

BOOK REVIEW

Mauro L. Condé and Marlon Salomon, eds., *Handbook for the Historiography of Science*

Cham: Springer Nature, 2023. Pp. xx + 530. ISBN 978-3-031-27509-8. £199.99 (ebook).

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Anglo-American historians in particular should read this book, for it portrays the historiography of science as seen from the position of expert editors in Brazil, the country which hosted the international congress in 2017. The previous year, this volume's editors established the journal *Transversal: International Journal for the Historiography of Science*. Now, they have produced an interpretation of the whole, drawing on their participating scholars to offer a rich and unfamiliar cuisine. This interpretation of their subject has been cooked with French recipes, and French scholarship takes centre stage.

In the introduction to the first issue of *Transversal*, the editors expressed their vision of their subject. They could see the

historicity of the writing of the history of science from Condorcet to current social studies of sciences; from Auguste Comte to Thomas Kuhn; from Paul Tannery to I. Bernard Cohen; from Pierre Duhem, Georges Sarton and Aldo Mieli to the historical French epistemology of Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem and Alexandre Koyré; from Léon Brunschvich [*sic*] and Émile Meyerson to the strong program of the School of Edinburgh; from Ludwik Fleck to Michel Serres; from Edgar Zilsel and Marshall Clagett to Paolo Rossi and Joseph Agassi; from Richard Westfall to Pietro Redondi; from A. Rupert Hall to Steven Shapin; from Héléne Metzger-Bruhl to Alistair Crombie; from Marie Boas Hall to Simon Schaffer; from Michel Foucault to François Delaporte' ('For the history of the historiography of sciences', *Transversal* 1 (2016): 1).

Correspondingly the first four essays in this book, leading off the section on 'key authors', deal respectively with Duhem, Koyré, Bachelard and Canguilhem. The remaining eight chapters of this section are more cosmopolitan, but again put into a very different perspective the history of science as typically seen in the anglosphere. Thomas Kuhn is the sole representative of scholars born and working across their careers in the United States to feature. Amongst contemporary scholars, Lorraine Daston may represent both American and German scholarship, but her distinguished Berlin colleagues Jürgen Renn and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger get distressingly little mention. Bielefeld, with its multitude of stars, is mentioned only in the context of the philosopher Lorenz Krüger. Britain is almost equally small on this map, with no mention of the Leeds school, though the Edinburgh 'strong programme' and the work of several other scholars are treated thoroughly. The proximate and, for many, influential, historiographies of medicine and

technology are almost completely absent. ‘Technique’ but not ‘technology’ appears in the index. Nor are the words ‘laboratory’ (except as ‘Cavendish laboratory’) and ‘instruments’ to be found there, even if ‘practice’ is. The title *Social Studies of Science* appears in neither text nor references and *Minerva* appears only twice.

This first section takes a historiographic approach that is itself distinctive. Social historians of science will look in frustration for analyses of institutional pressures and cultural context, though Daniele Cozzoli’s essay on Bernal is an exception. Though historians of instruments and laboratories might look askance at the sparse treatment of their subjects, there is the exception of an entire chapter devoted to the work of Steven Shapin.

While the representation of late twentieth-century topics may seem idiosyncratic, the concerns that have come to the fore in recent years are well treated. The book ends with a fourth part dealing with ‘Historiography of science and related fields’, which contains a fine article on ‘Science, religion, and the creation of historiographical categories’ by Jaume Navarro and Kostas Tampakis which is an excellent conspectus on a large and active field of research today. This is followed by comprehensive studies of the recent literature on the ‘Post-colonial and decolonial historiography of science’ and on ‘Science and gender’. It would be ironic if the volume itself exemplified the imbalances pointed out in this chapter.

Several essays take very narrow perspectives, particularly in Sections 2 (‘Concepts and conceptions in the historiography of science’) and 3 (‘Historiography of science from modern science to contemporary scientific world’) but also ending Section 4 (‘Historiography of science and related fields’). Thus treatments of Euler and Feynman seem possibly out of place in a volume of this nature. However, the treatment of ‘anthropological perspectives’ (Latour, Stengers and Chakrabarty) takes a wider view. The essay on ‘The historiography of scientific revolutions: a philosophical reflection’ takes an important topic in the historiography of science but veers towards evaluating the concept on purely philosophical grounds. James A. Secord’s recent article on the history of the term ‘the scientific revolution’, is not cited but should be read with this article (‘Inventing the scientific revolution’, *Isis* 114 (2023): 55–76).

Inevitably, in any such large collaborative volume, there are overlaps. Essays in the second section, dealing with the ‘German connection’, the ‘French style’ and ‘Gaston Bachelard’ address issues previously documented in the first section. However, for many readers these essays will serve as valuable extra windows into an unfamiliar literature.

Michael Dietrich, the editor of this new book series of historiographies of science, describes its ambition as laying out ‘what a scholar should know about the history of work in that area’ (p. v). He identifies graduate students as a key audience. This book certainly meets this aim, if in a surprising manner. As the sole introduction to a field so dominated particularly in the late twentieth century by American scholarship with its own rich history, the volume would certainly be inadequate. However, for those whose principal exposure is to that anglophone literature, this book provides a wonderful stimulus and corrective. There should be many whose creative contributions will be traceable back to the inspiration provided by some essay in this book. Disconcertingly expensive even by contemporary standards it may be, but librarians should be aware of its great potential benefits.