

8. *The Review Section*

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A content analysis of the review coverage of a journal is more difficult to assess than its contents of articles: editorial intentions are subject to greater attrition and exogenous influences have greater sway. This is more particularly the case with a journal of widely-ranging horizons because limitations of space and cost impose their own selectivity.

In the first place a journal depends on publishers to send review copies — and with a newly-established venture or a journal published overseas without a known readership (or, for Italian publishers, a journal in English facing outwards from Italy) there might well be reluctance to seek reviews in its pages — unless authors placed the journal on the review list which publishers usually send to authors. With expensive monographs some publishers are reluctant to send a large number of copies for review, and seek to target only the strategic journals for the book in question. Until a journal is well established, until it becomes well known, of accepted status amongst economic and social historians, its editor is not going to be in a strong position to elicit all the books desired for review. In the case of an international journal, with a wide remit, selectivity is imperative, compounded by the information problem of knowing what books are being published where and by whom: it is difficult for an editor to scan all publishers' catalogues systematically.

Table 12: Distribution of reviews by author

(No. of reviews published per author	(No. of authors in category)
14	1
11	2
8	1
7	2
6	7
5	6
4	14
3	18
2	44
1	189

In the case of reviews more than articles, further possibilities of attrition exist: whether reviewers approached by editors accept; whether those who accept actually write the reviews; whether reviews written are acceptable and get printed.

Some journals have a 'review editor' with the responsibility of organising this section of the issues delegated from the main editor. In the *Journal of European Economic History*, by contrast, the editor has done this in person, in addition to running all other aspects of the publication. Only in the case of some American reviews, for some years, was any sub-contracting organised — to Professor Ira Glazier of Temple University, who was a member of the Editorial Board. In the main, the initiative of publishers and authors was probably the principal determinant of the selection of books presented to the *Journal* for review: a responsive more than a pro-active role. This would make the range of books reviewed more representative of trends in publishing in the discipline over these years. Any 'content analysis' of the reviews appearing in the *Journal of European Economic History* has to bear all these considerations in mind.

Over the first 20 years of the *Journal's* existence, 517 reviews appeared in its pages. From the beginning, reviews formed a regular feature of each issue; without being formally structured as major

reviews or short notices in the fashion of some other journals. In addition, at the end of each issue, there has appeared a long list of 'books received' (including issues of other journals, book reviews and the like), with details of publication. The numbers of reviews published declined somewhat in the second half of the period. Once the *Journal* was well established, the number of reviews reached 45 in the 1974 volume; and, with variations, was still as high as 36 for 1981; but the 1990 total was down to 19. This evidently reflected an editorial policy to encourage assessments of some length and detail. By comparison, the *Economic History Review*, which seeks to cover publications in economic and social history (particularly for British topics) systematically, published 165 reviews in the 1974 volume (of four issues), and about 150 reviews in 1990.

The range of books reviewed was certainly not confined to Europe, however widely defined: Africa, India, China, Japan, the United States and Latin-America all featured in the list. Nor was there any undue concentration on Italy: only about ten per cent of the books featured were concerned with Italian subjects (37 being published in Italy in Italian; 20 being about Italy but in other languages). The coverage of the rest of Europe (excluding books with more general international themes) was as follows: the leading number of books reviewed concerned United Kingdom subjects (including the history of economic thought authored by British-based scholars) — 90 in all. This was followed by French books which totalled 63. After this came a large gap: Germany and Austria, 30; Spain and Portugal (but almost entirely books on Spanish economic and social history), 28; Russia and the Soviet Union, 25; North-Western Europe and Scandinavian countries, 16; Eastern Europe (including Austro-Hungary), 15. This, one may presume, broadly reflects the relative level of publications in the countries of these different European regions, even if a systematic quantitative investigation would be an intolerably complex task to perform (with many subjective decisions involved in it). It might also be that publishers in the UK (and British authors) have the convention of seeking wider review coverage in the English-speaking world and in

English-language media than others. Not uncommonly in the market for academic books published in the United Kingdom more than half the sales are abroad, mainly in North America. International journals are therefore a particularly attractive medium for carrying reviews.

For the reasons suggested above, it is difficult to know what conclusions to draw from an analysis of reviews by theme and topic — the selectivity which is inevitable given the amount of space devoted to reviews in the *Journal* compared with the vastly greater number of books potentially reviewable is not likely to reveal systematic patterns. To draw significant conclusions would, again, entail deriving a total population of books published on each specified topic, against which the number of reviews published could be compared — but this is a large research topic in its own right which could not be undertaken. In the absence of systematic quantification, therefore, conclusions remain impressionistic and tentative.

Agricultural history (particularly concerning regions of continental Europe) is well represented, particularly with local and regional studies and for the medieval and early modern periods; similarly, with monetary, banking and business history studies (including multinationals) with important monographs for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union/Russia. Studies of the process of industrialisation in different countries are well represented; and also monographs in urban history. As with the balance of articles in the *Journal*, social history is strongly represented: perhaps a third of the books reviewed are social or social-and-economic (as with the study of a family or a social occupational group, such as the nobility or peasantry).

Checking the indexes of any periodical is to reveal surprises both about which books have been reviewed and which (for a large number of reasons) have not. I remember from my own days as assistant editor of the *Economic History Review* that a long story lay behind some such instances. The *Journal of European Economic History* is no exception to those surprises. In the history of economic thought, for example, for which over 20 volumes were reviewed, there was only an indirect presence of the Adam Smith industry, reaching its climax

in 1976 and shortly afterwards in the flood of publications on the bicentennial anniversary of the publication of the *Wealth of Nations*¹.

In the coverage of demographic history, also, the range of books covered included studies of France (a local study on Meulan, an analysis of the female population in the nineteenth century and a prosopographical analysis of social elites), Spain, Japan, Germany, Britain and British Colonial America. But the publication which set new standards of rigour and sophistication in historical demography during the two decades of the *Journal's* life — E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: a reconstruction* (Edward Arnold, London, 1981) — alas, was not reviewed².

The external presence of books about industrialisation makes the absence of N.F.R. Crafts, *British Economic Growth during the Industrial Revolution* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1985), which has had such a major impact within this area of study, all the more noticeable. Inevitably, this is the case in other fields: as with a splendid reception, with so many persons present, one becomes on occasion more conscious of the absentees than those whom one actually encounters at the party. Emmanuel le Roy Ladurie is represented with *Le Territoire de l'Historien* (vol. III, 1974), *The Mind and the Method of the Historian* (vol. XII, 1983), and *The Peasants of Languedoc* (vol. IV, 1975), but where is the book by which he became an international star, Montaillou?

The English translation of Fernand Braudel *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Vol. IV, 1975) is present; but we are without *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800* and *Civilisation Matérielle, Economie et Capitalisme XV^e-XVIII^e*³.

¹ C.f. D.P. O' Brien, *The Classical Economists* (Vol. V, 1976); T.H. Sowell, *Classical Economics Reconsidered* (Vol. VI, 1977).

² This study gave the quietus to the explanation of demographic mechanisms offered by T.H. McKeown, *The Modern Rise of Population* (reviewed in Vol. VI, 1977).

³ *Civilisation Matérielle et Capitalisme* (A. Colin, Paris, 1967; English translation published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1973); *Civilisation Matérielle, Economie et Capitalisme* (A. Colin, Paris, 1979, Vol. I, *Les Structures du Quotidien...*; Vol. II, *Les Jeux de l'Echange*; Vol. III, *Le Temps du Monde*; English translation published by Collins, London, 1981).

Jacques le Goff as a premier medieval social historian has not been reviewed in the *Journal* and Georges Duby is represented by only one of his many volumes⁴.

The roll call of distinguished absentees could be extended but only in an unachievable ideal world would there be no such list in any journal. The positive reality remains that of a remarkable range of studies which have been reviewed, and reviewed in depth. This section of the *Journal of European Economic History* has justified, and more than justified, its status internationally for economic and social historians.

The range of the reviewers has been almost as wide as the range of provenance of the books reviewed, including the United States and Canada, and virtually all European countries from Scandinavia to Spain, from Britain to Poland, from Czechoslovakia and Hungary to Israel. The United States, Britain, and Italy appear to be the source of more reviewers than other countries of origin; but the balance has clearly been determined by the intrinsic expertise sought, wherever that was to be found, so that the distribution has been widely based, with no dominant voices. Amongst those reviewing most regularly for the *Journal* have been: E. Ashton (up to his death in 19); S.B. Clough a member of the Editorial Board up to his death in 19); C. D'Elia; J.P. Cuvallier, J.A. Davis, A. Di Vittorio, S. Howson, F. Jecquier, S.B. Saul, F. Spooner, U. Tucci, M. Wilkins, I. Zilli.

⁴ *The Early Growth of the European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth century* (Vol. IV, 1975).