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**Adelman, Jeremy. *Republic of Capital: Buenos Aires and the Legal Transformation of the Atlantic World*. Stanford: Stanford University press, 1999. Pp. x, 376. 5 maps, bibliography, index. US\$55.00 (cloth)**

This is a study of how the city and province of Buenos Aires lost their prosperous positions at the periphery of the Atlantic economy between 1806 and 1830, and how by 1860 the merchant capitalists of Buenos Aires city had successfully reintegrated city, province and nation into the Atlantic world. The author effectively contests a longstanding historical model of "Argentina as nineteenth-century failure". Many non-Argentine scholars have held that unlike the United States, no constitution-based liberal political tradition molded by popular sovereignty resulted from the Argentine independence revolution. Adelman reasons instead that, perhaps more politically complex than its American equivalent and certainly much longer in gestation, a stable nineteenth-century Argentine polity was slowly built by merchant capitalists, landowners and others. They entrenched what had always been at the core of the early American federal structure — the strict protection of property rights and contracts. The analysis is not only compelling, but a wonderfully lucid synthesis of early nation-building in Argentina. Moreover, it makes clear how Buenos Aires city emerged so predominant in Argentine business and politics.

In the late eighteenth century, Buenos Aires merchant capitalists prospered in a rapidly changing colonial economy that stressed the export of precious metals from the Andes, while placing new emphasis on a burgeoning agricultural economy in the littoral region. The merchants initially flourished even as the growing breaks between the two regional economies helped prompt political unrest after 1800. But as insurrection gripped both South America and Europe, they found no way to structure a political system that might provide stability for a reinsertion of Buenos Aires into the trans-Atlantic commercial system in the aftermath of South American independence struggles. The intellectual foundation of a solution came in Enlightenment-inspired conceptions of commercial liberty that transcended what Adelman calls "bullionist mercantilism" and in conceptions of property that tied judicial problems of ownership to the property owner as informed citizen. But the violent regime that *caudillo* Juan Manuel Rosas consolidated out of independence-era turmoil during the 1830s and 1840s limited political and economic stability. Through cronyism, warfare, and a tight grip on the Buenos Aires customs house, Rosas exploited his position at the crossroads of trade between Buenos Aires province landowners and Atlantic world consumers. For a time, Buenos Aires merchants accepted the authoritarian regime, trading unstable business conditions and weak contract-law enforcement for Rosas's attacks on competing ports that confirmed the predominance of Buenos Aires capitalists. But their support waned in the face of ongoing warfare in favour of a republican system that would ensure stability.

This book's most important contribution comes in the discussion of changing judicial and intellectual understandings of property rights, contracts, and commercial exchange. In the aftermath of Rosas's rule, merchant capitalists removed juridical questions of

property rights from legislative control by entrenching such rights in a new constitution (1852). As Adelman points out, the Argentine constitution dovetailed with similar mid-century codes elsewhere that adopted legal formalism, the notion that neutral principles rather than ideology determined legal solutions. The Argentine "republic of capital" was consolidated in the three decades that followed by Buenos Aires bankers who financed the public purse. Both the public Banco de la Provincia and the private Banco Nacional were run by private financiers. Both functioned as agents of the new republican regime and as holders of the public debt. So strong was the power of capital in the consolidation of the state that the constitution and the evolving political system offered relatively few protections for private or individual rights, often cast as a threat to the republic. Because of this, popular protest as it developed in the late nineteenth century was forced into extra-legal channels of action, precipitating new crises in the twentieth century for a polity ill-equipped to incorporate challenges to existing political authority.

Adelman's research is rich, his mastery of the historical literature complete. There is one notable weakness. At several points in the narrative, the author discusses workers. They are clearly essential actors in the historical processes analysed. Adelman concedes this in allowing that the institutions he considers were "settings where individuals, groups, and classes reconciled their disputes." But the book's conceptual leaps from workers' actions to political and judicial institutions are too great. While the author painstakingly lays out the evidence for the ways in which Buenos Aires merchants influenced institutional shifts, there is no attention to popular impacts on these same institutions — or how workers and their political representatives were marginalised from the processes under consideration here. In the end though, *Republic of Capital* is about the role of the Buenos Aires capital elite in transforming institutions and nation building. In that ambitious task, the book succeeds powerfully.

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**Lee, Leo Ou-fan. *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999. Pp. xvii, 409. Black and white illustrations, glossary, index. US\$49.95 (cloth); US\$24.95 (paper).**

Leo Ou-fan Lee introduces Shanghai urban culture to the reader by invoking the prose of Mao Dun: "LIGHT, HEAT, POWER!" These words express a fascination with urban spaces and modernity which permeated experience, production, and representation of Shanghai in the 1930s. Lee's cultural history offers a mapping of Shanghai attuned to the semiotics of the city — of light, heat, power, and modernity — in a Chinese urban context. *Shanghai Modern*, while focussing on narrative rather than theory, explores the relationships between city, modernity, coloniality, mimicry, national identity, gender, orientalism, occidentalism, and cosmopolitanism.

*Shanghai Modern* proceeds in three parts: part one outlines cultural production; part two discusses selected literary texts; and part three suggests linkages between Shanghai and Hong Kong as emblems of modernity at different stages in twentieth century history. The tripartite structure of the book replicates the cinematic montage interspersed with narration prevalent in films of the era and favoured by prominent literary figures such as Mu Shiyong (chapter six). *Shanghai Modern* thereby invites the reader to experience through the daily lives of literary urbanites of the 1930s and 1940s the new urban reality of modern consumption and conveniences. Lee moves seamlessly between description and analysis of the urban consciousness (re)produced in various public spaces such as dance halls, movie theatres, racetracks, and coffeeshops, as well as through different media including popular literary magazines (Chinese and Western), pictorial magazines, films, and jazz music. When analysis of literary texts takes centre stage in part two, the depth of knowledge Lee brings to his study of urban culture in Shanghai shines particularly brightly.

The significant contributions of this book to the fields of cultural and urban history are many. One of the most salient, to my mind, is the connection by Lee of the phenomena of nationhood and the public sphere. Lee's attention to the intimate links between imagining a new community of the nation and defining a new (urban) reading public allows commercial ventures in publishing and advertisements to sit alongside literary texts as components of the cityscape. Lee asserts, "Since a cultural imaginary may itself be defined as a contour of collective sensibilities and significations resulting from cultural production, we must also wrestle with both ends of this interpretive strategy — namely, both the social and the institutional context of this cultural production and the forms in which such an imaginary is constructed and communicated. ... In my view, 'modernity' is both idea and imaginary, both essence and surface (63)." I question, however, Lee's formulation of this approach as contrary to "the elitist approach of conventional intellectual history, which tends to discuss only the essential ideas of individual thinkers." While scholars of Chinese intellectual and literary history (Lee included) focus on ideas, most do so in relation to the larger cultural contexts within which the thinkers existed and with which they were engaged. For future directions of intellectual and cultural history, we would benefit by taking *Shanghai Modern* as an example of the productive potential of moving outside conventional categorizations of historical inquiry rather than pitting cultural against intellectual history. The cultural imaginary of contemporary intellectuals may invoke different spatio-temporal coordinates than popular writers but consideration of this imaginary can, and should, be part of both intellectual and cultural histories.

Lee's real challenge to conventional modern Chinese history lies, I believe, in the remapping of the modern nation-scape through delineation of a Chinese identity predicated upon, rather than in opposition to, urban spaces. Contrary to scholarship on China that takes leftist writers and rural spaces to be the essence of modern China, Lee argues convincingly that Shanghai was not only, or even primarily, a city of national humiliation and capitalist vice. For

the writers featured in this book, Shanghai embodied modernity and China's future. Through analysis of Chinese writers such as Eileen Chang, Shi Zhecun, and Mu Shiyong, this study also moves beyond the parameters of Chinese urban culture to engage comparatively the relationship between citizens, cities, and modernity in Europe, America, and China. Lee's introduction into English-language scholarship of the schools of Chinese modernism, neo-sensationalism, and de-cadence surfaces alternative imaginings of the relationships between China and the West, city and modernism. For example, the occidentalism of Fu Yanchang and his associates, for Lee, reveals that "exoticism as a phenomenon of urban culture is closely related to a search for Chinese modernity and provides a partial solution to the paradox that arises between nationalism (a new cultural identity) and imperialism (203)." In summary, Leo Ou-fan Lee demonstrates in a richly textured account how the city, as centre of modern civilization, captured the imagination of many urbanites as essential backdrop to modernity and Chinese-ness. *Shanghai Modern* provides for a diverse audience a nuanced account of how the light, heat, and power of the city's venues and its images fueled a dynamic urban culture distinct from rural China and urban Europe but nonetheless driven by similar concerns of modernity, identity, and space.

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**Cliff, Andrew; Peter Haggett; Matthew Smallman-Raynor. *Deciphering Global Epidemics: Analytical Approaches to the Disease Records of World Cities, 1888-1912. Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography 26. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pages xxiii, 469. 11 halftone illustrations, figures, tables, appendices, bibliography, index. US\$74.95 (cloth), US\$29.95 (paper).***

In 1887 the United States Marine Hospital Service (forerunner of the United States Public Health Service) began publishing a weekly bulletin of disease data gathered not only from American locations, but from cities all around the world. American officials were concerned that immigration and travel to the United States would bring a host of deadly ailments into the country, resulting in widespread epidemics. There was good reason to be fearful. Past experience had demonstrated that infectious diseases could cause large numbers of fatalities. A process of excluding or quarantining people arriving from parts of the world where epidemics were occurring was seen as one way to control the incidence of disease in the United States. But to know whom to exclude, one needed to know where epidemics were occurring. Hence, American consular officials all over the globe were instructed to find out how many people had died of infectious diseases in their jurisdictions each week and cable the figures to Washington. With varying degrees of enthusiasm they complied, and for twenty-five years mortality statistics from over 200 foreign cities, augmented by data from about 150 American cities, were published in the *Weekly Abstract of Sanitary Reports*. Historians have nibbled around the