Every economist with an interest in international finance would learn from reading this book, and would enjoy doing so.

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Karl Gratzer and Dieter Stiefel (eds.), **History of Insolvency and Bankruptcy from an International Perspective** (Huddinge: Söderstörns högskola, 2008, 332 pp.).

The result of a session at the International Economic History Congress of Helsinki (2006), this book brings together an introduction and 12 papers on bankruptcy and insolvency. The authors come from a large variety of European countries (plus Brazil and the US), with a concentration in northern Europe, particularly Sweden, where the first editor originates.

The book is divided into three parts, corresponding to three different perspectives, which do not have much in common except for the interest in bankruptcy. The first part, titled 'National macro-oriented studies', proposes a national business history perspective which aims at understanding the role of bankruptcy in the transformation of business and social life in Sweden, England and the Ionian Islands. The first chapter, by K. Gratzer, deals with the transformation of the bankruptcy legislation together with the attitude towards people made bankrupt in Sweden, mostly during the nineteenth century, with an important focus on debtors' prison. M. Schulte Beerbühl's chapter on German merchants in eighteenth-century England compares their fate to that of English merchants and wonders whether a community of foreign merchants could provide its members with protection against bankruptcy in times of crises. S. Gekas' chapter shows that credit accentuated power relations in the Ionian Islands under British rule, studying both exploitation of peasants by usurers and, in a more original fashion, the use of bankruptcy codes in credit among merchants.

The second part includes micro-oriented studies, and uses the tools of business history. The first chapter, by M. Fior, is not well located there, since it details the links between European reconstruction in the 1920s and the Credit-Anstalt insolvency, a mostly macro-economic perspective even if dealing with a single firm. The author uses international political economy to argue that the League of Nations and the free circulation of capital it reinstated in the 1920s were the real reason behind the Central European financial crisis of the early 1930s. Other chapters are more truly micro-oriented. Ph. Ollerenshaw studies a single British textile firm (Cyril Lord) in the post-war period, discussing in particular the role of government policies in the development and rescue of a large firm. M. Ernkvist examines the early video game industry in the 1970s and early 1980s, linking disruptive new technologies and industry organisation to the many crises that affected all the firms in that industry at various moments. In an original chapter, R. Gritta, B. Adrangi, S. Davalos and D. Bright review the history of the statistical models used in order to forecast bankruptcy, with a particular application to the air carrier sector for which various specific models have been invented. Finally, J. Fors proposes an ambitious network perspective on bankruptcies, mergers and acquisitions, with application to the Swedish dotcom crash.

The third perspective is a comparative legal one. The question here is to understand the differences among bankruptcy regimes and institutions either through time or between countries (or both), a question already dominant in the first chapter. T. Ribeiro de Oliveira investigates the use of bankruptcy legislation as an instrument of economic policy at the very moment of Brazilian independence (1808–21). It suggests bankruptcy legislation was part of a set of institutions that aimed at increasing government revenues in the short term and were detrimental to industrialisation. The ambitious chapter by P. Di Martino compares the evolution of bankruptcy laws in England, Italy and the US up to 1939. It aims at ranking these laws in terms of efficiency (based on two major criteria: debtor/creditor orientation and continuation/liquidation bias) and at explaining historically the origins of the differences among the countries under study.

The chapter by D. Stiefel studies the introduction of new bankruptcy legislation and its impact during the transition from communism to capitalism in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. It emphasises that the mere survival of many firms during that period required in particular debtor-friendly legislations that may later hinder the development of financial markets.

The last chapter, by A. Persson, provides a detailed comparison of Swedish, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian laws relating to security interest and insolvency.

Overall, the book results from an interesting attempt to bring together scholars from economic and social history, business history, law, political economy, business modelling, network analysis and business strategy. Considering the priority given to diversity over consistency in the volume, one may regret the absence of the literature on bankruptcy in both theoretical and empirical economics. Readers will not find a general or systematic history of bankruptcy in this volume, but they will discover some theoretical or empirical perspective on that surprisingly multifaceted topic that they did not know previously. This book will, then, provide some useful insights into the variety of bankruptcy studies to anyone interested in the topic.

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Michael W. Klein and Jay C. Shambaugh, **Exchange Rate Regimes in the Modern Era** (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010, 264 pp., $40.00/£29.95).

The end of gold's official monetisation in 1971 was the penultimate nail in the coffin of an international monetary system based upon fixed exchange rates. With capitulation in subsequent efforts to turn back the clock, the world was ushered into unprecedented territory. The new monetary system was based on completely 'fiat' money