

Acknowledgments

The fascinating construction history of the late nineteenth-century Gotthard Tunnel reads like a romanticised triumph of humankind over nature. Intellect, correct tools and skilful workers blended in the process of fighting a way through the capricious Swiss mountains. Finally, they built the tunnel, despite years of drawbacks, unexpected geological circumstances, financial crises, and serious doubts whether the tunnel ends would ever meet.

As I wrote this dissertation, colleagues, friends and family often drew parallels between writing a book and drilling a tunnel. To me, it always seemed both a temptingly apt and a dangerously depressing metaphor. I hoped that mention of my 'tunnel vision' referred to my work ethos and not to the lack of intellectual breadth. I repeatedly begged that the promised 'light at the end of the tunnel' would cast an early, reassuring beam. I incessantly prayed not to gain martyrdom by dying in the process as the tunnel entrepreneur, Louis Favre, did. Moreover, I wished that I would remember all people that helped me in finally triumphing, unlike the anonymous and forgotten Gotthard labourers.

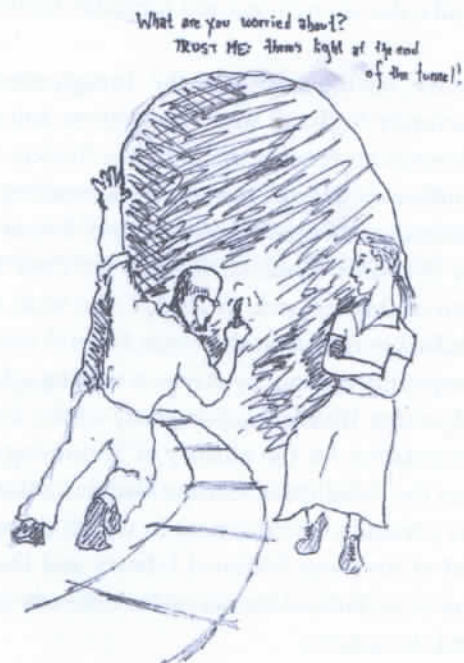
Hence, having arrived at the 'inauguration' of this book, I want to take the opportunity to thank some institutions and people that played a crucial role in the dissertation process. In 2002, the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) kindly awarded me the Melvin Kranzberg Fellowship that financially allowed me to conduct research in Switzerland. I want to thank the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for their travel grant that enabled the continuation of this research in 2003. I also want to express my gratitude to the group of *Technikgeschichte* at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich for their hospitality during my stay as a visiting scholar in Spring 2004. The scholars of the *Algemene Wetenschappen* group of the Eindhoven University of Technology, the Foundation for the History of Technology, the N.W. Posthumus Research School and the Tensions of Europe Network offered me an academically challenging and very friendly environment in which to work. Finally, I want to thank the personnel of the Swiss National Library and the SBB Historic (Heritage Foundation of the Swiss Federal Railways) for tirelessly bringing me hundreds of Gotthard books and documents.

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Notwithstanding my wanderings, there is one place where I decided to stay: close to my soul mate and husband, who gave me the confidence to finalise this work.

Den Haag, January 31, 2008



*'Farewell drawing' offered to me
by Alec Badenoch when I left Eindhoven*

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