upon them, was a mercer.⁵¹ Moreover, although most of the May Day rioters were manual workers, their targets were not limited to wool-carders and shoemakers. As noted above, the crowd also attempted to attack 'the houses of the Florentine, Lucchese, and Genoese merchants'.⁵² This suggests that the alien menace was perceived to include rich traders alongside poor craftsmen. Despite the potentially vast social distance between these two groups, and the very different types of economic danger each represented, they were closely bound together in the minds of Tudor Londoners.

The direct threat to employment and commerce was compounded by another threat in the form of crime and immorality. In the months before the Evil May Day riot, several incidents served to create an impression of strangers as a source of disorder and depravity. John Lincoln claimed to have seen 600 aliens shooting crossbows together and implied that Englishmen ought to fear the violent potential of such 'assemblies and fraternities'.⁵³ In his chronicle, Edward Hall also recounted in some detail the egregious crimes committed against the English by apparently vicious aliens. In one case, an English carpenter buying doves at Cheapside market was abused by a Frenchman who grabbed the birds from him 'and said they were no meate [fit] for a Carpenter'. In another case, not only did a Frenchman murder an Englishman, but his compatriots then publicly threatened to kill many more. Most notoriously, a Lombard merchant named Francesco de Bardi essentially kidnapped the wife of a local citizen and stole his valuable collection of plate.⁵⁴ Resentment about these incidents was voiced publicly at the time. It was the mocking presence of de Bardi at the Greenwich sermon on April 19th that pushed William Bolt to promise imminent revenge. Moreover, during the riot itself, one of the primary targets of the crowd was John Meautys's house on Leadenhall Street, which sheltered not only wool-carders but also French 'pyckpurses' and others of 'evell disposition'.⁵⁵ The typical alien was thus assumed to be violent, thievish and perhaps even murderous.

What unified these sometimes very different sorts of foreigners – craftsmen, merchants, criminals – turning them into a single stereotypical 'stranger'? It was their apparent *privilege*. This is what transformed them from an object of ridicule into a real threat. The strangers in London at this time were feared as much for their apparent political favour and judicial impunity as for anything else. When we re-examine the most notorious cases of aliens' supposed greed and criminality at this time, the crucial role of official privilege and protection becomes clear.

Indeed, this grievance was physically embodied in the sites attacked by the rioters in 1517. As has been noted, one of the first places they visited was St. Martin le Grand, a large precinct just north of St. Paul's Cathedral that had been granted royal status as a 'sanctuary' and 'liberty' in the medieval period. Throughout Henry VIII's reign, the vast majority of the residents of the liberty were immigrants, and many had settled there precisely because the enclave was exempt from the jurisdiction of the City of London and its guilds.⁵⁶ As a result, St Martin's became known as a space where immigrants could work and trade freely, in direct contradiction to national and local regulations. Not only did its hundreds of residents avoid the restrictions that were supposed to apply specifically to strangers, they even escaped the supervision of the livery companies which governed the working lives of English artisans and retailers, seemingly giving the aliens 'a competitive advantage'.⁵⁷ In addition, because it was a royal sanctuary, St. Martin's was home to some debtors and felons, making it known for its 'Disorders' throughout the Tudor period.⁵⁸

The houses of the Italian merchants attacked in 1517 were probably located on Throgmorton Street, within the precincts of the Priory of Austin Friars. In 1509, the Florentines in London had founded a chapel there to John the Baptist, their patron saint, and many were settled nearby around this time. The great Italian merchant houses of Cavalanti and Bardi – the latter including the notorious Francesco de Bardi – established themselves here at a large double-messuage and ‘great warehouse’, amid the other grand commercial houses that populated this area.⁵⁹ The fact that the Florentines specifically set up ‘within the precinct’ of the Priory is important, because throughout the medieval and early modern period, there was a clear tendency for aliens to settle within bounds of the city’s religious houses, both before and after the Dissolution, thanks to the legal ambiguity that hung over these spaces.⁶⁰ Another key target of the rioters in 1517 was Blanchappleton, a block of houses in Aldgate Ward on the other side of the city. Although it did not enjoy the same official status as St. Martin’s or Austin Friars by this time, it too had long been associated with immigrants. In the fifteenth century, ‘Blancheappilton’ was private manor that sheltered foreign workers from civic oversight.⁶¹ The City had formally taken over its jurisdiction in the 1470s but - as with some other formerly privileged areas - this enclave probably retained a degree of autonomy in the early sixteenth century.⁶²

The large house called Green Gate on Leadenhall Street exemplified a different sort of privilege. In the late medieval period, it incorporated ‘a Tenement and nine Shops’ and its owners included a Lombard and an unpopular courtier who was looted during the rebellion of 1450.⁶³ These associations continued into the early sixteenth century when Henry VIII had granted it to his French secretary, John Meautys, a man notorious for abusing his royal favour, and it was because of this that the crowd attacked it in 1517. As noted above, Meautys harboured alien wool-carders and pickpockets within Green Gate, protecting them from the local authorities. There they practiced their unlawful trades and criminal enterprises, ‘contrary to the Franchises of the Citizens’ and the laws of the land.⁶⁴ However, unlike the residents of St. Martin’s whose special status came from a formal grant, the Frenchmen of Green Gate were sheltered by a more informal, personal sort of patronage. Meautys had been close to the king for many years, having been a royal secretary since his father’s reign and involved ongoing diplomatic negotiations with France.⁶⁵ As a result, royal support allowed him to treat his home as an extra-legal enclave, which in turn led to a profound hatred among those who blamed aliens for London’s troubles. This personal animosity explains why it was reported that the crowd would have beheaded Meautys if they had succeeded in capturing him.⁶⁶

Other prominent but unpopular immigrants also had direct links with the royal court. Francesco de Bardi was an Italian merchant who supplied Henry VIII with some of the luxurious foreign cloth that he so loved – the king’s accounts include payments to him for thirty yards of yellow satin, two ‘rich jackets’, and over £50 of velvet.⁶⁷ De Bardi had been given ‘letters of denization’, giving him legal rights that most aliens lacked.⁶⁸ Most worrying of all, on several occasions in the 1510s, the king offered the Italian his favour in the form of substantial loans and repeatedly granted him licence to export hundreds of sacks of wool to the continent.⁶⁹ Then came the incident which made him into the ultimate symbol of the supposed foreign danger. According to Hall, de Bardi ‘entised’ an Englishman’s wife to come to his house, bringing her husband’s valuable collection of plate with her. When the husband demanded her return, the stranger answered ‘that he shoulde neither have plate

nor wyfe'. In the legal suit that followed, de Bardi not only defeated the Englishman's complaint but also 'arrested the poore man for his wyfes boorde, while he kept her from her husbände in his chamber'.⁷⁰ Instead of protecting native Londoners from the criminal depredations of aliens, the law courts seemed to be punishing them for even requesting redress. As noted above, resentment of this apparent immunity came to a head on 19 April 1517, when de Bardi and other strangers appeared in the king's gallery at a sermon at Greenwich, where they 'Jested and laughed howe that Fraunces kepte the Englishemans wyfe, sayyng that if they had the Mayres wyfe of London, they would kepe her'.⁷¹ It was this boasting that provoked the mercer to predict the day of violence that was soon to come. For native Londoners, de Bardi was the very personification of their fears. He was economically damaging and morally dangerous – importing luxuries and exporting wool at the expense of English merchants, while preying on an Englishman's wife and stealing his prized possessions. But he was also favoured by the authorities including the king himself, who granted him economic privileges, legal protections and the cultural power that came from a place in the royal gallery.

Local people perceived an equally threatening dynamic in the other notorious cases involving aliens at this time. When the English carpenter was insulted and robbed of his doves by a Frenchman, it was the former rather than the latter who received punishment, because the Frenchman was a diplomat's servant. The French ambassador complained to the Lord Mayor and to the king's council, who supported the stranger and had the poor carpenter imprisoned.⁷² Likewise, when another Frenchman murdered a local man, he was merely ordered to leave the realm, led by a constable and carrying 'a crosse in his hande'. As he walked, a large crowd of other Frenchmen surrounded him and one asked sarcastically 'is this crosse the pryce to kyl an Englisheman'? Another answered 'spitefully' that 'on that pryce we would be banyshed all' within the week.⁷³ The apparently cheap price of an Englishman's life, and the Frenchmen's evident pride in bragging about it, reinforced the stereotype of the foreigner as a man disposed to criminality but protected from just punishment. Although one suspects that Hall's chronicle exaggerates the egregiousness of these incidents, his interpretation must have been common among native Londoners at the time.

English complaints about the privileges and favour accorded to strangers attest to the importance of these concerns as a cause of the tension in 1517. From the beginning, the petitions from London artisans and merchants in the period leading up to the riot complained specifically about aliens' supposedly unregulated trading, which flouted the rights of the City's freemen, and the government's willingness to allow such depredations.⁷⁴ The seditious libels posted on church doors in April 1516 offered another example of these apprehensions as they implied that the alien merchants who sought to monopolise English wool had received much of their money from the king himself. The government's severe response may have actually confirmed the writer's suspicions by showing the king's intense concern about this matter.⁷⁵ Moreover, although the records name no specific individuals, such ire may well have been especially directed at Francesco de Bardi who, as we have seen, enjoyed royal loans and licences for exporting wool. It is thus not surprising that John Lincoln implicitly critiqued the English authorities as well as the strangers themselves. His grievances were primarily economic, but he also claimed to have tried to bring these concerns to the attention of 'the counsaill' only to find himself called 'a busy fellow' and his warnings ignored.⁷⁶

When Evil May Day finally arrived, the significance of privilege is readily apparent. The crowd that marched through the streets that night included many people for whom 'political' concerns were probably just as important as 'economic' ones.⁷⁷ As we have seen, among the primary targets of the rioters were St. Martin le Grand, Blanchappleton and Green Gate, each of which was perceived as an enclave shielded from local oversight by royal protection and favour. Moreover, these were not the only places attacked. The first place visited by the crowd was Newgate prison, where several Englishmen who had assaulted aliens had been imprisoned a few days earlier.⁷⁸ For the rioters, freeing these prisoners must have been seen as a case of righting past wrongs. In their minds, true justice had been turned upside down as strangers like Meautys and de Bardi escaped the law while locals were punished for attempting to defend themselves from foreign depredations. By releasing their comrades and then marching on to ransack the houses of the formerly 'untouchable' aliens, the crowd would have seen themselves as rectifying a blatant injustice. At some point during the night, they also took on an additional source of privilege: foreign ambassadors. As has been seen, at least one ambassador had successfully sought the support of the Lord Mayor and the king's council in a dispute between an Englishman and one of the ambassador's servants. On May Day Eve, Londoners showed their hostility to such favours by attacking the house of the Spanish ambassador, Bernidino de Mesa, and also assaulting a Portuguese diplomat, Don Pietro Civrea.⁷⁹ Here again we can see ways in which the king's support turned certain aliens into targets of popular anger. One report went further still and claimed that the crowd's hostility to the favour shown to foreigners spilled over into threats against officials themselves. The papal nuncio, Francesco Chiericato wrote that the rioting apprentices were heard 'denouncing death to the Cardinal and the City authorities'. In response, Cardinal Wolsey, the king's most powerful minister, allegedly 'fortified his dwelling with cannon and troops'.⁸⁰ Although aggrieved Londoners were certainly not seeking to bring down the regime, their actions and rhetoric suggest that they placed almost as much blame for their condition on the aliens' powerful allies as upon the immigrants themselves.

The aftermath of the May Day rising reinforced this impression. The crown could have responded in a range of ways as the common law definitions of riot allowed for penalties ranging from fines to execution.⁸¹ However, as with the earlier case of seditious handbills on church doors, the government initially pursued the most severe response available in 1517. In addition to occupying the city with hundreds of soldiers over several weeks, the judges also charged over 400 prisoners with the crime of High Treason, 'because the king had amitie with all Christen princes' so the rioters attacks on aliens had thus 'broken the truce and league'.⁸² Over the next week, eleven gallows were set up around the city – including at Newgate, St. Martin le Grand, Leadenhall and Blanchappleton – where John Lincoln and at least thirteen others were hanged, drawn and quartered for their offences against the king.⁸³ The papal nuncio wrote with approval of the 'great vengeance' taken upon the instigators, through which 'his Majesty showed great love and goodwill to the strangers'.⁸⁴ Even the grand ceremony in which the remaining prisoners were pardoned hints at the 'political' significance of the event.⁸⁵ In both punishment and pardon, the rioters were treated not as common criminals but as rebels who had threatened royal authority by mobilising against aliens protected and patronised by the king himself.

The toxic mixture of real and alleged privileges enjoyed by many foreigners in early Tudor London poisoned their relations with local people. Concerns about economic damage and criminality were key components in this, but what made these immigrants so dangerous in the eyes of the English

was the apparent alliance between ‘the multitude of straungers’ and ‘the kyng and hys counsaill’.⁸⁶ The differences between alleged economic competitors, criminals and privileged elites were elided to form a powerful concoction. It was this many-headed monster against which ‘the voyce of the people’ cried in 1517.⁸⁷

III. Beyond 1517

Public hostility to foreigners continued to simmer in London long after the looted workshops had been restocked and the eleven gallows had been taken down. Over the next two centuries, repeated outbursts of anti-immigrant sentiment show that these issues remained concerns, even if these later events were generally much smaller in scale than the riot of 1517. Although changes in the wider political and religious context meant that the specific details of the stereotype of the ‘alien’ shifted, the combination of a perceived economic threat with apparent official support was a potent source of hostility throughout the early modern period.

There were relatively few cases of open conflict between the English and foreign populations of London from the 1520s to the 1550s. This was thanks in part to rising metropolitan prosperity but also helped by strong action from the authorities to strengthen the city’s guilds, which were granted additional powers even as they expanded to include more alien members subject to their jurisdiction.⁸⁸ However, during Queen Elizabeth’s reign, anti-immigrant threats and violence once again became a significant problem. Declining trade, rising inflation, new waves of foreign arrivals and a more welcoming attitude from the central government all led to rising tension.

In 1571, for example, ‘the citizens of London’ submitted a complaint to the Queen against the ‘merchant strangers’ and ‘handicraftmen’ who had recently settled there. As in 1517, the English believed that these foreigners flouted ‘the laws of the land and the charters of the city’ through a whole series of illicit practices: they created enclaves by dividing up ‘the fairest houses in the city’ into lodgings for their fellow immigrants; they inflated the price of imports by hoarding them ‘at their pleasure’; they sold merchandise by retail when only allowed to sell wholesale; they sent their profits overseas instead of spending them in England; they conspired together to make ‘a commonwealth within themselves’ and ‘engrossed almost all the new drapery into their hands’ by excluding natives from the trade; they were employed in ‘several crafts and occupations’ that were supposed to be reserved for native workers; and they practiced ‘manual’ trades without having served a seven-year apprenticeship.⁸⁹ The sheer range of offenses attributed to immigrants in this complaint is notable, as is the very close overlap with the concerns voiced in 1517. Here, again, the foreign threat includes both rich merchants monopolising trade and manual workers monopolising jobs. Moreover, the aliens were seemingly not hurting natives through open competition in the market, but rather through illicit collusion to avoid the regulations by which London’s economy was supposed to be governed. Finally, although it is not mentioned explicitly in the complaint, it would be surprising if the Elizabethan regime’s support for immigration was not an additional concern. The government welcomed the arrival of Protestant merchants and artisans from the continent, because they wanted England to serve as a beacon for refugees persecuted by foreign Catholic rulers and because they sought to strengthen domestic manufacturing through the skills that the immigrants brought with them. For instance, William Cecil, the most powerful royal minister for much of late

sixteenth century, publicly welcomed the Protestant refugees, offering them 'open patronage and protection'.⁹⁰ Such vocal support from the royal authorities worried those who believed the aliens were a threat to their livelihoods.

Over the next three decades, such concerns provoked further loud complaints that sometimes spilled over into direct conflict. In the 1580s and 1590s, locals repeatedly circulated libels around London threatening aliens, a group of apprentices attempted to launch 'an insurrection in this cittie against the Frenche and the Dutche', others harassed the retinue of the French ambassador in the streets, and finally in 1595 'the poor tradesmen made a riot upon the strangers' around London.⁹¹ The specific grievances and targets are illuminating. For example, one libel of 1583 was directed against alien handicraftsmen but also against guild leaders who allegedly took bribes from strangers.⁹² Another in 1587 threatened the 'hurt and destruction of the strangers' of the liberty of St. Martin le Grand, precisely the same 'privileged' site that had been targeted in 1517.⁹³ In 1592, the English freemen of London alleged that strangers 'had more Liberty than the English Retailers', avoided taxes, 'kept a Commonwealth among themselves' and 'were dangerous to the State'.⁹⁴ Anonymous libels at the time made similar allegations but with much more venom, calling immigrants 'beastly brutes' who made a 'counterfeit show of religion' and demanding that all Flemings and Frenchmen depart the kingdom or face a rising by thousands of apprentices and journeymen. Revealingly, one claimed that the Queen 'hath been contented, to the great prejudice of her own natural subjects, to suffer you to live here in better ease and more freedom than her own people'. Such direct allegations of unjust royal favouritism towards the aliens resulted in the conspirators being publicly stocked, carted and whipped for their insolence.⁹⁵

London came close to reliving the Evil May Day riot in the summer of 1595. Trade was depressed and food prices were higher than they had been in decades.⁹⁶ At the beginning of June, journeymen weavers petitioned the City and the foreign churches in London against the aliens. They said that that the 'great favoure' and 'Liberty' offered to Protestant aliens had been repaid with treacherous 'stinges' of ungrateful 'Serpentes', for the immigrants flouted civic rules by employing women, hiring unapprenticed workers, keeping 'more Loomes and Servants then any Freeman dare doe', and disregarding 'the lawes of our Lande'.⁹⁷ Over the rest of the month, the city was shaken by a series of riots, including two disturbances in the markets about the high food prices, followed later by a violent attack on Tower Hill by a huge crowd of apprentices who reputedly sought to spoil the wealthy and seize 'the sworde of authority' from the magistrates.⁹⁸ The food riots coincided with 'Tumults' by 'the poor Tradesmen' against 'the Strangers in Southwark' and 'within the Liberties (as they are called) where such Strangers are harboured'. When the Lord Mayor sent some of the 'young Rioters' to gaol, others 'gathered in a Body' to try to break them out.⁹⁹ Although none of the violent protests of this month caused as much damage as those of 1517, the authorities reacted with great severity, imposing martial law on the city and executing five apprentices for 'treason'.¹⁰⁰ These were years when popular anxieties about economic competition from strangers again intermixed with a fear of their apparent legal impunity and political patronage.

When Scotland's King James IV inherited the English throne in 1603, the dynamic of xenophobia in London changed significantly. Although prejudice against continental immigrants remained, resentment of the substantial number of Scotsmen who accompanied the new king on his journey south became a noticeable feature. The newcomers – mostly courtiers, their servants and soldiers -

were perceived as violent and lusty as well as greedy for English wealth. For example, in a short set of verses that circulated widely in 1612, the libeller claimed that:

They beg our goods, our lands, and our lives,
They whip our Nobles and lie with their wives,
They pinch our Gentry, and send for the benchers,
They stab our sergeants, and pistoll our fencers.¹⁰¹

Unsurprisingly, aggrieved Englishmen were quick to link the supposed economic threat of the Scotsmen to the current regime. James I incited considerable anger by granting valuable properties to his Scottish favourites and allowing many a 'Jockey' to 'beg al our money lands livings & lives'.¹⁰² The number of men who arrived from north of the border seems to have been small enough to avoid causing the sort of widespread, active hostility among working and trading Londoners that had been seen in the sixteenth century. Nonetheless, tensions occasionally ran very high and resulted in at least a few violent clashes between the English and Scottish in the capital.¹⁰³

Hostility to immigrants flared up again in the 1670s and 1680s when religious persecution in France led to another wave of Protestant refugees arriving in England. The sheer number of aliens was worrying to many Londoners, but several specific grievances stand out. One of these was the fear that aliens were introducing labour-saving machinery, thus reducing employment for locals. Apprentices and journeymen in trades such as weaving and hat-making repeatedly complained that the French 'have introduced various manufactures and who work for less than the English'.¹⁰⁴ Yet, this was precisely what made them so attractive to governments of the day. Charles II, James II and their ministers, following the example set by Queen Elizabeth a century earlier, encouraged immigration large part because they believed the foreign artisans would bring new skills and technology with them. English workers, by contrast, responded to these 'innovations' with violence. During riots in London in 1675, for instance, local weavers attacked workshops with 'engine looms' that had supposedly been introduced by recent immigrants, attempting to have 'the French inventions (as they called them) burnt'.¹⁰⁵ Thousands of apprentices and journeymen took part in these violent protests and – although they also struck a range of other targets – there was a strong anti-alien element.¹⁰⁶ As in 1517, some English merchants also demonstrated their Francophobia. Many Londoners involved in overseas commerce worried publicly about England's 'balance of trade' with France, arguing that the importation of foreign goods undermined the nation's commercial and industrial strength.¹⁰⁷ These economic concerns were enhanced by the apparent Francophilia of Charles II and James II. They were – correctly – rumoured to be receiving secret payments from Louis XIV and both kings had close associations with Gallic Catholicism.¹⁰⁸ The popular xenophobia expressed in libels and riots was thus reinforced by the anti-French propaganda disseminated by educated merchants and political agitators.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 which overthrew James II and installed William III and Mary II as England's new monarchs changed the dynamic of anti-foreign sentiment yet again. In some ways, Francophobia remained important. In 1698, for example, when resentment was swelling up once more against aliens' involvement in England's overseas traffic, a satirical pamphlet blamed the wealthy immigrants living at Soho for 'the death of trade', with a clichéd 'Monsieur' bragging that they would 'Will take very good Care, To lay her so deep she shant rise'.¹⁰⁹ However, the pamphlet suggested that Dutchmen bore as much of the blame as the French.¹¹⁰ Moreover, it is no coincidence that Soho is given as the residence of the aliens who destroyed nation's trade. In 1698, the year the

pamphlet was published, the king granted a large part of the district to his Dutch favourite, William Bentinck, Earl of Portland.¹¹¹

The fact that King William himself was a Dutchman meant that fears of foreigners encroaching on English commerce and employment often took on a seditious undercurrent. In addition, the new king brought with him Dutch and Huguenot soldiers who occupied key towns in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1688. They were perceived as a financial drain both directly (through being quartered on local householders) and indirectly (through the high levels of taxation required to pay them) but they were also associated with brawling and other crimes.¹¹² Worse still, William III pushed for a 'General Naturalization' which would have granted full civil and economic rights to vast numbers of aliens within the realm.¹¹³ Hence, many xenophobic complaints tied these issues together, blaming foreigners for unemployment, depressed trade, high taxes and even misgovernment. For example, a manuscript libel of 1696 attacked a new currency policy and suggested that government itself was to blame:

Some Say the King contrived this Thing
His duchmen For to Cherish
For they will be Sure for to Indure
When we poor English Perish

It went on to condemn the new taxes associated with regime and suggest that only the exiled James II could 'Ese our Grefe'.¹¹⁴ In short, the author drew on the widespread anxieties about economic hardship and the king's foreignness to justify Jacobite revolt.¹¹⁵ Here, as in Tudor London, official privileges and royal patronage dramatically accentuated the perceived foreign threat.

Not every immigrant group fit into the same model in the minds of early modern Londoners. Some featured regularly in the popular culture of the period without acquiring the same set of associations as the groups noted above. For example, a growing number of Africans lived and worked in London by the late sixteenth century, yet the 'tropes of blackness' - such as servitude - that pervaded Tudor and Stuart literature were distinct from the stereotype of the European 'alien'.¹¹⁶ Although they were undoubtedly seen as a foreign 'Other' and often portrayed as inherently disorderly, they were not presented as a privileged group that used the cover of official protection to threaten to the civic community. Indeed, thanks to England's growing role in the transatlantic slave trade and official acts targeting 'blackamoors' as 'infidels' to be 'possessed' and 'transported', they were not likely to be mistaken for migrants who enjoyed special royal patronage.¹¹⁷

It is nonetheless remarkable how frequently the bogeyman of the privileged migrant can be glimpsed in the early modern culture of the capital and the complaints of its citizens. While exceptions can certainly be found, popular responses to new groups of foreigners repeatedly bundled together economic threats to material livelihoods with political threats to civic liberties.

IV. Conclusions

The power of xenophobic stereotypes in sixteenth and seventeenth-century London has implications for our understanding of both the nature of English people's relations with aliens and the structure of prejudice that underlay these interactions.

At the most basic level, we must fully acknowledge the role of anti-immigrant attitudes in social relations at this time. Most Londoners showed plenty of grudging toleration for recent arrivals in their daily lives and some even welcomed the newcomers as customers, business partners, friends and co-religionists. Still, the recurrent threats and violence against aliens in Tudor and Stuart London suggest that Nigel Goose and Joseph Ward may have been too optimistic in their claims that popular xenophobia was relatively insignificant.¹¹⁸ In fact, it was a powerful force that directly spurred mass protests in 1517 and 1595, two of the most dangerous moments of popular unrest seen in the Tudor capital, and must have led to innumerable unrecorded acts of hostility and discrimination.

More specifically, we must recognize the 'many-headed' nature of the stereotype of the alien. There were, as we have seen, several different sorts of strangers in early modern London. Some were seen as brutish, others as cunning. Some seemed to work tirelessly for low wages whilst others effortlessly gathered vast wealth. Yet all these groups were a potential threat because of one particularly dangerous feature that they all shared - there was always a sense, at least in the cases that spurred the most fear and hostility, that the newcomers had the support of the authorities. This elided their obvious diversity and turned them into a menacing monochrome stereotype: the privileged foreigner.

However, such prejudices were never all-embracing nor inescapable. Many English people happily lived and worked alongside immigrants, and familiarity undoubtedly served to gradually disassemble the mental stereotype which provoked the riot of 1517. For example, some of the Londoners who petitioned about aliens in the late sixteenth century directly acknowledged that most strangers were Protestant refugees who deserved to stay, but also asked that the government ensure that existing limits on trading by immigrants were better enforced.¹¹⁹ In other words, they had already mentally separated economic competitors from protected refugees and merely wanted officials to do the same. A similar untangling of stereotypes can be seen in the multi-authored play *Sir Thomas More* (c.1591-93). Here the complaints of the Evil May Day rioters are initially given some credence though its negative depictions of de Bardi and the Frenchman Caveler as rich, privileged parasites. Yet in a later scene More speaks sympathetically of 'the wretched strangers' carrying babies upon their backs and 'poor luggage', and invites the rioters to empathise with the immigrants' plight.¹²⁰ Rather than compressing all aliens into a single malevolent figure, these texts undermined this stereotype by acknowledging the differences between them.

It would nonetheless be overly optimistic to imply that the more pernicious view of immigrants simply faded away over time through increasing exposure to human diversity. Instead, this form of stereotyping remains relevant in twenty-first century Britain. As a historian, it is hazardous to attempt to draw analogies between events that occurred hundreds of years ago and the situation in our own times, but clear commonalities are nonetheless worth noting. In the elections of the 2010s and the Brexit referendum of 2016, many politicians and newspapers offered an anti-immigrant message that was structured in much the same way as the early modern complaints discussed above. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) offered the clearest version of this. Its ideology was not defined by explicit racism. Instead, it incessantly attacked 'the political establishment' in Westminster and in Brussels for compromising British sovereignty by granting special privileges to immigrants. According to the UKIP leader Nigel Farage in 2014, the party was

simply providing voters with a weapon with which to attack this hydra: 'They [the voters] have made the connection. It took me bloody years to get immigration and Europe together, but I knew at the local elections this year it was now the same thing.'¹²¹ If we want to understand the return of this ideology, we need to acknowledge that it ties together a protest against the failures of the governing class to an anxious reaction against newcomers.

We cannot, therefore, starkly divide 'economic' from 'political' concerns. Nor should we underestimate the overlap between popular 'prejudice' and elite 'critique'. There was a dangerously fruitful cross-pollination of different forms of xenophobia in early modern London, some of which continues today.

¹ Edward Hall, *The Triumphant Reigne of Kyng Henry the VIII* (1550), pp. 153-4.

² The legal term for non-English individuals at this time was 'stranger' or 'alien', whereas 'foreigner' technically referred to English people in London who did not have the 'freedom' (citizenship) of the city. However, 'foreign' was also occasionally used to describe 'strangers' and 'aliens', so I have used all three interchangeably here.

³ Evil May Day is discussed in Martin Holmes, 'Evil May-Day, 1517: The Story of a Riot', *History Today* (Sept. 1965), pp. 642-50; Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (1989), pp. 15-17; Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (1989), pp. 129-33; Peter J. Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (1990), pp. 442-6; Graham Noble, "'Evil May Day": Re-Examining the Race Riot of 1517', *History Review* (Sept. 2008), pp. 37-40; Joanne Paul, *Thomas More* (2016), pp. 78-81.

⁴ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 153-64. I have used the 1904 edition, edited by Charles Whibley, which precisely reprints the text of the folio edition of 1550. There appear to be few if any non-typographical differences between the description of the riots in the 1548 and 1550 editions.

⁵ Peter C. Herman, 'Hall, Edward (1497–1547)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan. 2012).

⁶ *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London*, J.G. Nichols, ed. (Camden Society, old series, volume 53; 1852), p. 30; *The Customs of London, otherwise called Arnold's Chronicle*, F. Douce, ed. (1811), pp. l-li; *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, James Gairdner, ed. (Camden Society, new series, vol. 28, 1880), p. 93.

⁷ *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice* [hereafter CSPV] (38 vols; 1864-1947), II, pp. 382-86; *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII* [hereafter LP: Henry VIII] (21 vols; 1864-1920), II, p. 1045; Polydore Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, Dana F. Sutton ed. and trans. (first published 1534; 1555 edn.) <<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/polverg/27eng.html>>.

⁸ Bart Lambert and Milan Pajic, 'Immigration and the common profit: native cloth workers Flemish exiles and royal policy in fourteenth-century London', *Journal of British Studies*, 55:4 (2016).

⁹ W. Mark Ormrod, Bart Lambert and Jonathan Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300-1550* (2018), ch. 10.

¹⁰ *Ballads from Manuscripts*, F.J. Furnivall, editor (1888), I, pp. 104-7.

¹¹ LP: Henry VIII, II, p. 522.

¹² Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 154-5. The specific allegations are discussed further below.

¹³ *Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company 1453-1527*, Laetitia Lyell and Frank D. Watney, eds (1936), pp. 443-4.

¹⁴ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 155-6.

¹⁵ CSPV, II, p. 382; Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 156-7.

¹⁶ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 157.

¹⁷ CSPV, II, p. 382.

¹⁸ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 158-9.

¹⁹ Except where noted, the events of that night come from Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 159-60.

²⁰ Estimates of the numbers involved vary. According to Hall, it began with 900 to 1,000 at Cheapside and St. Paul's, grew further, and ended with over 400 prisoners: Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 159, 163. According to Giustiniani, there were 2,000 rioters in all: CSPV, II, p. 382. Francesco Chierigato, the papal nuncio, gives an almost certainly exaggerated figure of 6,000 to 7,000: CSPV, II, p. 385.

²¹ CSPV, II, p. 382; Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 160; *Grey Friars*, p. 30; *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, p. 93.

-
- ²² CSPV, II, p. 382. For the location of the Italian merchants' houses, see below.
- ²³ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 161-4; CSPV, II, pp. 383, 385-6; *Customs of London*, pp. l-li; *Grey Friars*, p. 30.
- ²⁴ For a failed plot in September 1517, and violent attacks in 1527 and 1529, see Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 132.
- ²⁵ Noble, 'Race Riot'; Gwyn, *Cardinal*, pp. 442, 444.
- ²⁶ Rappaport, *Worlds*, pp. 15-17.
- ²⁷ Archer, *Pursuit*, pp. 131-40; Ormrod, Lambert and Mackman, *Immigrant England*, ch. 10; Lambert and Pajic, 'Immigration'.
- ²⁸ For the most important and influential accounts of the 'rational' and 'political' behaviour of the pre-modern crowd, see E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present*, 50 (1971), pp. 76-136; Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France', *Past & Present*, 59 (1973), pp. 51-91; R.H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (1977). Much scholarship on this has appeared since then, but for two recent publications that integrate and advance this work, see Patrick Lantschner, 'Revolts and the Political Order of Cities in the Late Middle Ages', *Past & Present*, vol. 225 (2014), pp. 3-46; Justine Firnhaber-Baker and Dirk Schoenaers (eds.), *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt* (2017), pp. 279-91.
- ²⁹ Whether immigration actually has a negative impact on the employment of local workers today is subject to debate among economists, but most scholars argue that any effect is minimal: Devlin et al., 'Impacts of migration on UK native employment: An analytical review of the evidence', *Home Office Occasional Papers*, No. 109 (March 2014), esp. pp. 41-9.
- ³⁰ L. Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Among Us: policies, perceptions and the presence of aliens in Elizabethan England* (1996), p. 12.
- ³¹ Rappaport, *Worlds*, p. 404.
- ³² Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 154.
- ³³ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 155.
- ³⁴ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 156.
- ³⁵ *Ballads*, I, p. 106.
- ³⁶ *Grey Friars*, p. 30; *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, p. 93; *Customs of London*, p. l; CSPV, II, pp. 382, 385.
- ³⁷ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 159.
- ³⁸ For the violence associated with London apprentices, see Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (1996), pp. 161-70.
- ³⁹ For the difficulty of enforcing apprenticeship rules on strangers, see Rappaport, *Worlds*, pp. 55, 57; Archer, *Pursuit*, pp. 131, 135, 138.
- ⁴⁰ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 157, 159-60.
- ⁴¹ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 161, 163; CSPV, II, p. 383.
- ⁴² Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 155.
- ⁴³ CSPV, II, p. 382.
- ⁴⁴ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 160; *Grey Friars*, p. 30.
- ⁴⁵ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 155. For anxieties about the forestalling, regrating and engrossing of necessities in late medieval markets, see Davis, *Medieval Market Morality*, pp. 253-63.
- ⁴⁶ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 155-6.
- ⁴⁷ *LP: Henry VIII*, II, p. 522; *Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company 1453-1527*, pp. 443-4. For more detailed discussion of the role of aliens in 'the balance of trade' in the late medieval period, see J.L. Bolton, 'London and the Anti-Alien Legislation of 1439-40' in M. Ormrod, N. McDonald and C. Taylor (eds), *Resident Aliens in Later Medieval England* (2017), pp. 32-47.
- ⁴⁸ E.M. Carus-Wilson and Olive Coleman, *England's Export Trade, 1275-1547* (1963), p. 114. The proportion exported by Hansa and other aliens remained steady at about 45 percent in these years.
- ⁴⁹ William Page (ed.), *Letters of Denization and Acts of Naturalization for Aliens in England, 1509-1603* (1893), pp. ix-x, lii. The annual total rose from an average of only 3.7 in 1509-11 to 15.8 in 1512-15. It declined again to 5.0 in 1516-17, perhaps partly due to the effects of the sweating sickness. For the nature of these processes, see Ormrod, Lambert and Mackman, *Immigrant England*, ch. 2.
- ⁵⁰ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 155. He was also closely associated with the Duke of Buckingham, which may suggest a political element in his complaints: Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 154.
- ⁵¹ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 157.
- ⁵² CSPV, II, p. 382.
- ⁵³ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 156.

-
- ⁵⁴ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 154-5. For more on De Bardi, see below.
- ⁵⁵ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 160.
- ⁵⁶ For a thorough analysis of the London liberties at this time, see Shannon McSheffery, *Seeking Sanctuary: Crime, Mercy and Politics in English Courts, 1400-1550*, especially ch. 5. For an early modern perspective on St. Martin le Grand, see John Strype, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (1720; <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/stripe>), I, pp. 102-112.
- ⁵⁷ McSheffery, *Seeking Sanctuary*, p. 118.
- ⁵⁸ Strype, *Survey*, I, p. 112.
- ⁵⁹ Cinzia M. Sicca, 'Consumption and trade of art between Italy and England in the first half of the sixteenth century: the London house of the Bardi and Cavalcanti company', *Renaissance Studies*, 16:2 (2012), pp. 174-5; Michael Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England: A Cultural Politics of Translation* (2005), p. 148; Strype, *Survey*, I, pp. 117, 132. I am grateful to John Gallagher for bringing Wyatt and Sicca to my attention.
- ⁶⁰ Page (ed.), *Letters of Denization*, pp. xli-xlii.
- ⁶¹ *Calendar of Letter-books of the City of London* (11 vols; 1899-1912), XI ('L'), p. 37.
- ⁶² McSheffery, *Seeking Sanctuary*, pp. 61-2.
- ⁶³ Strype, *Survey*, I, p. 84.
- ⁶⁴ Strype, *Survey*, I, p. 84; Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 160.
- ⁶⁵ *LP: Henry VIII*, pp. 8, 121, 1467; II, pp. 874-5, 878, 1471.
- ⁶⁶ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 160; *Grey Friars*, p. 30; *CSPV*, II, pp. 382.
- ⁶⁷ *LP: Henry VIII*, II, pp. 1463, 1465-6. His name is spelled in a variety of ways in contemporary documents including 'Frances de bard', 'de Bardis', 'de Barde', etc. Hall claims he is 'a Lombarde' (which could mean anyone from Northern Italy) and royal records refer to him as 'a merchant of Florence'.
- ⁶⁸ *LP: Henry VIII*, I, p. 707.
- ⁶⁹ *LP: Henry VIII*, I, p. 487; II, pp. 439, 1451, 1482, 1487.
- ⁷⁰ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 154-5.
- ⁷¹ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 157.
- ⁷² Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 154.
- ⁷³ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 154.
- ⁷⁴ *Ballads*, I, pp. 104-107; *Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company 1453-1527*, pp. 443-4.
- ⁷⁵ *LP: Henry VIII*, II, p. 522. See also the earlier complaint from a 'company of English merchants at Antwerp', who 'accused Wolsey of lending the King's money to strangers for his own advantage' (3 Dec. 1515): *LP: Henry VIII*, II, p. 325.
- ⁷⁶ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 155, 162.
- ⁷⁷ For example, alongside apprentices and watermen, there were also 'Courtiers' (nobles' serving men), young priests, 'husbandmen' (small farmers) and a 'yoman of the Croun' (royal servant): Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 159-61, 164.
- ⁷⁸ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 157, 159.
- ⁷⁹ *CSPV*, II, pp. 383-4.
- ⁸⁰ *CSPV*, II, p. 385.
- ⁸¹ Wood, *Riot*, pp. 41-2.
- ⁸² Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 161. On English foreign policy at this time – which was privately anti-French but outwardly still at peace – see, Gywn, *Cardinal*, ch. 3.
- ⁸³ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 161-2.
- ⁸⁴ *CSPV*, II, p. 385.
- ⁸⁵ The politics of the pardon is emphasised in Noble, 'Evil May Day', pp. 39-40, and more extensively discussed in Krista Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State* (2003), pp. 157-60.
- ⁸⁶ Hall, *Henry VIII*, pp. 153-4.
- ⁸⁷ Hall, *Henry VIII*, p. 158.
- ⁸⁸ Rappaport, *Worlds*, pp. 44-49.
- ⁸⁹ *Tudor Economic Documents*, I, pp. 308-10.
- ⁹⁰ Yungblut, *Strangers*, pp. 36, 41. For other examples of the central government protecting aliens at this time, see Archer, *Pursuit*, pp. 137-8; Lien Luu, *Immigrants and the Industries of London, 1500-1700* (2005), ch. 5.
- ⁹¹ *Queen Elizabeth and Her Times: A Series of Original Letters*, Thomas Wright, ed. (2 vols; 1838), II, p. 308; Yungblut, *Strangers*, pp. 41, 43-4; Strype, *Survey*, II, pp. 301-2.
- ⁹² Archer, *Pursuit*, p. 133; Yungblut, *Strangers*, p. 43.
- ⁹³ Rappaport, *Worlds*, p. 56.

- ⁹⁴ Strype, *Survey*, II, pp. 301-2.
- ⁹⁵ John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion* (4 vols; 1824), IV, pp. 234-6.
- ⁹⁶ Archer, *Pursuit*, pp. 9-14; Rappaport, *Worlds*, p. 407.
- ⁹⁷ 'Complaint of the Yeomen Weavers against the Immigrant Weavers, 1595', in Francis Consitt, *The London Weavers Company* (1933), pp. 312-18. The complaint shows a clear awareness of the ambiguous role of the crown: 'If it be alleadged that our Queene favours Straungers we grant yt is true, but she will favour them noe further then may stand with the good estate of her loveing Subjects' (p. 316).
- ⁹⁸ Archer, *Pursuit*, pp. 1-2.
- ⁹⁹ Strype, *Survey*, II, p. 303.
- ¹⁰⁰ Archer, *Pursuit*, p. 2.
- ¹⁰¹ 'They beg our goods', in *Early Stuart Libels: an edition of poetry from manuscript sources*, Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae, eds (Early Modern Literary Studies Text Series I, 2005), E1 <www.earlystuartlibels.net>
- ¹⁰² 'When Scotland was Scotland and England it selfe', E6 <www.earlystuartlibels.net>
- ¹⁰³ Jenny Wormald, 'Gunpowder, Treason, and Scots', *Journal of British Studies*, 24:2 (1985), pp. 159-62; Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (2002), p. 233.
- ¹⁰⁴ *CSPV*, XXXVII, p. 449.
- ¹⁰⁵ Brodie Waddell, *God, Duty and Community in English Economic Life* (2012), p. 214.
- ¹⁰⁶ For more on the riots of 1675, see Harris, *London Crowds*, pp. 191-204.
- ¹⁰⁷ Waddell, *God*, pp. 172-3; Margaret Priestley, 'Anglo-French Trade and the "Unfavourable Balance" Controversy, 1660-85', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 4:1 (1951).
- ¹⁰⁸ Steve Pincus, 'From Butterboxes to Wooden Shoes: The Shift in English Popular Sentiment from Anti-Dutch to Anti-French in the 1670s', *Historical Journal*, 38:2 (1995), pp. 333-61.
- ¹⁰⁹ *An elegy on the death of trade by a relation of the deceased* (1698), p. 14.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 12 ('French and Dutch'), 14 ('De French and de Dutch').
- ¹¹¹ Hugh Dunthorne and David Onnekink, 'Bentinck, Hans Willem', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oct 2007.
- ¹¹² J. Childs, *The British Army of William III, 1689-1702* (1990), pp. 90-8, 118.
- ¹¹³ D. Statt, *Foreigners and Englishmen: The Controversy over Immigration and Population, 1660-1760* (1995), pp. 96-100, 114-19.
- ¹¹⁴ The National Archives, PL 27/2, part 1.
- ¹¹⁵ For more discussion and examples of anti-Dutch attitudes, see Brodie Waddell, 'The Politics of Economic Distress in the Aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, 1689-1702', *English Historical Review*, 130:541 (2015), pp. 340-3.
- ¹¹⁶ Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (1995); Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677: Imprints of the Invisible* (2008).
- ¹¹⁷ Emily Weissbourd, "'Those in Their Possession': Race, Slavery, and Queen Elizabeth's 'Edicts of Expulsion'", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 78:1 (2015), pp. 1-19.
- ¹¹⁸ Joseph Ward, 'Fictitious Shoemakers, Agitated Weavers and the Limits of Popular Xenophobia in Elizabethan England', in Randolph Vigne and Charles Littleton (eds), *From Strangers to Citizens: The Integration of Immigrant Communities in Britain, Ireland and Colonial America, 1550-1750* (2001), pp. 80-87; Nigel Goose, "'Xenophobia" in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England: An Epithet Too Far?' in Nigel Goose and Lien Luu (eds), *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (2005), pp. 110-35.
- ¹¹⁹ Rappaport, *Worlds*, pp. 57-8.
- ¹²⁰ Anthony Munday et al., *Sir Thomas More: A Play*, edited by Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori (1990), p. 59-63, 100, 104.
- ¹²¹ Patrick Wintour, 'Ukip's manifesto: immigration, Europe - and that's it', *The Guardian*, 20 May 2014 <<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/may/20/ukip-manifesto-europe-immigration>>