In a deftly conceived study, Riello has successfully redressed two distinct deficiencies in the history of attire. Firstly, by focusing on footwear he plugs a concrete gap in our knowledge of clothing in the past; and secondly, by drawing on approaches from economic and cultural history, he has begun to fill the conceptual void between fashion and business history. The production of boots and shoes has previously been investigated as part of industrial history – especially during phases of mechanization and organizational change – but the nature of the product, as a creation of fashion, and its place in both demotic dress and in the garb of the privileged has been largely overlooked. Riello has seized with gusto the opportunity to amend such neglect; and through meticulous primary research – much of it based on objects – combined with an awesome awareness of a literature that extends through the histories of the long eighteenth century, he has opened up the subject, imaginatively explored its component parts, and has offered fascinating insights along the way. For example, it is not generally known that, until at least the 1830s, shoes were symmetrical at the point of production, and only acquired distinct characteristics of left and right feet after sustained wearing. Early in the nineteenth century, the French began to label shoes as ‘gauche’ or otherwise, as a unique selling point, soon imitated by English shoemakers, well before any change occurred in the manufacturing process. Also noteworthy is that British people consumed, on average, two pairs of shoes per year throughout the period from the later seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Although such a statistic encompasses both those who went unshod and the owners of numerous pairs, poor law budgets and expenditure on outdoor relief suggest that a surprisingly large proportion of the English population wore shoes.

Riello has structured his work with clarity and logic, intelligently engaging with current ideas, to produce a complete history. The detail is rich, yet the analysis rises above the facts and never loses its sharpness. Substantial chapters on the related spheres of demand, consumption and shopping, interspersed with a valuable assessment of the interaction of shoe wearing and physical environment, demonstrate Riello’s expertise to best effect. There is also an accomplished, but slightly less elegant, section on guilds, which focuses on the London Cordwainers Company; and a discussion of manufacturing, the possibilities of which were extended through early nineteenth-century technical changes. The heterogeneity of the product and the manner of its consumption underlies Riello’s approach. Contrasts and connections are evident between bespoke and ready made, for example, and between function and luxury. Production and consumption were linked through retailing structures; unwanted bespoke goods were transformed into ready made; and although status – for men as well as women – might be assured through the wearing of impossibly high heels, it was not only the poor who required comfortable, hardwearing shoes. However, one connection sidestepped by Riello is that between footwear and other components of the long eighteenth-century wardrobe in historical investigation.

While recognizing parallels between the market for shoes and that for menswear and women’s clothing more broadly, Riello keeps these very much in the background. Also shadowy until late in the investigation is the instructive comparison with France, and the impact of French competition. This is justifiable given the dominance of the English industry though most of the eighteenth century, yet in view of the thematic organization of the work, more Anglo-French contrasts might have been introduced earlier. But really there is little to criticize in this work where business and
industrial history meet fashion and aesthetics. Hitherto there have been few fashion historians willing to pollute themselves with business; and the business historian sensitive to design and fashion is an equally rare beast. Riello’s work demonstrates the value of integrating two apparently diverse historical approaches. It is overall a marvellous book and I eagerly anticipate its sequel.

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Strategic and Organizational Change: From Production to Retailing in UK Brewing, 1950–1990
ALISTAIR MUTCH
London: Routledge, 2006
xii + 178 pp., h/back ISBN 0 415 36050 1 (£70.00)

This book explores the evolution of the British brewing industry from 1950 to 1990, by focusing on six of its leading brewers and their predecessors (Whitbread, Allied, Bass, Grand Metropolitan, Scottish & Newcastle, and Courage), and their diversification strategies into retailing. It aims to explain why the industry moved from being production-oriented to being retail-oriented, and how different companies responded in distinct ways to what might be seen as the same circumstances.

Chapters 1 and 2 first look at the existing debate about strategy and structure, and also discuss concepts used throughout the book. Chapters 3 and 4 outline the distinctive features of the brewing industry, and introduce the breweries, paying particular attention to the structure and operation of their boards of directors. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 present evidence on the key trends in consumption during the period analysed and how firms and public houses responded to such changes. The concluding chapter shows that the trends that emerged in the 1980s were consolidated, which meant a major split among the leading brewers between production and retailing.

The book discusses the major changes in the British consumer society and the brewing industry during the period of analysis. Traditionally public houses were run by tenants. During this period, they tended to be substituted by salaried managers. Other branded national chains also gained considerable importance; and the services provided by the pubs changed – with meals becoming more important, and the pub atmosphere becoming friendlier to women.

Another important change concerned the structure of the boards of directors. In the 1950s they were dominated by family representatives and also had some members of the ‘Establishment’. These representatives tended to be white males in their late 50s or older, and only a very small percentage had some form of qualification (the largest number of these being accountants). The route within firms was by apprenticeship and to be part of the Board members tended to have been in the company for a considerable number of years. Over time there was a trend towards smaller boards, with an increased emphasis on external directors. There was also a noticeable decline in connections with other brewing companies, which were replaced by more ties with distilling companies, representing an increased focus on the production of branded drinks, and also food and financial services. Brewers also started appointing highly qualified marketing managers with degrees from top European and American universities.

The vertical integration of the six brewers into retailing during the period of analysis is explained in the context of several factors. There was a growing emphasis on retailing in the economy in the 1980s; food and drinks activities became increasingly interrelated; national retail chains managed by professionals developed; and there was an extensive consolidation of operations into vertically integrated regional companies. These exogenous trends combined with the interest in the pubs in a wider product range led brewers to diversify into other beverages such as spirits and ciders. The brewers also made other investments in retailing.

By the 1990s these brewers were, however, positioned very differently in terms of their level of vertical integration. Several external factors such as the 1989 Beer Order which forced many brewers to separate the estate from the brewing activities due to monopoly positions, contributed to this situation. Scottish & Newcastle was the company least affected by this, because of its regional concentration and relatively small estate and was the only one to remain vertically integrated in production and retailing until the beginning of the twenty-first century. In contrast, other brewers
focused on other activities, such as Allied in branded products, and Whitbread in the retailing activity. Even though some firms such as Grand Metropolitan and Imperial Tobacco had just a passing role through the industry, they had a major part in shaping the way competition was played.

The focus of the book is on one particular activity of brewers – the management and operation of pubs. Therefore it only partially explains their strategies, in particular from the 1980s, when the alcoholic drinks industry started to globalize. Several important strategies followed by successful brewers are not analysed, such as the role of brands in the growth and survival of firms, the importance of alliances (both local and international), and there is only a very brief discussion of the development of other forms of retailing. This interest is revealed in several of the tables presented throughout the book, with the number of mentions of particular words – ‘retailing’ and ‘house management’ – appearing in companies’ annual reports in consecutive years, seen as a sign of their strategic importance for each firm. This criterion, apart from being very subjective, does not take into account how frequently other more important words (such as international investments, mergers and acquisitions, alliances, etc.) may have appeared in companies’ annual reports. In general the use of discursive construction and critical realism does not seem to illuminate the discussion, nor does it help achieve the aims of the book.

Overall this book offers interesting new insights on the evolution of six leading British brewers from 1950 until 1990 and their vertical integration and disintegration in retailing. It is certainly of interest to business historians working on the British brewing industry, the history of pubs and public houses, and corporate governance, in particular the compositions of boards of directors of British firms in consumer goods in the second half of the twentieth century.

**The British-Atlantic Trading Community, 1760–1810: Men, Women and the Distribution of Goods**

SHERYLLYNNE HAGGERTY
Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006
xiv + 287 pp., illus., charts, maps, tables, h/back ISBN 90 04 15018 8 (£70.00)

In this interesting book, Sheryllynne Haggerty, extrapolating from Liverpool and Philadelphia, attempts a global survey of the transatlantic trading community between 1760 and 1810. The leading elite merchants, she argues, have already been much studied. She therefore includes the other middlemen such as factors, agents, dealers and brokers, small and petty traders like shopkeepers and hucksters, and women traders that she claims have been scarcely mentioned before. These smaller intermediaries were often vital in completing the distribution of the new products of the eighteenth-century consumer revolution to a surprisingly large proportion of the British and American populations. Haggerty’s research starts with the Liverpool and Philadelphia city directories, which, although partial and imperfect, did attempt to provide a global view. She estimates the approximate size of all the interlinked trading specializations, not including the myriad professional, service and craft workers who supported the maritime economy, and shows how they worked together functionally and geographically.

The book is a development of her Ph.D. thesis with a similar title. Her conclusions are that the trading community very effectively linked Liverpool and Philadelphia in an integrated Atlantic commercial system which changed remarkably little between 1760 and 1810. It grew and became rather more specialized, but despite American Independence, and frequent commercial and diplomatic clashes, the same or similar traders kept renewing the old relationships in the traditional way after each crisis. The analysis is illustrated by vignettes of typical players from each level of the community, the same names recurring through the book. Her choice is largely determined by what was available in the archives she consulted, but this humanizes the analysis. There are therefore small sections, inter alia, on Ralph Eddowes, originally from Chester, who emigrated to Philadelphia with his wife and nine children in 1794, was stunned by the cold and the high prices,
but eventually successfully established himself as a Philadelphia merchant and farmer; William Rathbone IV, leading, cautious Liverpool general merchant; David Tuohy, daring Liverpool slave trader; Samuel and Miers Fisher, and Thomas Cope, Philadelphia Quaker merchants, who dealt with many women traders; Mifflin and Massey, Philadelphia wholesale grocers; Anne and Mary Tuohy, probably related to David, Liverpool tea-dealers and linen drapers; and Mary Coates, ‘elite’ Philadelphia shopkeeper, widow of Samuel, who purchased snuff from Fishers.

She first sketches in the overall Atlantic trade system, and the development of the two ports. She then defines the various classes of traders from merchants and factors through hawkers and pedlars, and higglers and hucksters, and the markets in which they operated. These terms were never quite fixed, and varied slightly between the two cites. Interestingly, Liverpool with its far larger industrial and commercial hinterland had far more substantial middlemen like brokers and wholesalers than Philadelphia. In Philadelphia, on the other hand, the senior merchants’ role was wider functionally and geographically. She analyses the special problems of women entering trades, especially the legal rights of husbands and fathers which limited wives’ and daughters’ separate access to credit. Many women of course worked alongside family. Most independent women traders therefore were widows or spinsters, and they generally operated in minor or genteel trades like millinery. In the second part of the book Haggerty analyses the personal networks, chains of information and credit and generally accepted norms and standards which held this system together. She suggests that although family, religion and ethnicity did support merchant cohesion especially early in traders’ careers or at critical times, generally a common commercial culture based on credit and reputation determined behaviour. Traders did not work ‘merely for money’, but were constrained by law and custom to make the whole system work effectively. Information was spread, and reputations made, internationally through the press and merchant letters, and regionally and locally through institutions – Councils, Exchanges, clubs – and word of mouth on the street. The ultimate sanctions were insolvency, bankruptcy and the debtors’ gaols.

This is a well written book on a broad theme. The other side of this is that Haggerty covers so many names that her information on each is possibly occasionally quite shallow. For instance she has only looked at a tiny proportion of Thomas Cope’s records, and hence does not seem to realize that as well as the ship’s husband, he was also the half owner of the Susquehanna and Lancaster, or that his surprising leniency towards Elizabeth West was probably because she was related. Similarly she does not immediately identify William Brown, later one of the richest and most influential merchants in the Atlantic Economy. However while Cope and Brown are dear to this reviewer’s heart, the additional detail is perhaps unnecessary in a survey of this kind which on the big questions feels accurate enough. Some of what she says is not exactly new and could be as easily conveyed by careful inspection of a few contemporary directories, newspapers and ledgers. Nevertheless, her general conclusions emphasizing the commercial mentalité, interrelatedness and continuity of the Atlantic economy, and analysing and quantifying the role of women, are useful and well made.

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New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History
GELINA HARLAFTIS and CARMEL VASSALLO (eds.)
St. John’s Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, No.28, 2004
188 pp., maps, p/back ISBN 0 9730073 8 9 (no price given)

This carefully edited volume is a seminal contribution to comparative historical discourse in the Mediterranean. It analyses the evolution and state of the art of the maritime historiographies of eight countries and offers plenty of insights for future research. The two editors, Gelina Harlaftis and Carmel Vassallo, at the opening of the book underline that maritime history has the potential to play a key role in the construction of a broad ‘total’ historical overview of the Mediterranean region. Not surprisingly, throughout the essays the legacy of Braudel is a recurring theme.
Indeed, each of the eight case studies provides evidence on how through maritime history one can gain a deeper knowledge of the economy and society at large. The contributors discuss maritime historiography not in a vacuum, but in relation to the national academic, cultural and political factors that have shaped its evolution. The main achievements in the existing maritime historiography are juxtaposed to the question of how maritime history should ideally be written in the future. Almost all of the studies contain a detailed discussion of both explored and under-researched sources. The historiographical silences are also uncovered. In most of the countries, as the contributors note, the lives of everyday people (seamen, labourers, shipowners and women) are notoriously absent in the historiography and insufficient attention has been given to institutions, culture and mentalities. Moreover, almost always the emphasis has been more on exchange than on the production side related to the maritime economy.

The volume’s trajectory through the Mediterranean opens with Spain. Marina Alfonso Mola and Carlos Martínez Shaw chart the long transition from an almost exclusively naval military history of the ancien régime to a wider and more diverse historiography. In the case of France, Xavier Labat Saint Vincent presents the rich maritime history of the French in the Mediterranean during the early modern era. In the Italian study, Michela D’Angelo and M. Elisabetta Tonnizi discuss the moves – away from military and nautical aspects – towards the history of everyday maritime life, a more interdisciplinary approach. They uncover the existing gaps in research on post-unification Italy, in particular with reference to the themes of national port policy, maritime labour and institutions. In Malta also traditionally maritime history has leaned heavily on naval history and the early modern period. John Chircop criticizes the traditional geo-strategic model and applauds the recent re-reading of Maltese early modern history based on a wider geo-historical perspective which is branching out beyond the Valetta Grand harbour. In the next chapter, on Slovenia, Flavio Bonin charts the evolution and increasingly widening base of the nascent post-World War Two national maritime historiography.

Gelina Harlaftis follows with a methodological analysis in which she puts forward the proposition that Greek merchant shipping was built upon the (diaspora) commercial and maritime networks created in the Mediterranean and northern Europe after 1830. She also offers insights and presents quantitative data useful for the study of the history of Greek shipping companies. In a separate chapter on Greece, Gerassimos Pagratis throws light on the variety of private sources in the under-researched area of commercial shipping prior to the mid-eighteenth century and discusses the traditional ‘Venetian’ and ‘Ottoman’ Greek historiographies for this epoch. Moving on to the subject of Ottoman Maritime history, which is still in its early days and remains dominated by naval history, Eyüp Özeren and Onur Yıldırım provide a thought-provoking piece on the interlocking of maritime history with the Ottoman state machine from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. Their main argument is that the Ottoman Empire was a regional maritime power and that the Ottoman navy in its heyday was flexible and the product of a creative response to the realities the Ottoman state faced at the time. The volume closes with Israel, in which maritime history is relatively scant and has developed as a part or by-product of wider historical studies. Ruthy Gertwagen discusses both the major sources and works on the maritime history of the land of Israel and Jews. She also outlines the contributions of Israeli scholars to the study of the maritime aspects of other countries. In her closing comments she observes that maritime history cannot be separated from general history, thus bringing the reader successfully back to the opening comment of Gelina Harlaftis and Carmel Vassallo that maritime history is the key to ‘total’ history.

I wish that the volume had a few more country case studies and that the chapters were slightly better balanced in size and emphasis on source criticism and historiographical revisionism. Nevertheless, this undoubtedly excellent collection will, I believe, leave a mark on the formation of future research agendas and incite ‘new’ revisionist and less ‘Eurocentric’ interpretations in maritime history. Moreover, this book is of wider significance because it is a wonderful example of how through maritime history we can gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted diversities and unifying threads among Mediterranean countries – and their scholarly traditions.

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© 2007 Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou
Deutsche Ölpolitik, 1928–1938
TITUS KOCKEL
Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005
393 pp., h/back ISBN 3 05 00 4071 8 (€79.80)

Over the past 100 years, few economic sectors have preoccupied politicians and the people they represent more than petroleum. Increasing demands for oil and cross-border supply dependencies – often involving ‘fragile’ nations and regions fraught with political risk – have been the subject of many recent journalistic and academic geopolitical discussions. Given this understandable preoccupation, a serious book, which puts oil politics of an earlier age in one major country into their historical context, is particularly welcome.

Titus Kockel’s specific contribution is to trace the political and technical developments of the industry in Germany from the end of Weimar’s short-lived golden years to the last year of peace before the outbreak of World War Two. He argues that Germany had many competing solutions for satisfying its growing oil needs. The synthetic process chosen – that pushed by IG Farben – won out only after a long struggle over alternatives supported by important ‘downstream’ and ‘upstream’ petroleum interests.

Kockel sets his story against the background of the scientific, technical, organizational, and political context of the oil industry in the 1920s, many of which had already severely disadvantaged Germans. Spearheaded by several German banks before World War One, German and other continental European firms tried to overcome America’s lead in exploration and vertical integration with a series of investments, mostly outside of Germany. By the start date of Kockel’s story, 1928, many German attempts to overcome the American, British, and Dutch lead with international cooperative agreements had been dashed by World War One and its aftermath. Just as oil exploration and distribution were getting an enormous boost from military and consumer demands, the divided German oil industry struggled against much more powerful and better coordinated – cartelized – international competitors. These companies even dominated German oil importation and distribution. But the collapse of the Stinnes Concern helped chemical companies acquire home-country coal assets as well as patents for producing synthetic oil out of locally available raw materials. Ostensibly because of a worldwide oil shortage in the mid-1920s, the German chemical giant IG Farben set for itself the ambitious goal of producing commercially valuable amounts of synthetic oil from coal by 1927.

Despite the loss of pre-war assets, Germany had several viable options for covering its petroleum needs when the Nazis came to power. Synthesis of benzine with the Bergius patent (IG Farben) competed against sourcing oil from Iraq, other patented Ersatz processes, alcohol, and even other domestically produced sources, but the IG Farben process had the support of the German Economics Ministry (RWM), the military, and, by the early 1930s, the National Socialists (NSDAP). Set against the ideological projects and real economic needs, Kockel tells a story in which conflicting and powerful political groups, business configurations, and technical orientations battled after the Machtergreifung (Seizure of Power) to determine how Germany would satisfy its seemingly insatiable oil needs.

Kockel’s view of competing interests is consistent with recent research about government and business policy setting. He makes a good case that acquiring oil from outside of Europe (for example Iraq) was even considered by policy makers as a serious possibility well into the mid-1930s. No doubt they wanted to keep their options open, but, as Kockel illustrates amply in other places, the apparent combined production, autarkic, and foreign exchange advantages of synthetic oil overwhelmed the other approaches. Although keeping the Iraq project going, for example, enjoyed a good deal of business support, perhaps only with hindsight, dependence on a region to satisfy Germany’s growing private and ‘public’ needs (even if large reserves were held in Germany) in light of the increasing likelihood of confrontation with formidable maritime powers and the dominant powers in the Middle East (the UK, France and the Soviet Union).

The book suffers from some unfortunate lapses. At times, the narrative jumps between periods with very different historical contexts without a clear transition. The index omits or fails to clarify where references to some important figures appear. Kockel’s treatment of the origins of Germany’s synthetic oil production capacity, moreover, seems to lack direction. In contrast to some other historians, he implies at times that the initial decision was prompted by supply problems during
World War One. Although this reviewer has always found the patriotic desire to avoid economic encirclement a plausible explanation of German efforts during the 1920s to create a myriad of synthetic products, Kockel presents little or no evidence that a quest for economic independence actually played a significant role in IG Farben's decision to produce synthetic rubber and oil before the Third Reich. At times Kockel cites general supply shortages and a desire to reduce foreign exchange outlays as the determining explanation for IG Farben's interest in the synthetic programme in the mid-1920s, rather than an ambition to aid in the creation of Germany's strategic independence. This said, Kockel has produced a well-researched account of private and public policy making. For readers comfortable with the German and highly interested in the oil sector, his tracing of how the many political and sometimes conflicting economic interests contributed to Germany's preparation of this vital sector for the regime's overall war aims is a welcome addition to earlier excellent studies by Peter Hayes, R. J. Overy and Raymond Stokes.

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Red Eléctrica de España: El Libro de los 20 años, 1985–2005
LUIS ATIENZA SERNA
Madrid: EPES Artes Gráficas, 2005
219 pp., illus, maps, h/back M 48984 2005 (no price given)

This book discusses a pioneering process of integration of several regional electrical networks (La Empresa Nacional Eléctrica, ENDESA, la Empresa Nacional Hidroeléctrica del Ribogorza, ENHER, Iberduero, Hidroeléctrica Española, Fuerzas Eléctricas de Cataluña, Union Eléctrica Fenosa and Sevillana de Electricidad) into a single national electrical system, the Red Eléctrica de España (REE). In the first of three parts Miguel Ángel Mondelo Alcobendas, a specialist in energy, recounts the actions of the presidents of the REE. In the second part, two economic historians, Josean Garrues Irurzun, and Santiago Lopez García, from the Universities of Granada and Salamanca, respectively, provide a coherent business history on electric network management. In the last part, Javier Quinto Romero, co-director of REE, presents models for distributing electricity.

The main message in the book is to stress the idea that REE could rationalize and minimize costs in producing, transporting and distributing electricity, an important and decisive factor for modernization. The book tells how the successful REE is not only a pioneering experience in entrepreneurship, but also a strong political strategy on the part of governments in democratic Spain. This large firm (REE) was created in la Moraleja, Madrid, following up the electoral programme of the Spanish PSOE in 1985, to carry out the National Energy Plan decisively and safely. For this purpose the share of public capital from public firms devoted to electricity was dominant (51.44 per cent). This fact allowed a rational regional implantation from 1987 onwards, resulting from the definition of five Regional Centres for Electricity Exploitation and Decentralization (the five CEREX) in La Coruña, Bilbao, Barcelona, Madrid and Seville, in order to overcome severe constraints that afflicted regions such as Galicia, the Cantabrico–Levante corridor, and Andalucia.

The book has abundant quantitative information on the labour force employed, buildings, length of the network, capital, investment and computation systems. Irurzun and Santiago Lopez also describe the REE's accomplishments using erudite technical language for details concerning economics and the provision of electricity as a public good, and also go into details of technology, tension, control, and software. However, their greatest contribution is their excursion into details on the strategy and management of REE and on the business culture of this large public firm. Financial results are presented in connection with the Stock Exchange prices and the quality of the services provided to consumers.

The success of REE is clearly expressed in the expansion of its activity to Morocco (through a submarine cable) in 1998, to Peru from 1999 to 2002 through the Red Eléctrica del Sur (REDESUR), to France in 2000, and to Portugal in 2001 for an 'Iberian Market for Electricity'
(MIBEL – Mercado Iberico de Electricidade), following detailed international agreements that were particularly difficult in the case of the connection to France. In 2002 REE bought the Bolivian Transportadora de Electricidad (TDE). The extension to Baleares, Canárias, Ceuta and Melilla in 2003 was another large advance.

A new business approach of REE was its diversification into telecommunications, thanks to the pioneering adoption of the new fibre-optic technologies. A decisive legal aspect emerged in 2000, when REE was authorized to use this infrastructure to sell telecommunication services. This licence allowed the company to exploit a genuine public network of telecommunications, which was sold to T-online in 2005.

The company is proud of its efficient provision of electricity on all other occasions, including the introduction of high speed trains AVE (1991), the Olympic Games (1992), the Seville World’s Fair, the Madrid European Capital for Culture (1992), the entrance into the new century and millenium (2000–2001) (despite the many popular fears), and the coldest Christmas (2001). The most disastrous and difficult moments were the three hours of total power blackout in Cataluña (apagão) on 24 August 1993 from 22.44 p.m. to 1.45 a.m. Curious aspects of popular fears about electricity are also included in the book, particularly the opposition of the region of Cadiz to electrical cables because of their effects on health and the environment, requiring careful technical explanations on the part of electrical engineers and top management.

To sum up, I would say that this book is a ‘must read’ for many reasons. It deals with a very important business and a decisive sector for economic growth and modernization. Remember that, thanks to electricity, the twentieth century saw the birth of the automobile and landing on the moon, as Luis Atienza Serna observes in the foreword. Note also that electricity management is one of the most difficult case studies, as it is embroiled in political options and hegemonic strategies. For these reasons, historical national cases are full of experiences of nationalizations and privatization during the two world wars, in the inter-war period, and after 1945. Finally, the market match between demand and supply is quite difficult to manage, because production must be exactly adjusted to demand, moment by moment, as storage is impossible. So, tremendously sophisticated systems of control of production must be put to work to meet this challenge. Although there exists an abundant bibliography on electricity in the market, this book certainly deserves special attention from business historians. Our colleagues Irurzun and Santiago Lopez did an excellent job.

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Robber Baron: The Life of Charles Tyson Yerkes
JOHN FRANCH
Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006
v + 374 pp., illus., h/back ISBN 0 2520 3099 0 ($45.00)

Master of intrigue Charles Yerkes dominated the building of mass transit systems in Chicago and, later, London for almost a quarter of a century, ending with his death in 1905. How he operated within and between public and private spheres to promote his immense ambitions leaves no illusions about how either sphere functioned under wildcat capitalism. Yerkes manipulated private and public investors, purchased official support whenever possible (which was usually), recruited innovative engineering, and patronized beauty in art, architecture, and women. John Franch’s compelling biography of this complicated figure offers a rich lode for scholarly analysis.

Yerkes learned his trade in Philadelphia, initially as a broker, then as a student of that city’s dubious transit entrepreneurs. An 1872 prison term there taught him that some limits existed to creative financing but that no limits existed to manipulating the law. His training in the management of public officials and investors served him well after his 1881 move to Chicago. In that burgeoning hub of the Midwest, he applied his training and connections to make a fortune in public transportation.

‘Chaotic’ best describes urban mass transit in its initial decades. Like John D. Rockefeller, Yerkes justified his profits because of the relative order he brought to the industry. He led Chicago from
horse-drawn streetcars to cable cars to electric trolleys, then to the elevated streetcar. In doing so, he sold bonds larger than projects cost or lines had assets, then distributed the difference, up to a third of the total, to himself and his collaborators. He also bought politicians’ votes and considered regulatory commissions cheaper to ‘take care of’ than legislatures and city councils.

An honest biography of any ‘robber baron’ reminds us that nineteenth-century capitalists operated in a culture with considerable tolerance for deceit, bribery, insider advantages, and exploitation of workers and citizens. Even so, Yerkes operated at the extremes. Eventually, his and others’ excesses – compounded in his case by profound contempt for most rules, most people, and most newspapers – provoked the regulation of utilities holding public franchises and of other enterprises with public charters. Retelling Yerkes’ tale should prevent the periodic loosening of regulations that occurs when citizens forget why such rogues fuelled reforms in the first place. But cultural trends often celebrate rogues more than their victims, such as the straphangers, employees, and citizens who paid the price for Yerkes’ avarice.

Yerkes saw the Chicago and London transit systems as hard-won monuments to his career, but they were not his only legacies. His limited philanthropy aimed more toward buying present and future public opinion than buying passage into heaven. Thus, he funded a grand observatory north of Chicago instead of the hospital for which his wife had lobbied. Franch portrays a protagonist of great charm, intelligence, ingenuity, drive, and accomplishment, but one faithful only to his own unrelenting ambitions. Franch cannot hide his reluctant admiration, but neither does he hide the consequences of Yerkes’ greed or the censure that it provoked.

Yerkes’ story points to major questions about the interactions between public and private spheres. Did constructing large utilities with public resources for public use have to produce vast private fortunes? Yerkes self-righteously believed that his financial risks and intense efforts justified squeezing riders, employees, and citizens alike. His streetcars could not run without access to rights-of-way, bond issues, and other public resources, so why were political challenges to his practices so hard to win, despite staggering and well-publicized chicanery? Were alternative financial mechanisms and urban planning tools too primitive before 1900 to manage huge infrastructure projects? Or were public agencies able to take on utility building only when there was no potential for profit, such as with sewers? Even London called on Yerkes’ experience in transit management and his American engineers to build its Underground system in 1900. What of this environment was structural, institutional, traditional, or ideological? To answer that ‘market forces’ determined decisions merely begs the questions.

Franch draws on no current scholarly literature to raise or address these and other questions that his narrative inspires. Other possibilities for analysis include Yerkes’ web of personal connections. It demonstrates the centrality of social capital to climbing to magnate stature and then operating there. The social dynamics of corruption play out intriguingly here, as well. Also, how do Yerkes’ practices compare with builders of other systems, such as telegraphs and railroads? How did building urban utilities compare with building regional or national systems? How did the perceived line dividing creative capitalism from corruption change between Yerkes’ earliest adventures in the 1860s and 1905? Why did presumptions change about how to trade off public resources for private profit to fulfil public needs? How important were such commanding targets as Yerkes to motivate Progressive Era reforms?

Franch minutely details Yerkes’ interactions with other people and institutions. He also develops certain aspects of the contexts in which Yerkes operated, giving us a good sense of the conditions in which a brilliant, ambitious, and almost entirely unscrupulous person could generate changes. To achieve all this, Franch extensively mined period newspapers and trade journals, memoirs, correspondence, and contemporaries’ critiques, as well as credit reports, court filings, and bankruptcy records. The ore from his assiduous labours deserves analytical refinement into metals with which we can construct deeper understandings of how entrepreneurs interacted with public and private institutions to build the utilities that move, heat, light, and connect us.
This book examines one of the most important economic phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century: the rise of the container. The container – or the ‘box’, as the author calls it – facilitates inter-modal freight transport by dramatically reducing transfer costs. It enhances the security of valuable consignments, and improves the efficiency with which they can be stowed on board a ship. Containerisation has significant implications for road and rail transport too.

It is difficult to summarize the book because the individual topics are so diverse, and the methods by which they are treated are so varied. The publisher’s blurb aggravates the problem by raising the reader’s expectations to unrealistic levels. The book’s claim to be ‘the first comprehensive history of the shipping container’ is unwarranted. Whilst it is true that the impact of containers on the growth of international trade is an under-researched topic, this book barely scratches the surface of the subject.

The core of the book is an interesting thematic study of the post-war history of New York docks, focusing on trade union affairs and labour disputes. Embedded within this study is a narrative of Malcolm McLean’s business dealings, and the way that they stimulated the take-off of the container trade in New York. It is not, however, a convincing study of Malcolm McLean as an entrepreneur, nor a conventional business history of his Sea-Land company.

In the introductory chapter the author promises to develop some wider economic themes connected with geography and technological innovation, but he never really delivers on this. He does not analyse the container as a Schumpeterian innovation, and does little to document the impact of containerization on the global economy. Despite some intriguing insights, the analysis remains on a superficial level.

It is the final part of the book that will appeal most to non-US readers. It provides a global perspective on the growth of container traffic, and examines the fortunes of ports outside the US that have embraced the container. However, the author’s attempt at a popular racy style ensures that substantive issues are quickly glossed over. Typical of the wasted opportunities is a graph of aggregate container capacity based on annual data from UNCTAD 1965–1974. Not surprisingly, the graph shows an upward trend. The interpretation would be more meaningful if the graph included data for more than ten years, and especially for the most recent period. Data obtained from shipping archives would have been an added bonus too.

Overall, this book is to be welcomed for its attempt to raise the profile of an important and surprisingly neglected phenomenon. It demonstrates how a single maritime innovation substantially affected the growth of international trade. It is only the ‘first word’ on this subject, however, and certainly not the last. The comprehensive history of the global container industry, as promised by the publisher, still remains to be written.

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Financial Founding Fathers: The Men Who Made America Rich
ROBERT E. WRIGHT and DAVID J. COWEN
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006
240 pp., h/back ISBN 0 226 91068 7 (£16.00)

Americans, it seems, are endlessly fascinated by the exploits of their founding fathers. Bookstore shelves are crowded with volumes about the famous and near-famous and Pulitzer Prizes are regularly awarded for weighty biographies of the familiar. In an effort to tap into this market, Wright and Cowen offer a book extolling the virtues and exposing the vices of America’s lesser-known financial founding fathers. While Alexander Hamilton is a household name, most modern Americans could only scratch their heads in confusion if quizzed about the likes of Albert Gallatin,
Stephen Girard, Tench Coxe or Thomas Willing. As Wright and Cowen reveal, these men, though less well known, were integral to American economic success. Portrayed as saints and sinners, savours and angels, these men’s financial deeds and misdeeds provide tales as compelling as those of George Washington’s apocryphal cherry tree, or Thomas Jefferson’s questionable love life, or John and Abigail Adams’ very genuine lifelong partnership.

Wright and Cowen begin, as they should, in the beginning with a thoughtful assessment of Hamilton’s achievements and why they sparked such political rancour. They attribute the rancour to competing visions of America’s economy (rural and agricultural or urban and industrial) and polity (decentralized and state-oriented or centralized and federal). In opposition to Jefferson’s vision of a yeoman utopia, Hamilton envisioned an industrial powerhouse capable of rivalling Britain and was willing, as he proved in his contributions the Federalist Papers, to battle for the hearts and minds of post-Revolutionary Americans. While the authors provide a nod to the Virginians’ sincere concern with the consequences of economic modernization, they fail to acknowledge the very real Republican concerns with the tendency of Federalists to follow the British in awarding monopolies, limiting competition, rewarding the few and undermining economic and political equality, all of which Jefferson thought would corrupt a virtuous republic. This was the fundamental, some might say the foundational, American debate up to the Civil War. It reappears in slightly modified form in the concluding chapter of the volume in the discussion of Andrew Jackson and Nicholas Biddle’s bank war.

Despite prophesies of doom pouring forth from the Republican camp, Hamilton’s agenda prevailed in the long run, and Wright and Cowen’s narrative casts Hamilton’s long shadow over all the major players. Tench Coxe, for example, is labelled a ‘Judas’ for abandoning Hamilton and the Federalists when he was passed over for appointment as Treasury Secretary. William Duer is cast as the ‘Sinner’, whose financial shenanigans nearly derailed Hamilton’s financial revolution. Albert Gallatin, the Swiss émigré and staunch Republican, is cast as the ‘Saviour’ who, as the country’s third Treasury Secretary comes to appreciate the system Hamilton established. The French émigré Stephen Girard is cast as the ‘Saint’. When Gallatin’s treasury could find no buyers for a bond issue needed to finance the War of 1812, Girard stepped in and, with the assistance of David Parish and John Jacob Astor, successfully marketed the issue. This early investment banking consortium was born of necessity and Girard was largely responsible for its success. And, finally, to Nicholas Biddle, who waged an epic Hamiltonian struggle to save the Second Bank of the United States from the depredations of a second-generation Jeffersonian. Biddle lost the battle, of course, but Jackson lost the war. Banking and finance were, by 1836, too much a part of the American commercial scenery to contemplate turning back.

When I started reading the book, I wanted to like it. While there is much to be said in its favour, it suffers some serious flaws, not the least of which is that it jumps back and forth between a genuinely scholarly discourse and trite clichés, including repeated references to the financial system as the ‘goose that laid golden eggs’. I presume such allusions were included to make the book more readable. Unfortunately, these clumsy efforts at readability are subtraction by addition. A prime example is the discussion of the adoption of the dollar as the unit of account. Establishing a common unit of account was important, Wright and Cowen remind us, because it affords a simple answer to the question: ‘How much is that?’ Clear enough. Then the authors continue with the ‘Mint Act defined the size of the goose’s golden eggs’ (p. 31), which trivializes the earlier point and is not wholly accurate anyway because the goose they are referring to is the financial system in toto and its eggs are improvements in the payment and credit system. The dollar per se is not the measure of the social benefit of a common currency, but those benefits could be measured in the newly defined dollar.

Even if the narrative is off-putting at times, the story Wright and Cowen tell is an important one. Just as the American political system was the handiwork of a remarkable group of men who came together under exceptional circumstances, the American financial system is no less remarkable and its cornerstone was laid by, arguably, the best and the brightest of this able assemblage of men.

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The growing importance of small business across countries has not gone unnoticed. Global institutions like the World Bank or the European Union, as well as many countries – developed and developing ones – have set up programmes, institutions or entities with the firm objective to support and foster small businesses and their activities. This highlights the widely held view of politicians, civil servants, and other public and private bodies, that small businesses contribute positively to economic growth and development, via job creation, innovation, and competition, to name just a few. Some of these topics have been moderately researched, e.g. innovation, and others hotly debated, like job creation. In these specific cases, the current general consensus amongst academics is that small businesses do play a valuable role in innovation and employment generation. Other areas, such as whether or not public support for small business is necessary, or cost-effective, have been neglected and some of these are addressed in the book.

The book reviews a considerable share of the small firm literature, including for instance the difficult relationship between small businesses and financers, or the nature of training in these firms. Unfortunately these are not the book’s strength. Comparable works, such as David Storey’s book (Understanding the Small Business Sector. London: Routledge, 1994), Sara Carter and Dylan Jones-Evans’ book (Enterprise and Small Business: Principles, Practice and Policy. Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2000) or Paul Burn’s book (Entrepreneurship and Small Businesses. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), offer more comprehensive introductions to the small business literature for students and academics alike.

The other part of the book is rather more original in the selection of themes. Chapter 3, ‘Do Small Firms Matter?’, presents one of the few currently available historical analyses of the role of small firms, which business historians might find interesting. In chapter 5, ‘Business Owners and Government?’, Bannock asserts that taxation and regulation are the two government activities that affect small businesses the most. In Chapter 6, ‘Entrepreneurs and Managers’, he concludes that innovative enterprises in Europe face financing problems, while chapter 7, ‘Government Policies on Small Firms’, demonstrates the existence of a mismatch between public support to small businesses and their needs and proposes alternative measures. Finally, ‘Small Firms in Developing Countries’ contains a series of proposals and recommendations to developing countries and country donors of help and aid interested in promoting small businesses and their role in development. It is unfortunate though that findings are often inadequately evaluated and analysis lacks rigour.

A major strength of this book is its distinctively international focus. Graham Bannock provides a plethora of empirical evidence, figures, and information, drawn from several countries, including developing ones, which differentiates the book from others in the field. In an ideal world, one would wish to be able to look at the same kind of data, e.g. money spent on support programmes for small businesses, or patenting activity by these firms, for a sample of countries which remains constant as the book progresses. However, data limitations make the ideal empirical piece of research a wishful thinking and this book is inevitably affected by that. Rather than offering a continuous and uniform stream of data, the information is supplied as snapshots and in an intermittent manner, focusing on different countries in most of the cases. In sum, while this book has an enticing title and raises important questions, it is something of a lost opportunity.

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