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Alexander Statman. *A Global Enlightenment: Western Progress and Chinese Science*. 320 pp., illus., notes, bibl., index. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023. \$45 (cloth); ISBN 9780226825762. E-book available.

The history of knowledge has recently been undergoing a “global” turn. Rather than accepting past assumptions about the uniqueness of the West, historians are increasingly reconstructing the ways in which modern knowledge has relied on the transcultural circulation of ideas, people, and goods. Alexander Statman’s *A Global Enlightenment* fits neatly into this trend, announcing from its very title the basic premise of its argument: that the Enlightenment was never a purely Western phenomenon but rather a global one from beginning to end. The title is, perhaps, a bit misleading. By “global,” Statman really means “China,” and it is this region that occupies his attention. “Chinese thought,” he argues, “continuously informed the thought of the Enlightenment, though to different degrees, at multiple points, and in various ways” (p. 3). Indeed, the very notion that the Enlightenment is Eurocentric, Statman shows, is itself an idea that grew out of the Enlightenment—a self-conscious refashioning that ignored the crucial role that China played in European understandings of self.

Statman’s book follows a group of Enlightenment philosophes whom he collectively refers to as the “Orphans of the Enlightenment”: thinkers who, for one reason or another, felt left behind by the ideas of modernity and progress that came to dominate intellectual life in eighteenth-century Europe. Each of these individuals was inspired by Chinese ideas, but they evaluated them in different ways. Some, like the scholar Antoine Court de Gébelin, believed that the apex of human wisdom had already been achieved in the past, and, since China was a repository of past knowledge, it only made sense to look eastward to recover the insights that had long been lost to history. Others, like the French philosopher Marquis de Condorcet, viewed Chinese thinking as a foil to modern knowledge: as everything that progressive science was *not*. And a third school saw in China a form of “alternative” knowledge that could serve as a complement to contemporary scientific paradigms.

A Global Enlightenment moves between China and Europe, though its dominant focus is on the writings of European thinkers: from the last generation of Jesuit missionaries to live in China to the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Their views on Chinese doctrines changed over time. But their ideas *about* China—often fanciful and informed by what they wanted to see—reflected and helped define what, at least in their calculation, made Europe unique. As Statman persuasively documents, it was through the Orphans’ engagement with Chinese thinking that a coherent notion of Enlightenment ideals—science, progress, and reason—came to coalesce and achieve epistemic dominance, creating the image of an inscrutable Eastern “other” in the process.

The book’s most original contributions are found in Chapters 3 and 4, when Statman shows how Chinese thinking (at least in terms of how it was interpreted by the Orphans of the Enlightenment) came to prefigure aspects of modern esotericism. Court de Gébelin, for instance, believed that there was “no such thing as discovery; only recovery” (p. 119), and he therefore set out to prove that contemporary Western science was merely a recuperation of what the ancients had already known. While Court de Gébelin attempted to do so through an empirical investigation into historical (and possibly apocryphal) texts, the Jesuit priest Joseph-Marie Amiot turned to contemporary schools of thought, including Franz Mesmer’s philosophy of animal magnetism. Chinese theories of yin and yang, Amiot proclaimed, were not only consonant with Mesmer’s hypotheses but had perhaps even anticipated them. Amiot’s goal was to prove that all Western knowledge was merely a rediscovery of ancient thinking. But the actual result, as Statman perceptively argues, was that Chinese philosophy came to be associated with mysticism and esotericism: the vestigial parts of scientific inquiry that mainstream thinkers had rejected.

This is a rich, multifaceted book whose many contributions cannot be adequately summarized within the space of this review. But it is also a book that points to future avenues of discussion. One of the complexities of pursuing a “global” history of knowledge is defining what is meant by the term—and for whom the history is being written. Although this is a book ostensibly about Europe *and* China, it is still primarily a history of

European thought at its root, and it therefore says little about how the Chinese themselves interpreted their intellectual traditions or might have contributed to European knowledge production. (One exception comes in Ch. 2, when Statman explores the fascinating relationship between the Manchu prince Hongwu and the Jesuit Amiot.) For most of the book, however, China appears mainly as a resource from which Europeans could draw; it is less about “Chinese thought”—if, indeed, there is such a thing in any coherent or hegemonic sense—than about how Europeans interpreted and operationalized the ideas they *attributed* to China. This is neither a fault of Statman’s nor a weakness of the book, which is impressively sourced and compellingly argued, but a methodological question that remains to be plumbed: Is it possible to write a history of modernity that truly decenters the West?

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Modern

Lina Zeldovich. *The Other Dark Matter: The Science and Business of Turning Waste into Wealth and Health.* 272 pp., illus., notes, index. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021. \$26 (cloth); ISBN 9780226615578. E-book available.

This delightful book about the many uses of poop reveals stunning facts and uplifting projects being undertaken around the world to transform our “waste” into treasure, such as “humanure” (fertilizer made from human excrement and urine). Journalist Lina Zeldovich shines in the second and third sections of *The Other Dark Matter*, which showcase her journalistic work on revolutionary waste-treatment projects that produce both methane gas and fertilizer, and medical uses of excrement, respectively. She introduces several inspiring start-up enterprises around the world that give people access to safe sanitation, cleaner streets, affordable electricity to charge their phones, methane gas by which to cook without lung-polluting firewood or charcoal smoke, and pathogen-free fertilizer for their soils. She tours the waste-treatment facilities and R&D labs of waste-to-treasure projects in or near New York, Toronto, and Washington, D.C. Zeldovich expertly walks the reader through these hopeful stories with humor and exquisite detail. She outlines the technical and social problems that had to be overcome for each endeavor to succeed. The only thing missing is comparative analysis of the greenhouse gas emissions of poop-based fuels versus fossil fuels. All varieties of the former smartly dispose of waste, but if they are also engines of climate change, they may seem less enticing than cleaner energy sources like wind and solar power.

As a historian, I enjoyed the first part of the book, “The History of Human Waste,” but also found it frustrating. Zeldovich makes several assertions without citations, occasionally with direct quotes (pp. 39, 56–57, 58, 79). Some of her assertions are patently false: Japan *did* suffer from a high disease burden thanks to farmers’ frequent use of humanure (p. 32); Chinese people *did* express disgust at night soil and the people who worked with it (p. 34). She references the work of historians on early humanure and sewerage practices but employs ahistorical analysis, asserting, for example, that behaviors in Tokugawa, Japan, were “unfathomable by our standards” (p. 30) or “unfathomable by Western standards” (p. 31), as if these were monolithic, even though the same chapter also covers the assiduous night soil culture of Flanders and the Netherlands (pp. 40–43). Readers are left wondering who exactly she wishes to evoke into “our” Western standards, whether she really meant to compare early eighteenth-century Japan to twenty-first-century Europe, and when exactly Flemish and Dutch farmers were using humanure fertilizer (that section gives no dates and