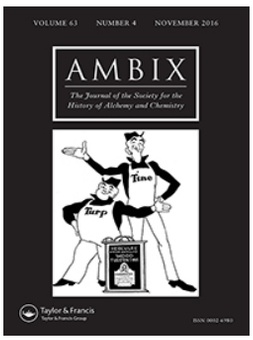

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Making Marie Curie: Intellectual Property and Celebrity Culture in an Age of Information

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Drosophila mutants by means of X-rays in 1927. Here, the link with radium is rather forced; Muller had initially conceived the experiments to be carried out using a vial of radium, but it broke accidentally, leading him to use X-rays instead.

As shown in the chapter on Muller's research, there seems to be some arbitrariness in how Campos reconstructs the path from early vitalist interpretations of radium's nature to the work of the "founding fathers" of modern genetics. Focusing solely on radium, and almost exclusively on British or American developments, Campos misses the opportunity to deliver a comprehensive history of early biological applications of radioactivity. After all, radium was not the only material put into use in biological research, and most important researches on the then called field of "radio-agriculture" were carried in continental Europe. This was indeed recognised by the main actors of Campos' narrative, who described, for example, a treatise of the University of Prague professors Julius Stoklasa and Josef Penkava as "doubtless the most exhaustive publication on the subject" (p. 143). Indeed, the circulation of materials and techniques, which allowed for the very possibility of experimental work crossing the disciplinary frontiers of physics and biology, is scarcely addressed.

In short, *Radium and the Secret of Life* is a collection of detailed and well-researched stories about some neglected but extremely interesting cases of early radiobiology. However, Campos's focus on the spread of ideas in a small community of scientists – its circulation in broader audiences is only briefly discussed in the first chapter – falls short of addressing the complexity and cultural entanglements of the early connections between biology and radioactivity.

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Making Marie Curie: Intellectual Property and Celebrity Culture in an Age of Information. By Eva Hemmungs Wirtén. Pp. 248, illus., index. University of Chicago Press: Chicago. 2015. $35. ISBN: 978-0-2262-2359-8-1.

As the best-known woman scientist of the twentieth century and popular scientific icon, Marie Curie has long been subject to scholarly and media attention. Under the spell of Eve Curie's best-selling biography (*Madame Curie*, Doubleday, 1937), she was mostly portrayed as a pure, disinterested scientist, but over the last two decades a different image has taken shape. Focusing on the material and gender culture of radioactivity labs, the political economy of radium, the rise of radioactivity as a discipline, and the industrial relations of the new science, historians have portrayed Curie not just as a prominent radioactivist, but also as an entrepreneurial scientist and as a researcher who pioneered the joint management of domestic and professional life.

Making Marie Curie complements this historiography with an account of the construction of Curie's *persona*, "the culturally produced trace or copy of the person" (p. 6). Eva Hemmungs is professor of mediated culture at Linköping University and author of *No Trespassing: Authorship, Intellectual Property Rights, and the Boundaries of Globalization* (University of Toronto Press, 2004). Not meant as a biography, her book is structured as a set of essays on three related themes: intellectual property, celebrity culture, and scientific information. Each of these motifs finds expression in particular moments of Curie's life, from the early years of the discovery of radium (chapter 1) to her work on behalf of the Committee of International Cooperation of the League of Nations in the 1920s (chapter 4), through her failed election to the *Académie des Sciences* and the Langevin affaire (chapter 2), and her 1921 trip to the United States (chapter 3).

Hemmungs makes insightful connections between Curie's professional and personal life, the media, and the law, examining the formal and informal strategies deployed by Curie to

overcome mechanisms of sexism. As a married woman, Curie could not hold property under the 1804 Code Civil, which may have conditioned her and Pierre Curie's decision not to patent radium. The mangle of public and private is also apparent in the scandal following the revelation of Curie's relationship with Paul Langevin, potentially damaging not just to her personal reputation but also to the international radium standard. Personal and professional interests were likewise intertwined in Curie's dealings with Missy Brown Meloney, the journalist and author who managed the extensive network supporting Curie's laboratory in the 1920s. Hemmungs exploits Curie's correspondence with Meloney, revealing the extent of the relationship between them and explaining the meaning of the radium gift. The chapter on the American trip exemplifies Hemmungs' suggestive writing and her deft use of press clippings, book contracts, and letters, sources she rightly deems "as relevant to the ongoing cultural construction of Curie as any biographical (or even scientific) so-called fact" (p. 3).

Hemmungs brilliantly deconstructs received accounts, particularly the very influential ones produced by Curie herself (her biography of Pierre Curie and her autobiographical notes) and by her daughter Eve. Paradoxically, however, she invests them with much significance, especially as regards the decision not to patent radium. Curie's celebrity and her "almost mythological aura" follow from "this action of nonaction … a watershed moment in the historical timeline of modern science" (p. 4). Hemmungs departs from Curie's account in Pierre Curie's biography and then relies on Eve Curie's fictionalised "five minute's talk" between husband and wife (p. 30) to conclude that:

> if we take Marie Curie's words in *Pierre Curie* at face value, then it was because they gifted radium that the radium industry was born and the flurry of patenting, branding, and commercial uses of radium took off fairly immediately following their discovery. (p. 152)

Despite the conditional phrasing, too much meaning is thus granted to these overtly retrospective narratives, ignoring the well-established historical fact that the industrial uses of radium were anything but immediately apparent. Moreover, given that radium could only be identified, and its discovery claimed, by disclosing the procedure for its isolation, by the time radium production became commercially viable it was too late for the Curies to think about patents.

The editorial artefact of keeping notes to a minimum and gathering references into an otherwise excellent bibliographic essay is perhaps responsible for a certain lack of historiographical engagement. Hemmungs rightly concludes that there is still "a bit too much myth and not enough *mensch* when it comes to Curie" (p. 164). Her approach to the making of Curie's persona resonates with former attempts to understand the person "as an institution builder, a networker of the highest order, the kind of modern scientist that built alliances, attracted other scientists around her, and protected her investments" (p. 165). A more explicit dialogue with Curie's historiography would have reinforced her argument and added *mensch* to her richly textured, creative, welcome account.

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Cold War Science and the Transatlantic Circulation of Knowledge. Edited by Jeroen van Dongen, Friso Hoeneveld, and Abel Streefland. Pp. x+293, illus., index. Brill: Leiden and Boston. 2015. €115. ISBN: 90-04-26421-3.

A recent vogue for studying the relations of science and the Cold War in a global perspective is evidenced in books and special issues in major journals in the history of science and technology. This edited book is conceptually and analytically consistent with this burgeoning literature, and includes chapters by some of the Anglo-American scholars who have led this