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Mary Nolan. *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and the United States, 1890–2010.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 406 pp. $85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-87167-9; $28.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-69221-2.

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Mary Nolan's Challenge to the American Century

In *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010*, Mary Nolan has drawn on her expertise as an historian of the Atlantic world to produce a work that challenges the belief that the twentieth century was the American Century. Chronologically divided into twelve chapters and an introduction, Nolan's book adds to the standard narrative of the "long" twentieth century by using a transnational perspective to present to the reader, "a history of shifting transatlantic power relations, of provisional outcomes and ongoing indeterminacies, of cooperative projects and competing visions of capitalism, modernity, and empire [which] cannot be reduced to the inevitable triumph of the United States" (p. 1). Examining the intellectual, commercial, economic, and cultural pathways that connected Europe and the United States during the period, Nolan argues that America played a dominant but not hegemonic role in the transatlantic relationship between 1945 and the 1970s.

Nolan begins her examination of European-American relations in the year 1890. During the late nineteenth century, Americans experienced the country's industrial revolution; however, Nolan refuses to accept the belief that America's industrial revolution destined it for global hegemony. Instead, Nolan shows that trade, investment, and production were rapidly increasing in both the United States and Europe. Although large American companies such as Singer and International Harvester moved into Europe, British investments played an influential role in stimulating the American economy, and German companies such as Siemens and AEG offered American companies stiff competition in Europe. Nolan also argues that many Europeans disliked American products because they saw them as being mass produced and not customized for individuals. Although I initially dismissed this information as simply an antiquated European response to modernity, Nolan supports her argument by explaining that many middle-class Europeans feared that the consumption of American goods would adversely affect their national identities. Moreover, Nolan also explains that Americans and Europeans showed mutual cultural interest during this period and that individuals moved back and forth across the Atlantic, not just from Europe to the United States.

Nolan's following four chapters explain the fallout of the First World War, the emergence of American mass consumer culture in Europe during the late 1910s and early 1920s, European backlash against American capitalism during the Great Depression, European social programs in relation to America's response to the crises of the 1920s and 30s, and European and Americans views of the rise of Nazism, fascism, and communism in Europe. Although the First World War was experienced much differently in Europe than it was in the United States, Nolan accurately characterizes the post-World War I era as a period of convergence between Europe and the United States. Both agreed that communism needed to be stopped in Russia. An interest in socialism increased in both the United States and Europe. Both believed that it would be best for everyone if colonialism continued to exist in Asia and Africa, and both struggled with economic downturn.

Nolan explains that most American citizens remained ambivalent about this shift in power as the United States became the de facto hegemon of Europe. Many Americans also remained ambivalent to the rise of power of Nazism in Germany, fascism in Italy, and communism in the Soviet Union, which is why the outbreak of the Second World War came as a surprise to many Americans. In comparison, Europeans continued to fear that their national cultures were being dissolved by American consumer culture and many Europeans were much more aware than Americans of the threat that Nazism, fascism,

and communism posed in continental Europe.

Covering the time period from 1939 to 1968, in her following three chapters, Nolan argues that much like the First World War, the Second World War was experienced differently in Europe than it was in the United States. She also argues that "World War II marked the passing of the European age globally" and "the simultaneous rise of American hegemony" (p. 171). Primarily, Nolan attributes this shift in power to the Allies' postwar strategy, an Anglo-American project that sought to avoid the economic downturn that occurred in Europe after the First World War, through the creation and implementation of the Marshall Plan. As Nolan points out, this postwar strategy was also developed to deter the spread of communism into Western Europe and the Third World. However, Nolan argues that European-American relations were not completely dominated by the United States and that many differences still existed. For example, different models of capitalism existed in the United States and Europe, Britain refused to admit that it was no longer a global power, and many European countries argued against American tutelage. Although economically and militarily weaker than the United States, several European countries showed that they still had agency by not supporting the United States during the Korean War, by designing their own social programs, and by supporting their own national film projects.

In the final four chapters of her book, Nolan examines the relationship between the United States and Europe from 1968 until 2010. More specifically, she explores how the two regions were affected by protests during the late 1960s, the end of the postwar boom during the early 1970s, the end of the Cold War, the development of a multipolar world, and the fallout of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Nolan believes that during this period, anti-Americanism rose drastically in Europe–specifically during the 1970s–while anti-Europeanism was most prevalent in the United States during the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003. Continuing with her theme that the long twentieth century has been incorrectly characterized as the American Century, Nolan argues that in the early twenty-first century the United States only dominates its relationship with Europe when it comes to the size of its military and, although there continues to be some similarities between Europe and the United States, America no longer represents the vanguard of modernity. Finally, Nolan concludes that "the American Century in Europe is over" (p. 373).

Designed as part of the textbook series entitled *New Approaches to European History*, Nolan's work is an excellent resource for any upper-year undergraduate history or political science course that examines the United States, Europe, or the relations between the two regions. By questioning the traditional narrative offered by many textbook-style works and challenging the belief in American exceptionalism, Nolan forces readers to question their own views on the relationship between the United States and Europe; and although she states that she does not have all of the answers, her work stimulates the discussion not only about transatlantic history but also the history of empires and transnational history. Nolan's ability to shift seamlessly from a macrocosmic perspective to a microcosmic perspective is impressive and it is also refreshing to see the inclusion of Eastern Europe in her analysis.

That being said, such an ambitious work inevitably has a few drawbacks. Thematically speaking, at times I found the organization of each chapter to be a bit redundant. However, I understand that some redundancy is nearly unavoidable when a book is organized chronologically. The other minor issue that I had with the work was that Nolan fails to adequately define who she means by "Americans." Although she does an excellent job examining individual countries in Europe throughout the work, only on a few occasions does she make reference to specific regions, classes, or interest groups in the United States. These were the only issues I had with the work and by no means did they significantly take away from Nolan's argument, nor should they stop any individual from reading this revisionist approach to traditionally held beliefs about European-American relations during the long twentieth century.

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