

Tot slot ben ik ook niet helemaal overtuigd van de vermeende *path dependence* die Kaptein ziet in de grote ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse windmoleninfrastructuur en de vertraagde transitie naar stoom die daarop volgde. Het klopt dat windenergie tot zeker 1850 interessanter bleef en er als dusdanig sprake kan zijn geweest van een soort ‘techniekfuij’ (255-263). Niettemin investeerden sommige Nederlandse ondernemers reeds voor 1850 in stoomkracht. Kaptein verklaart dit aan de hand van een soort ondernemersmentaliteit die deze pioniers moeten hebben gehad, waarbij ze zich een geloof in de vooruitgang en volle overgave aan winstmaximalisatie aanmatigden. Maar zullen oude (‘conservatieve’) molenaars niet eenzelfde geloof hebben gehad in de molentechnologie die in de negentiende eeuw nog lang niet uitgeblust was? En omgekeerd: wat met landen zoals Engeland en België waar wel vroeg werd omgeschakeld naar steenkool en stoom, maar toch ook de erfenis van traditionele *prime movers* moet hebben gespeeld wanneer de allereerste tendensen tot moderne industrialisering zich op basis van wind- en waterenergie voordeden? Eerder dan een *path dependence*, denk ik dat we bij de receptie en adaptatie van energietechnologieën beter kijken naar de industrieën en hun achterliggende structuren zelf. In dat verband gaat Kaptein uitvoerig in op de grote houthandelaars in de Amsterdamse houtzagerij en scheepsbouw, de drapiers en reders in de Leidse textielnijverheid, of de negentiende-eeuwse *fabricateurs* in Tilburg en Leiden die het nodige investeringskapitaal verschaften. Want waren het niet die industrieën waarin doorheen de vroegmoderne periode een aanzienlijke kapitaalintensivering had plaatsgevonden, die net gingen investeren in mechanisering, hetzij via windkracht, hetzij (vanaf ca. 1800/1850) via stoomkracht? Die ‘grote transformatie’ van de politieke economie en de definitieve doorbraak van het industriële kapitalisme – in het mercantiele Nederland minder sterk aanwezig aan het begin van de negentiende eeuw dan in Engeland en België – zijn meer fundamentele ontwikkelingen die in het boek van Kaptein mijns inziens meer krediet verdienen.

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Piet A. Geljon, *Een Nederlandse Overzeebank. De Nederlandsche Bank voor Zuid-Afrika, 1888-1969*. (Amsterdam: Boom, 2017). 592 p. ISBN 9789024408818.

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This book, by Piet A. Geljon, focuses in on the history of the Nederlandsche Overzee Bank (NOB) and its predecessor ‘overseas’ banking institutions between the 1880s and the 1960s. It is a fascinating tale of a Dutch bank attempting to serve a

market niche in South Africa that did not really exist in the first place. And it shows that the bank only fully succeeded as a viable concern once it rid itself of its Amsterdam overlords. But while the subject matter of this book is sufficiently interesting to deserve a dedicated monograph, by its conclusion I was left wanting more than what I got; the truly interesting material is hidden in the book's appendices.

Geljon's book covers the period from the NOB's foundation servicing Dutch business interests in the Transvaal, to the point at which it ceased to be organized as 'Wilkinsian' free-standing company. This period takes in the major political turmoil due to the Boer War and the First World War, the cut in economic ties between the Netherlands and South Africa during the Second World War, and the emergence and intensification of the apartheid system of institutionalized racial segregation and discrimination in the postwar era. It includes radical changes to the way the bank was owned and organized, due to mergers and acquisitions in both the Netherlands and South Africa, and shifts in power between the bank's operations in South Africa and its Amsterdam headquarters. The book concludes when the NOB's South African business is being fully spun-off as a separate concern, to be owned and run by Afrikaner banking interests rather than controlled from Amsterdam.

This book fits in the commissioned corporate history genre, which by now has a long tradition in the Netherlands. The aim of this genre is always to reach a wide audience; it is intended as a piece of popular history. In some ways it succeeds in this mission. The book is a veritable treasure-trove of detailed descriptions of the business of overseas banking and the personalities of the overseas bankers. Crucially, it is also written in a non-technical way. However, in practice the intention and the reality of corporate histories diverges somewhat. The subject matter of this book is far too specialist for a mainstream audience and so it will inevitably end up in the libraries of academic business historians, like myself, rather than on the coffee tables of *elke Jan Rap en sy maat*. The problem, then, is that an academic audience wants more than a description. We seek an argument synthesis rather than an explanatory synthesis.

To be fair to Geljon, he has already presented or published a couple of more analytical pieces about the history of the NOB aimed at a more academic, international, audience. But the most successful of these, written jointly with Ton de Graaf, is unfortunately hidden in an obscure conference volume, edited by Hubert Bonin and Nuno Valério (London 2015). Probably Geljon's most significant work before the present monograph is a book based on his PhD dissertation, a history of the securities trade of Dutch banks between 1860 and 1914 (Amsterdam 2005). I can see many similarities between Geljon's latest work and his PhD. Both are descriptive, narrative histories which emphasize details and chronologies of events rather than focus on the economic and social processes that drive these

details and events. And so, in common with his previous work, Geljon's new book will no doubt prove to be a very useful resource for business historians in that it carefully lays out the facts and provides the reader with the archival context. But academic readers – well this one at least – will probably be left frustrated. Perhaps Geljon's book is best seen as a starting point on which to build something more analytical. Indeed, Geljon starts to do exactly this in an appendix to this book – which, incidentally, is rather hilariously printed in an incredibly small font! For me it is a missed opportunity that such an exercise was not attempted in the book's main text.

The most interesting, and contentious, claim in Geljon's new monograph is that apartheid played no role in the separation of the NOB's Dutch and South African businesses. For me this seems a rather bold claim to make. The bank under study was geared exactly towards South Africa's Afrikaners – the ethnically Dutch population principally responsible for the apartheid system. Geljon argues that the NOB was not involved, or at least not responsible, for discrimination because it had divested its South African operations before the excesses of apartheid fully took hold. This is unconvincing, but explained perhaps by Geljon's career working in the Dutch financial services sector – some of which he served in the employ of the very bank under study. A really interesting piece of research would be to use Barclays in a counterfactual comparison with the NOB. Barclays kept onto its South African business all through apartheid and was famously the subject of boycotts in its home market as a direct consequence. In my opinion, a NOB-Barclays comparison would push the knowledge frontier by providing a framework for a more analytical business history of Dutch overseas banking.

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Bart Lankester, *Kom vrouwen, aangepakt! De revolutie van socialiste Trien de Haan*. (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017). 344 p. ISBN 9789035143814.

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Het kleine verhaal van een grootse vrouw

In *Kom vrouwen, aangepakt! De revolutie van socialiste Trien de Haan* heeft historicus en publicist Bart Lankester het levensverhaal van zijn stief-oudtante ingebed in de context van de Nederlandse revolutionaire arbeidersbeweging en de vrouwenemancipatiebeweging. Trien, zoals de auteur haar amicaal beschrijft waardoor je je als lezer snel met haar verbonden gaat voelen, leefde van 1891 tot 1986 en maakte daarmee een heel groot deel van de snel veranderende twintigste eeuw mee.