

Stephen Girard's Trade With China, 1787–1824: The Norms versus the Profits of Trade. By JONATHAN GOLDSTEIN. (Portland, ME: MerwinAsia, 2011. 142 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$65, cloth; \$35, paper.)

Economic historians rarely describe the great nineteenth-century capitalists as victims. Yet Jonathan Goldstein argues that the prominent Philadelphia merchant Stephen Girard was both a “product” and a “victim” of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century world commerce. An overemphasis on the success and agency of Americans in world trade often clouds the complexities of risk and failure that defined most commercial exchange during this period. This pitfall is not repeated in Goldstein’s study. In tracing Girard’s entry into the China trade in the Canton delta from 1795 through 1824, Goldstein details the political, economic, and cultural factors in China that influenced the trade. Although Girard made a substantial fortune, primarily through shipment of illegal opium, Goldstein is careful throughout his analysis to consider both Western and Eastern perspectives of commerce. Indeed, his largest contribution is highlighting how the Chinese, not the Americans, dictated the conditions of trade.

While the potential profits of the China trade were enormous, so, too, were the potential costs. Chinese commercial procedures were largely one-sided; there were few, if any, protections for Westerners once they entered the Canton port. Commercial diplomacy was practically nonexistent. These conditions resulted in extremely harsh responses to accidents or disputes. When in 1784 two Chinese men were accidentally killed by a salute from the *Lady Hughes*, a British ship, for example, the British gunner received no trial and was hanged. Merchants were clearly aware that the lives of their men were at risk, but the expected profits outweighed the price. According to Goldstein, a dispute similar to the *Lady Hughes* affair effectively ended Girard’s trade in 1821.

Goldstein dedicates his entire final chapter to the “Terranova incident” of 1821, wherein a Chinese woman drowned while selling fish to a sailor aboard an American ship. Although the Americans insisted the drowning was an accident, the Chinese officials threatened a full embargo if the Americans did not hand over the crewman. The sailor was surrendered and executed less than two days later. Goldstein attributes Girard’s exit from the China trade to this failure of diplomacy; the price of trade, it seemed, had become too high. While this episode certainly contributed to Girard’s exit from the China trade, Goldstein’s analysis here strays from the central theme of profit as a motivator, allowing discussions of Western modernity and democratic capitalism into his discussion. Indeed, Goldstein admits that Girard sent two more non-opium ventures to China after the incident, but the profits did not outweigh the costs.

Another noteworthy accomplishment of Goldstein’s analysis lies in his focused study on Girard. Although the Girard papers are accessible to researchers, the enormous volume of his correspondence is difficult to penetrate.

While Goldstein includes few personal details of Girard's life, he successfully navigates the archive and demonstrates how central Girard was to Philadelphia's trade with China. Overall, Goldstein's contribution is a positive one. His concise description and analysis of Stephen Girard's role in the China trade provides a helpful starting point for any scholar interested in learning more about Girard and early nineteenth-century trade.

Temple University

BRENNA O'ROURKE HOLLAND

William Birch: Picturing the American Scene. By EMILY T. COOPERMAN and LEA CARSON SHERK. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. 376 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$75.)

With *William Birch: Picturing the American Scene*, Cooperman and Sherk offer the reader two publications for the price of one: Cooperman's explication of the life and career of the artist who created the first set of engraved American views ever published in the United States and Sherk's admirably edited version of Birch's autobiography and personal papers. Thus, the first biography *and* autobiography of this important American artist are included together in one lavishly illustrated volume. While students of Philadelphia art and art history are no doubt familiar with the work of Birches *père et fils*, the history of the elder Birch's extensive patronage networks in Great Britain, detailed in Cooperman's first two chapters, will be new to many readers. Likewise, Cooperman's exploration of Birch's second and less successful publication, *The Country Seats of the United States*, is a welcome contribution to the field of Anglo-American landscape studies.

While the biographical explanation of Birch is exceptionally strong, the art historical deconstruction of the images he produced is less so. Fortuitously, also published in 2011 is Wendy Bellion's *Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America*, and Bellion's chapter "Sight and the City"—a study of "embodied vision" in the drawings and engravings executed by William Birch and his son Thomas for *The City of Philadelphia*—is a critical complement to Cooperman's foundational work. It is wonderful to have two such extensive studies of Birch appear in publication at the same time, and it would behoove those libraries that specialize in the histories of American art, the early American republic, print, and Philadelphia to purchase both books. Hopefully so doing will encourage students of early America to pursue more studies of Birch's work, such as the lesser-known *Country Seats of the United States*—particularly as it relates to British country house traditions and their translation into a supposedly more democratic America.

The publication of Birch's letters of introduction, lists of subscribers, and autobiography add a new dimension to studies of patron networks both in