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**Eva Hemmungs Wirtén, *Making Marie Curie: Intellectual Property and Celebrity Culture in an Age of Information*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015. Pp. 223. ISBN 978-0-2262-3584-4. £24.50, \$35.00 (hardback).**

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The British Journal for the History of Science / Volume 49 / Issue 01 / March 2016, pp 134 - 135  
DOI: 10.1017/S0007087416000157, Published online: 16 March 2016

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0007087416000157](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0007087416000157)

**How to cite this article:**

Patricia Fara (2016). The British Journal for the History of Science, 49, pp 134-135 doi:10.1017/S0007087416000157

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EVA HEMMUNGS WIRTÉN, *Making Marie Curie: Intellectual Property and Celebrity Culture in an Age of Information*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015. Pp. 223. ISBN 978-0-2262-3584-4. £24.50, \$35.00 (hardback).  
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There are always new stories to be told about even the most familiar of icons. During the last century, the world's most famous female physicist was compressed into a variety of cardboard cut-out figures – the scientific martyr, the Jewish whore, the double Nobel Prize-winner, the steely obsessive – although modern schoolgirls associate her with a cancer charity and more traditionally feminine virtues of compassion and caring. These multiple roles are made still more complicated by the array of possible names. In a tribute to the Polish origins of which she was so proud, this woman is now often called Marie Skłodowska Curie, but as Eva Hemmungs Wirtén discusses in her splendid new book, the available combinations of titles, surnames and initials were of more than symbolic significance: how she signed herself had practical consequences. The unexpected stereotypes who emerge from *Making Marie Curie: Intellectual Property and Celebrity Culture in an Age of Information* include the savvy media manipulator, the ambitious opportunist and the hard-headed negotiator, all three constrained by old-fashioned legislation on women's rights.

Hemmungs Wirtén's overall aim is to study the past in order to learn about the present. To enhance understanding of modern scientific life, she explores the era of the Curies by intertwining three analytical threads of contemporary relevance: intellectual property, celebrity culture and the organization of knowledge. Rather than proceeding steadily through her subject's life, Hemmungs Wirtén adopts a more rewarding strategy of discussing four key episodes in considerable detail: discovering radium, the furore surrounding Curie's affair with Pierre Langevin, her two trips to America, and her less well-known participation in the League of Nations and its Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation (CICI). Although each of the four main chapters could stand as an individual paper in its own right, together they form a powerful and coherent argument, if at times somewhat leadened by academic sociology-speak. Making excellent use of relatively untapped primary sources, notably the extensive correspondence of Missy Brown Meloney preserved in the Paris Curie archive, Hemmungs Wirtén has succeeded in casting fresh light not only on Curie's own career but also on the development of modern attitudes towards ownership of knowledge about the natural world.

*Making Marie Curie* opens with her famous pronouncement that science should be interested in things, not in people; the tensions inherent in this dichotomy become a leitmotif recurring throughout the book. Hemmungs Wirtén closely examines the Curie couple's renowned refusal to patent their discoveries. Although by this stage the laws in Britain had been changed, in France wives were still non-people who belonged to their husbands and could not own property in their own right; it was only when she became a widow that Curie could in principle possess radium and bequeath it to her daughters. Curie could – and did – ensure that she was credited for originating intellectual ideas, such as inventing the label 'radioactivity', but she gradually and strategically retreated behind her husband's identity in establishing priority of discovery: as Hemmungs Wirtén shows, under these circumstances, the distinction between 'we' and 'I' can be crucial. Always short of money, the married couple derived part of their income from the patents Pierre and his brother had taken out on their electrical instruments, but as a wife Curie was not entitled to patent radium, which would have entailed demonstrating that it had an industrial application and so would be financially profitable. This perspective puts a new twist on her apparently noble declaration that the couple were disinterested searchers after scientific truth; or, in the eloquent phrasing that Meloney put into her mouth, radium was an element that belonged to everybody but should enrich nobody.

The Curie myth perpetuates images of her isolation as a lonely widow, but she leaned on several women, including her two daughters, the English electrical engineer Hertha Ayrton, and Meloney,

who effectively became her PR agent for almost fifteen years. Hemmungs Wirtén convincingly establishes Meloney's crucial role in both the mythology and the life of Marie Curie, carefully picking apart the ambiguous implications of gift exchange between the two women and their two nations. Curie insisted that the fruits of her first tour be donated to her personally not as money but as radium, even though financially it would have made sense to shop around in Europe for a cheaper supply. At the last minute, she seems to have realized that if she were to die, her daughters would have to pay inheritance tax, but a bizarre sequence of lost letters and faulty memories obfuscates the historical picture still further. The two women were often talking at cross-purposes, but as one of Curie's greatest admirers Meloney gradually became one of her few intimate acquaintances.

Despite her claim that science is about things, not persons, Curie worked hard throughout her life to fashion her public image. Legally a non-person before Pierre's death, she nurtured her ephemeral existence as an independent persona, albeit in Pierre's shadow. Radium might not have belonged to the Curie couple, but the international unit of radioactivity bears their name, and she liberally gave permission for its attachment to schools and streets. Only when things went wrong did her Polish origins prevail: one of the accusations against Curie during the Langevin affair was that an unladylike immigrant had brought a hallowed French name into disrepute. Later reinstated as a French heroine, she considered suing a so-called Alfred Curie who was marketing the ubiquitous Tho-Radia range of radioactive cosmetics and perfumes. In this clearly written, thoroughly researched and originally oriented exposé, Hemmungs Wirtén reveals how Curie's own brand achieved far greater international recognition.

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KATHERINE C. EPSTEIN, *Torpedo: Inventing the Military–Industrial Complex in the United States and Great Britain*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2014. Pp. 305. ISBN 978-0-6747-2526-3. £30.00 (hardback). doi:10.1017/S0007087416000169

For historians, the military–industrial complex presents at least three problematic features: the part that is 'military', the part that is 'industrial' and the part that is 'complex'. The literature instead favours a simpler 'executive–academic dyad', in which civilian officials conspire with their expert advisers, and thereby short-circuit the vast apparatus of government procurement. A fourth problem is the power of denomination. We remember the 'military–industrial complex' from its concern to President Eisenhower, and by extension, Cold War America. Katherine Epstein would like us to forget these historical biases and appreciate their elements at work in the Anglo-American world around the turn of the twentieth century. On this point, her book is admirably consistent. After headlining its first page, Eisenhower reappears only for the final paragraph. What falls between is a rewarding challenge.

Fundamentally, *Torpedo* is a serious attempt at understanding the weapons of weapons development, which is to say contracts, patents, licence agreements and the like. Its centrepiece is a series of lawsuits between the US Navy's Ordnance Bureau and a pair of multinational arms dealers. Even more ambitiously, Epstein welds the instruments of law to the corresponding instruments of death. In each chapter, the machine itself attains some new brilliance for wars both naval and juridical, with regular voyages into tactics and military doctrine. We learn that the two are related, though not as closely as the top brass would care to admit: 'Hampered by poor communications with torpedo specialists, and needing to understand myriad technical issues in order to generate sound tactics, they simply did not know or lost sight of some details' (p. 182). Epstein, on the other hand, revels in these details, and compounds her already impressive task by alternating chapters between the Bureau of Ordnance and the British Admiralty.