

MARIA PAULA DIOGO and DIRK VAN LAAK, **Europeans Globalizing: Mapping, Exploiting, Exchanging**. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pp. xviii + 352. ISBN 978-0-230-27963-6. £60.00 (hardcover). doi:10.1017/S000708741700098X

This book is an outstanding contribution to the history of technology. The two authors, Maria Paula Diogo (Lisbon, Portugal) and Dirk van Laak (Leipzig, Germany), have written the latest volume of the ambitious Making Europe series that sets out to reframe the modern history of Europe from a technological angle. While the other five books of the series are concerned with the history of the continent itself, *Europeans Globalizing* zooms out and turns towards Europe's interaction with the world through the lens of technology. The sheer vastness and complexity of this task should have made it an impossible endeavour. Yet the book surprises the reader with its tremendous scholarship and wealth of novel insights. Although the series has collectively received praises and prizes for its contribution to the field, this volume particularly deserves further recognition.

Whereas the history of technology and infrastructure was frowned upon for many years in the historiography for its overly simplistic progressive narrative and deterministic approach, the field has enjoyed a remarkable renaissance recently. This is largely due to the many fascinating studies of telegraphs, dams, waterways and railway lines that have broken new ground by adopting a transnational or global perspective. *Europeans Globalizing* is part of this emerging field of research but manages to ask some genuinely new questions. Unlike other authors, Diogo and van Laak do not focus on specific technologies but rather stress the modes of technological entanglement and the changing self-image of the Continent in that process. Thus emphasizing the culture of technology, the authors revise the ways in which we explain the global spread of technology and knowledge. Instead of clinging on to the one-sided categories of transfer and imposition that older studies have favoured, the book makes a convincing case for a circulatory conception of technological encounters. Accordingly, it illuminates the impact of non-European forms of knowledge, the multifarious responses to Western technologies, and, moreover, the extent to which the interactions have had repercussions on Europe in turn. The authors argue that technology and science knowledge had been at the core of interactions between Europeans and non-Europeans since 1850. Broadly speaking, the result was the worldwide triumph of a techno-scientific modernity structured by the underlying ideas of progress and economic growth and the transformation of Europe through the global movement of people, goods and knowledge. This double process informed, so the main argument goes, the self-conception of Europe: technology, once a utilitarian means, became a yardstick by which the world was understood and judged. Eurocentrism was the consequence.

These arguments are spread out over seven substantive chapters which are based on both original research and literature review. The first chapter, 'Europeans mapping & being mapped', brings out a European trait – the scientific world view – that underpinned the spirit of discovery and colonization; Chapter 2, 'Europe's significant others', focuses on the Continent's relationship with the Ottoman Empire, Russia and the Americas through technologically informed interactions. Looking at the dark side of technology, Chapter 3, 'Wars & peace at home & abroad', highlights how Europeans used techniques of violence to subjugate people, while Chapter 4, 'Scrambling for Euafrica', deals with infrastructures as agents of imperialism. Chapter 5, 'From the Raj to the Yellow Peril', details how India, China and Japan reacted to Western technology. Finally, Chapter 6, 'A new world order & the collapse of colonialism', investigates the role of European technologies in the age of decolonization, whereas the last chapter, 'The reconstruction period', portrays the rise of technologies and cultures of mass mobility and tourism amidst the Cold War.

A vast range of topics is addressed in these chapters, including many well-known ones such as the Suez Canal, the Baghdad Railway and the World Expositions, along with many more neglected

or rather unknown aspects. However, the authors do not claim to be exhaustive; they understand their choice of topics as insightful case studies. The subchapter on dependence and interdependence deserves a special mention. It shows how painfully vulnerable Europe was – both politically and economically – to imports and how it dealt with disturbances and transformations. To the loss of their supply of rubber from overseas, for example, Germans reacted by artificially producing a rubber substitute called *Buna*. This invention was eventually used by the Nazi regime to sell their ideology of German autarky and to satisfy wartime needs. The most stimulating argument, however, is put forward in the chapter on imperialism and infrastructures. Here, the authors propose that the ‘scramble for Africa’ was ‘a techno-political and a techno-economical phenomenon’ (p. 149). What, on the surface, appears to be pure power politics or economic strategy was actually a rivalry on conflicting infrastructure ambitions. This point is powerfully illustrated by the clashing – hence never implemented – African transcontinental railway concepts of the Portuguese, French and British. In short, the book offers a fresh take on controversial topics and opens up space for new debates.

Maria Paula Diogo and Dirk van Laak have written a remarkable work by any standard: the balanced and thoughtful judgement of the authors and the scope and relevance of presented topics that literally cover all parts of the globe are impressive. The omission or underexposure of certain aspects, while regrettable, is understandable. One might have wished to read more of the everyday history of technology covering both a perspective ‘from below’ and a stronger non-European dimension. The last point would also have called for a greater problematic approach to the concepts of ‘superiority’ and ‘globalization’ which are both implicitly associated with Europe. Nonetheless, this is a ground-breaking and thought-provoking contribution to the global history of technology. It shows how technological encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans have shaped today’s world, recognizing the complex dynamics and range of actors involved. In conclusion, *Europeans Globalizing* is an admirable piece of scholarship. A comparable concise volume does not exist.

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JONATHAN SADOWSKY, **Electroconvulsive Therapy in America: The Anatomy of a Medical Controversy**. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017. Pp. 172. ISBN 978-1-138-69696-9. £110.00 (hardcover).

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I had only just finished reading Jonathan Sadowsky’s *Electroconvulsive Therapy in America* when I happened across a prime example of the mythology of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) in a local museum. In a glass-fronted cupboard sat a rather grubby and rough-around-the-edges ECT machine; propped up next to it was a card informing the visitor that ECT was commonly used in Victorian asylums alongside other ‘horrific’ physical therapies. ECT didn’t arrive on the scene until the 1930s, yet is regularly erroneously associated with the Victorian asylum, where perhaps it is seen to be more at home. ‘Mythology’ is, I think, as apt a word to use for this phenomenon as ‘misconception’ – indeed it is a term Sadowsky himself uses when charting perceptions of ECT. For the majority of people, ECT conjures up images of shabby treatment rooms, patients being held down by teams of straining assistants, and the wards of decrepit asylums and mental hospitals. Yet for some it will conjure up images of a rather more modern environment – perhaps somewhere they visited as an outpatient just a week or so ago. And for some of these people, ECT will be credited as a treatment that has spared them a life lived within the walls of a psychiatric hospital, a therapy that has restored their autonomy and sense of self.

These differing opinions of ECT are what interest Sadowsky, in particular how they have developed from ECT’s inception in the twentieth century through to its continued use in the present day.