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Global History, Imperial History and Connected Histories of Empire

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Abstract

The turn towards Global history shows no sign of abating. It seems that across the discipline, historians are becoming increasingly interested in understanding the past on a planetary scale. Prominent Imperial historians, in particular, have been among the most fervent advocates of Global history. So close are the concerns of some Imperial history—particularly British Imperial history—to those of Global history, that it is getting harder to disentangle the two. Despite this we argue that, whilst both fields are overlapping and heterogeneous, historians should reflect more explicitly on the methodological differences that exist between them. In the process we point out some lessons that Global historians might learn from Imperial historians, and vice-versa. We argue for a “connected history of empires” that seeks to uncover links that operated across the formal borders of imperial formations and deploys novel spatial frameworks. Such an approach would draw on the diverse methodologies developed by Imperial and Global historians who seek to write both “comparative” and “connected” histories. We point the way towards histories that are more than imperial, but less than global.

Introduction

The “global turn”, the move to writing “Global history”, represents one of the most significant historiographical developments of recent decades. Scarcely perceptible in the 1990s, this new approach to questions of scale and narrative has become increasingly popular since the beginning of the new century. It seems set to entrench its scholarly hegemony still further. Historians of the British empire have played a key role in accomplishing the global turn and, in the UK at least, have increasingly come to identify themselves as “Global and Imperial historians”. Conferences, research centres and postgraduate programmes promising entry into a sparkling new field of “Global and Imperial history” (presumably more attractive, to funders and students alike, than plain old Imperial history) have proliferated. But what is the exact

relationship between the two component parts of this new academic fusion? Have they been added to the mix in equal measure? Should Imperial history be regarded as a mere prelude to twentieth-century narratives of “globalization”, understood as a very recent process by which places and peoples have become ever-more densely interconnected? Or is globalization a process with a longer history, stretching back into the early modern period, in which the development and collapse of empires appear as but a minor, passing theme within a deeper, continuous and enduring global story of common development and closer integration? Or is the relationship between imperial expansion and contraction on one hand, and globalization on the other, more significant, and complex? And one day, perhaps soon, will those scholars who now write, research and seek funding for “Global and Imperial history” come to describe their subject simply as “Global history”, with Imperial history disappearing as a distinct subject, one more casualty of our onward march into a global future?

Arguably, in their eagerness to “go global”, few Imperial historians have devoted serious attention to these questions, although the answers undoubtedly have massive implications for how we understand our subject. Through this essay, and by bringing together the articles collected in this special issue, we seek to encourage wider discussion of these questions. We also suggest ways that historians of empire might usefully respond to them. We argue that Imperial historians could usefully rethink the nature and scale of the connections and comparisons that we work with, in dialogue with recent developments in Global history. But we also argue that Imperial historians should not abandon their long-standing attempts to understand the peculiar nature of modern empires as political, economic, cultural and social structures, with all the opportunities, obstacles, inequalities and violence that they presented people with in the past. We argue that a fruitful cross-fertilization can be accomplished between Imperial and Global histories, but that this can best be achieved by acknowledging and exploring the productive tensions between their differing methodologies and analytical frameworks. Scholars should not assume that Imperial history can be folded simply and easily into Global history.

In particular, we argue that Imperial historians might gain more by thinking in terms of “connected history”, than by working unquestioningly within a Global history framework with its attendant and potentially distorting preoccupation with the

idea of globalization. Connected histories of empire grounded in specific places and concerned with particular individuals might help us avoid the simplifications encouraged by the planetary scale of analysis that absorbs many Global historians. As Lynn Hunt suggests, a “top down” approach to globalization offers historians much less than versions of Global history written “from below” that trace the “series of transnational processes in which the histories of diverse places become connected and interdependent”.² So construed, connected histories of empire might offer accounts that accord more agency to individuals, and recognise the crucial importance of choice, contingency and chance.³ By avoiding the Olympian perspective that characterises some Global history writing, connected histories of empire can help us develop our understanding of how people in the past themselves understood (and sought to influence) patterns of long-distance interaction, and of how contemporaries themselves drew comparisons between widely-separated parts of the world.

Furthermore, we argue that to derive real value from connected histories of empire, to avoid simply searching for patterns of interconnection for their own sake or as fragmentary evidence for earlier phases of globalization, Imperial historians should devote more attention to links within and between different empires (European and non-European), and within and between different colonies. This offers two associated benefits. First, it can help us correct the Anglophone bias that continues to mark much supposedly “Global” history—often, in fact, a dialogue among English-speaking historians, built on English-language primary and secondary sources and centrally concerned with English-speaking parts of the world. Second, it can assist us in overcoming the long-standing but often misleading tendency to examine the British empire as a singular, hermetically-sealed world-system. Imperial historians need to learn from the willingness of Global historians to dispense with nations and empires as self-evident and self-contained units of analysis. But we need to avoid the planetary simplifications of some brands of Global history, and indeed we need to push the agenda of scalar revisionism further by acknowledging the varied experiences of particular regions within different empires and within different colonies. Our arguments thus diverge significantly from those of another pair of Imperial historians, who have recently offered an overview of what they call “imperial globalization”.⁴

The terminology employed in this essay requires some explanation. What do

we mean by “Global history”? No satisfactory or agreed definition exists, because Global history is a new and diverse field, and one that borrows from and blurs into a number of different approaches. Hunt tends to equate Global history with the history of globalization, and sometimes implies that Global history can really only be written for the period since c.1990, when the entire world seemed to have become interdependent for the first time.⁵ However, this is a definition that few Global historians would accept. Attempts to trace the roots of contemporary globalization back into earlier period, as far back as the early modern era or even into the middle ages, are central to what many understand as constituting Global history. Neither, contrary to what Hunt writes, do all Global histories focus directly on globalization or present it as a progressive and inexorable process. On one hand, a conscious or unconscious overlap exists between the work of Global historians and of those who see themselves as practicing “World history”. The latter approach emerged largely out of history teaching in US universities, and often involves attempts to write “the whole history of the whole world”, offering stories about the entire planet that encompass very long periods of time.⁶ Globalization is often only a minor theme in this variant of Global history. On the other hand, a very different branch of Global history owes more to the approaches pioneered by “Transnational history”. Transnational historians focus on the “interaction and circulation of ideas, peoples, institutions or technologies.”⁷ They analyse the “connectors” that provided concrete links between different places and peoples, “the actual ways and means that characterise the encounter of their historical trajectories”.⁸ Transnational historians often seem less prone to, and less interested in, the simplifications associated with “globalization talk”. In this essay, we have called the transnational form of Global history “connected history”: to us, it seems to offer Imperial historians much more than approaches that focus on the concept of “globalization”, or that are inspired by World history.

The term “connected history” derives largely from an essay published by Sanjay Subrahmanyam in 1997, which took this phrase for its title. Attempting to locate Asia in a global early-modern context, Subrahmanyam argued that, rather than treat different parts of the world as if they were essentially discrete entities, historians should focus on the circulations, exchanges and interactions that linked those places together. Subrahmanyam claimed that it was through analysis of the movement of both

the tangible and the intangible—people, goods, technologies, institutions and beliefs—that Asia’s history could best be integrated into a global picture. It was the role of the historian to uncover the “fragile threads that connected the globe.”⁹ More recently, Charles Bright and Michael Geyer have similarly called for a “connected history of the world”, focusing on the “entangled histories of already connected people, places, things, ideas and images”.¹⁰

Historians of the British empire have to some extent (and not necessarily in explicit dialogue with the ideas of Subrahmanyam or of Transnational historians) followed similar leads. They have devoted increased attention to connections, mobility and networks. Increasingly, they have conceptualised the British empire as a complex patchwork of interacting and dynamic agencies, rather than as one homogenous monolith directed from London with a single overarching objective.¹¹ As will be discussed below, a number of historians and historical geographers have thus attempted to map the many webs and flows that made up the empire.

However, Imperial historians have paid much less attention to the connections that traversed the geographical frontiers and borders of the British empire. They have not explored links *between* empires as thoroughly as those *within* empires.¹² The essays brought together in this special issue of *JCH* offer a valuable corrective, demonstrating the variety and significance of trans-imperial connections, how they bound together and influenced different empires and forged ties between empires and sovereign states or regions. These essays thus further question the accepted spatial frameworks that continue implicitly to inform much historical research.

Similarly, several of the essays in this volume look at *comparisons* between different empires. Here, they explore the avenues opened up by earlier comparative research into the history of modern empires. The few studies that have brought different modern empires between the same set of hard covers have tended to take the form of multi-authored volumes, containing individual chapters each covering specific colonies. In these collections, analysis of multiple colonies is seldom accomplished within a single chapter. The editor, or more often the reader, has been left to do the actual work of comparison. Research incorporating two or more empires in one integrated study, by a single author, has meanwhile been hard to find. There are

of course real practical difficulties, arising from issues of linguistic ability and the availability of funding for travel and the purchase of resources, which hinder genuinely comparative research. However, several of the contributions to this special issue indicate at least one way of overcoming such obstacles. Rather than simply comparing colonies as objects of historical study, several of our contributors shift the focus towards examining how comparisons were made and used by contemporary historical actors, taking a lead from the work of Ann Laura Stoler.¹³ This is not so much comparative history, as the history of comparison. Such an approach also has an added virtue, in that it often returns us to studying the connections between empires by revealing the networks through which different empires monitored and learned about one another.

This essay first looks at the divergent comparative methodologies of Imperial and Global historians. It suggests how Imperial historians might learn from the strengths of Global historical comparative methodologies, while avoiding some of the associated pitfalls. It then moves on to examine how Global historians and Imperial historians have, in their different ways, started to write connected histories. It puts the essays brought together in this special issue into the context of these historiographies, and suggests avenues for future research.

Comparative Methods in Global History

Implicitly or explicitly, connected histories involve comparisons. To understand how those comparisons might fruitfully be presented in connected histories of empire, it is first necessary to consider how they have been undertaken by other scholars. Both Imperial and Global historians deploy comparative methodologies, but the approaches they adopt often bear little resemblance to one another.

First, an obvious difference is that Imperial and Global historians have tended to base their comparisons on quite different timeframes. Major works of comparative Global history published over the last quarter of a century, many inspired by Kenneth Pomeranz's controversial book *The Great Divergence*, have focused principally on the early modern period up to, roughly, the 1830s.¹⁴ In contrast, histories drawing comparisons between different empires have generally examined either the late-nineteenth-century high point or the mid-twentieth-century demise of the European

imperial systems.¹⁵

Second, comparative Imperial and Global histories have been shaped by very different underlying research agendas. Global historians engaged in comparative history-writing have been mostly interested in examining large scale socio-economic change. The predominant quest has been for a convincing explanation for the “European miracle” of industrialisation.¹⁶ On the other hand, as will be discussed below, comparative Imperial histories have examined a wider range of topics, reflecting the development over the last thirty years of a plethora a new avenues for research. Economic matters have, since the 1980s, attracted the attention of fewer and fewer Imperial historians. Topics relating to social and cultural themes have proved much more appealing.

These differences are significant. Yet there are certainly areas where a dialogue between Imperial and Global historians’ comparative methods might yield productive insights when writing connected histories of empire. Here, we highlight one lesson that comparative Imperial historians could learn from their Global colleagues, and one corresponding lesson that Global historians might learn from their Imperial counterparts. Global historians have challenged the inflexible geographical assumptions implicit in earlier work that adopted the regions and nations of the world as coherent and natural units of analysis.¹⁷ This recent creative “re-spacing” of the globe should be taken as a challenge to Imperial historians to assess whether the formal boundaries of empires provide the best parameters for building units of comparison. On the other side, Imperial historians have begun to consider how contemporary historical actors drew comparisons between different colonies and empires, and the reasons why they engaged in these exercises. This cultural history of comparative analysis has been largely neglected by Global historians.

Pomeranz’s “great divergence” thesis, now roughly a decade-and-a-half old, offers a useful case study that allows us to draw out some preliminary contrasts between the comparative methodologies of Imperial and Global historians. Although he was not the first to shift the focus of the debate around industrialisation onto a detailed analysis of Asian societies and economies,¹⁸ his book has provided the most enduring framework for conducting comparative global analysis. It is also a useful

starting point because the central argument has important implications for broader understandings of the impact of European (and especially British) imperialism in Global history.

Pomeranz effectively returns us to older debates surrounding the economics of empire, by arguing that imperial expansion was a crucial factor in making industrialisation possible.¹⁹ Pomeranz's explanation for the early industrialisation of Europe, or more specifically England, has been crudely summarised by friendly critics as "colonies and coal."²⁰ In short, he argues that it was easy access at home to coal, and overseas to the land opened up by colonial conquest in the New World, that led to England diverging in economic terms from the rest of Eurasia. He arrives at this conclusion through extensive "reciprocal comparisons" of areas of the world that in the early modern period were both densely populated and economically dominant within their wider regions. He terms these the "cores" of the global economy. The main cores that can usefully be compared, he argues, are England and the Yangzi Delta, although Pomeranz also draws on evidence from the Netherlands, Japan and Gujarat, which according to his criteria also displayed structural similarities. Through his "reciprocal comparisons" between these core areas, numerous similarities emerge that call into question the underpinning assumptions of other, Eurocentric explanations for early industrialisation. Pomeranz finds "surprising resemblances" between his cores that undermine claims to Europe's uniqueness and demonstrate that, even where important differences are apparent, these differences cannot have had the profound effects that have often been claimed for them.²¹

These resemblances lead Pomeranz on towards a second form of comparative analysis. Drawing on Charles Tilly's terminology, he calls this approach "encompassing comparison". Rather than comparing England and the Yangzi Delta as discreet units, this approach involves comparing each area in terms of its role as an element within a larger whole. In other words, exploring their place in the interactions of the global economic system.²² Here, Pomeranz points out that comparative and connected histories become almost indistinguishable. The availability of coal and colonies to England meant that ecological pressures, similar in nature to those operating in the Yangzi Delta, were relieved in a quite distinctive fashion. The labour-intensive innovations for working the land developed in the Delta were not followed

in England, where more easily accessible coal enabled the deployment of labour-saving techniques.²³ Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England's access to cultivatable land in the Americas further relieved the internal pressure on land at home. Indeed, it is this contrast between the Yangzi Delta's relationship with its peripheral region in central China and England's relationship with its non-European peripheral region, arranged around the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, that makes imperialism so central to Pomeranz's argument. England's colonial periphery was coercively maintained, whereas the relationships that other core territories maintained with their own peripheries were characterised more by mutual growth and were a closer approximation to free market economics.²⁴

Pomeranz's "reciprocal" and "encompassing" forms of comparative analysis have drawn historians' attention to the globally distinctive forms of European imperialism and its crucial role in Global history. They have also set the tone for much of the comparative Global history that has followed.²⁵ For instance, Victor Lieberman has argued that fruitful comparisons can be drawn between the northern and western regions of Europe on the one hand, and mainland southeast Asia on the other. Pomeranz has found "surprising resemblances" in the early modern period: Lieberman's research has revealed, in an equally evocative turn of phrase, "strange parallels" operating in the period between c.800 and 1830 CE.²⁶

Yet not all agree with Pomeranz's approach to "re-spacing" the globe. In one of the most significant engagements by an Imperial historian with the field of Global history, C.A. Bayly has rejected entirely the method of "reciprocal comparison". For Bayly, the role of Global history is to "blow down the compartments which historians have made between this region and that region, or between this subdiscipline of history and that one."²⁷ For Bayly, it is unnecessary to ponder how best to divide the world up into meaningfully comparable units: *all* regions can meaningfully be compared, because *all* parts of the world were undergoing similar changes during the period between the French Revolution and the First World War. All regions were "modernizing", becoming more like one another, partly as a result of widely-felt economic transformations, but especially due to the spread of common forms of state organization and intervention. Bayly thus argues for what we might label a "great convergence" rather than a "great divergence", driven by the global diffusion of the

model of the “patriotic and information-rich state.”²⁸ Northwest European countries pioneered this model, and as a result enjoyed an early imperial sway over global flows of information, wealth and power. Yet by the end of the nineteenth century the gap was already narrowing, with formidable “modern” states emerging in other parts of the world. The overseas spread of Western influence was always accompanied by “leakages and the transfer of power and intellectual skills” to non-Europeans, ultimately ensuring both that Western dominance was temporary and that “modernity” was everywhere inevitable.²⁹ The origins of change might have been “multi-centric”—they did not all derive from Europe or the West—but ultimately they all pointed in the same direction. Bayly argues that in the long nineteenth century the entire world thus took a common “step-change” forward, towards “contested uniformity.”³⁰

Does Bayly offer Imperial historians a more useful model of comparative and connected history than Pomeranz’s tools of “reciprocal” and “encompassing” comparison? We would argue not. Bayly’s brand of Global history exhibits some of the key characteristics of World history, in terms of its attempt to offer a single, essentially narrative-driven, account: a unified, world-encompassing story. Although the book’s subtitle evokes themes of comparison and connection, it is not a work of “connected history” as Subrahmanyan or as most Transnational historians would understand that approach. Bayly is interested more in the analytical connections and comparisons that can be created in the mind of the historian, than in the connections and comparisons that contemporaries themselves created or perceived. His themes of convergence and homogeneity, and his desire to take the entire world as his frame of analysis, ultimately work to obscure the complex ways that individuals and groups created global connections, within and across the boundaries of empires, to serve a wide range of often conflicting agendas.

Comparative Methods in Imperial History

As already noted, the debate over the “great divergence” has tended to focus the attention of Global historians on the period before 1830, at least in terms of their discussions of empire: Bayly is a notable exception here. Meanwhile, Imperial historians with comparative interests have primarily concentrated either on the “New Imperialism” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or on mid-twentieth-

century European “decolonization”. This chronological disjuncture has compounded some of the wider differences between Imperial and Global approaches to the history of empire.

Some of the earliest comparative Imperial history was written during what was still the colonial era.³¹ Later, in the wake of decolonization, William Roger Louis and Prosser Gifford edited two important collections on European imperialisms in Africa, the first comparing the British and German empires and the second the British and the French empires. These remain among the most wide-ranging attempts to conduct comparative research within the field of Imperial history. Both books were divided into two parts. The first part of each book looked at diplomatic, political and (to a lesser extent) cultural histories within the imperial metropolises. The second part of each book examined colonial administrative practices within Africa.³² Overall, the volumes explored the ebb and flow of inter-imperial collaboration and rivalry between the 1880s and the First World War. They emphasized the similarities in administrative practices between empires, whilst also noting the importance and variety of local conditions. With their implicit separation of metropole and periphery, and their limited acknowledgement of African agency in shaping “the partition of Africa” on the ground, these publications reflected the broader state of the field of Imperial history in the 1960s.³³

In more recent years, there have been few attempts to make such large-scale comparisons between European empires. Instead, emergent subjects in Imperial history, such as cultural history and histories of medicine and punishment, have brought together material drawn from across different empires in the context of more narrowly-focused studies.³⁴ In terms of the scale and nature of the comparisons attempted, most of this work bears very little resemblance to the Global histories inspired by Pomeranz, or to Bayly’s history of convergence. Instead of big questions regarding the development of global inequalities or homogeneity,³⁵ comparisons focus upon more bounded and specific themes and processes as they operated within different imperial formations. The difference is not only in the content, but also in the form. As with the earlier works of Gifford and Louis, these are usually multi-authored edited collections, containing discreet essays that often each address a single imperial power and/or colonial state.³⁶ Comparative analysis, where it is explicitly conducted,

is restricted to introductory essays by volume editors.³⁷ Whilst these volumes contain fascinating insights, the analytical benefits of situating historical studies from different empires alongside one another are rarely made explicit. And, in contrast to Global history, this Imperial branch of comparative history has not been used as a foundation upon which to construct grand narratives.

What Pomeranz calls “reciprocal” comparisons between empires have only recently begun to push Imperial historians into re-thinking their traditional geographical assumptions. Interestingly, whereas in Global history comparison has led to attempts to narrow down regional units of analysis, some comparative Imperial studies have worked in the other direction, taking in a wider range of territories and examples than ever before—albeit without necessarily buying into Bayly’s arguments about global convergence. Matthew Fitzpatrick’s recent collection on the entangled histories of imperialism and liberalism encourages historians to take account of expansionist states beyond France and Britain, particularly German, Hungarian, Dutch, Polish, Serbian and Zionist versions of “liberal” imperialism. As Fitzpatrick explains in his introduction, these comparisons are useful not because ideologies were identical across these empires, but because a deeper understanding of the similarities helps in turn to bring out national particularities.³⁸ Making a similar point, but examining a greater range of imperial principles and policies, Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen have recently argued that “European” empires have often been implicitly assumed to be those of western European states only, overlooking the histories of the multi-ethnic empires to the east. To counter this, their edited collection brings into comparison the British, Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman empires.³⁹

Like other multi-authored volumes, the essays brought together by Fitzpatrick and Leonhard and Hirschhausen each tend to examine a single empire or colony. Editors and readers are left to do the heavy comparative lifting. Two recent single-author studies have offered a more genuinely comparative approach. Ann Laura Stoler has uncovered underlying similarities between French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies in state responses to “mixed race” populations. Discussions in the colonies about these groups were a point of considerable tension for both regimes as they attempted to legislate to maintain a strict racial division in the face of the complex

realities on the ground.⁴⁰ More ambitiously, in terms of its breadth of geographical scope, Martin Thomas's recent study of colonial policing compares various colonies in the French, British and Dutch empires. Through comparisons of the underlying structures informing the deployment of imperial police forces in colonies during the interwar years, he argues that a similar reasoning can be discerned across empires, rooted in political economy and the need to control labour.⁴¹ Neither Stoler nor Thomas play down the marked differences among the colonies they discuss, but their comparisons serve to bring to the surface some of the deeper tensions and concerns that were shared by European colonial authorities.

In addition to these studies, imperial historians have begun to return to comparative history, but in a different form. This has been driven by the call for a more reflective mode of analysis made by Ann Laura Stoler in an influential article published just a year after Pomeranz's provocative book. Stoler argues that historians should pay attention to how imperial officials and other contemporary historical actors themselves used comparisons in formulating their thoughts and guiding their actions. This is not because such comparisons offer ready-made or "objective" analytical structures that historians can re-deploy as we wish. Rather, Stoler emphasises that such contemporary comparisons were part-and-parcel of European attempts to create new colonial structures of power and influence. Stoler calls for historians to confront the political work that comparative analysis has done in the past, and to uncover and acknowledge how this has continued to shape academic practice in the present.⁴² Stoler also highlights the problem of comparative analysis that treats colonies as fixed and natural entities, when they might better be understood by historians as ideational constructs, their boundaries and state structures an intrinsic part of more obvious attempts to promote the interests of the imperial core.⁴³ Here, others have similarly alerted us to the danger of adopting colonial states as privileged units of analysis, and of thereby implicitly re-inscribing restrictive, anachronistic and ahistorical colonial-cum-national geographical frameworks.⁴⁴

Paying attention to the politics of comparisons in history involves developing a sensitivity to how ideas and knowledge moved around the world. As such, it is an approach that may help to bridge the gap between those Global histories that focus on the "great divergence" or the "great convergence", and those that are more interested

in circulations and exchanges.⁴⁵ It also helps show how comparative and connected histories can be one and the same thing. As Stoler notes, comparative studies should act “as a window onto *specific* exchanges, interactions, and connections” that took place in the past.⁴⁶ Here, curiously enough, Stoler echoes Pomeranz’s point that “encompassing” comparisons, when done properly, are indistinguishable from connected history.⁴⁷

New Geographies for Comparative and Connected Histories

Just as Pomeranz based his comparative history on devising what he thought to be comparable geographical units of analysis, Global historians have engaged in a more general “re-spacing” of the world, redefining the historical geographies that lie behind their research. In particular, innovative studies operating under the labels of “World” as well as “Global” history have focused on borderlands and oceanic worlds, arguably with more interesting results than attempts to write histories at a scale that takes in the entire planet. These innovative spatial frameworks have fed into some Imperial history too. But Imperial historians seeking to write connected histories might learn still more from Global scholarship, and engage in a re-imagining of the geographical units most appropriate to their historical analysis.

William Van Schendal and Michel Baud’s agenda-setting 1997 essay “Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands”, published in the *Journal of World History*, persuasively made the case for borderlands as useful geographical units of analysis. Schendal and Baud argued that the complex ethno-linguistic social networks and the diverse politico-cultural patterns that could be found in the mountainous region linking North East India, South China and Mainland Southeast Asia, should oblige historians, and other scholars, to treat the area as one integrated system. This promised to correct the myopia of previous studies that had been implicitly limited by national territorial boundaries. They also drew attention to the geo-political fallout in the post-colonial period, as emerging nation-states and national groups aspiring to statehood came to contest the borders that had been demarcated by imperial powers. Borderlands, they argued, could be viewed as coherent analytical units, and focusing on them could provide fresh insights into the messy, unfinished, and fraught processes of decolonisation.⁴⁸ Their focus on borderlands has been further popularised by the recent work of James C. Scott. Referring to the upland regions discussed by Schendal

and Baud as “Zomia”, Scott argues that the diverse populations that resided there were “anarchist” communities. He argues that the mountains were beyond state power, and that the societies that formed there were radically egalitarian and purposely organised so that state structures did not form within them. Illiteracy, swidden agriculture and mobility were essential for this resistance to state structures. The inhabitants of this region were, he argues, “barbarians by design.”⁴⁹ These clearly controversial arguments have inspired much debate within Global history circles, including a special issue of the *Journal of Global History*.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, Eric Taggiacozzo’s studies of illegal trades in imperial Asia have highlighted the utility of a focus on borderlands for understanding the making of empires. He argues that the illicit goods which were traded in these borderlands drew imperial powers into these regions and led them to attempt to establish fixed territorial boundaries.⁵¹ The idea of borderlands might be explored further in Imperial history: the networks that operated across borderlands connected competing imperial formations, and events in these frontier zones brought empires into contact and conflict, with repercussions felt in imperial centres.⁵² As the work of Schendal, Baud and Scott also demonstrates, borderlands are important for understanding the end of empires and resistance to colonial states.

Studies conceptualising oceans as spaces of global interconnection have so far had a greater influence on the writing of Imperial history. The rise of Indian Ocean studies illustrates the overlapping way in which Imperial and Global historians have used this new approach in their research. Janet Abu-Lughod’s now-famous book *Before European Hegemony* argued that the Indian Ocean was the most important arena of the fourteenth-century world system. Her study uncovered the multiple trading networks that linked empires, polities and communities from Southern Africa to China, and the resulting flows of religious ideas and practices.⁵³ K. N. Chaudhuri went on to argue for the underlying historical unity of the Indian Ocean world into the early modern period, despite the very visible socio-cultural diversity of the region.⁵⁴ While debate about the coherence of the framework provided by Indian Ocean studies continues, the concept has developed our awareness of deep and lasting connections in the world beyond Europe’s shores.⁵⁵

Within Imperial history, students of South Asia have been foremost in engaging with this new approach. Thomas Metcalfe's seminal study of the "imperial connections" that spanned the Indian Ocean—military, policing and labour networks—uncovered the sub-imperial importance of British India and its resources.⁵⁶ Even more recently, Clare Anderson has presented the Indian Ocean as "a dynamic and porous space" in which individuals could construct networks of mobility and communication that crossed the borders of colonies and of the Dutch, French, British and Malagasy empires.⁵⁷ Similarly, Sugata Bose's study of the Indian Ocean as an "interregional" space of global interaction at the time when European imperial power was in its ascendancy, uses both comparative and connected historical methods, and also draws on individual life-stories to illustrate the complexities of this period.⁵⁸ Although concerned with imperialism, Bose's book is usually considered a contribution to Global history rather than Imperial history.⁵⁹ Yet it can tell us much about the meeting of empires in Asia, and about the historiographical possibilities for interaction between Imperial and Global histories.

The Atlantic Ocean has likewise emerged as a site of historical as well as historiographic convergence, encounter and exchange. In some ways the overlaps between Imperial and Global history are greater here than for the Indian Ocean, since the "Atlantic World" was one that was essentially created through imperialism and slavery.⁶⁰ Working with the Atlantic Ocean as a scholarly framework has fostered comparative colonial studies of the early modern period as well as connected histories of trade, peoples, ideas and ecologies (although Latin America and the South Atlantic have not been as well incorporated into this geography).⁶¹ It has acted as an umbrella sheltering studies that operate on very different geographical scales: some examining trans-Atlantic flows; some attempting to integrate all the lands surrounding the Atlantic; and some exploring Atlantic interconnection through a single site. As with Indian Ocean studies, questions have been asked about the coherence of the Atlantic World approach. Nevertheless, it remains an influential spatial framework for histories attempting to incorporate multiple imperialisms and uncover global interconnections.⁶²

An example of "re-spacing" the world that has emerged more clearly out of the concerns of Imperial history is James Belich's idea of an "Anglo-world". His

Replenishing the Earth seeks to explain why English-speaking people multiplied in number so dramatically between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, and how they accumulated so much wealth and global power. This is a contribution to the “great divergence” debate, but also a central element in recent attempts to rethink the history of British overseas settlement and to restore that history to a key place in our understanding of empire. Belich imagines an Anglo-world that incorporated two distinct but related, and very similar, demographic and economic systems. One encompassed Britain as its core and a periphery of settler offshoots in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The other was composed of an east-coast American core and a settler periphery stretching to the west. Belich thinks partly in terms of connections—those between each core and its periphery, and also to some extent between the two cores, with Britain providing a substantial amount of the investment, and a significant number of the migrants, needed to kick-start American growth. However, *Replenishing the Earth* is essentially a work of large-scale comparison, and one that emphasises the underlying similarities between different examples of English-speaking settler expansion around the globe. The two systems within Belich’s Anglo-world both expanded at a dramatic, unprecedented rate in the period he covers, generating “explosive colonization”, a boom-and-bust cycle of rapid acceleration alternating with sharp contraction. The “progress industry”—an alliance of public and private investment in infrastructure and development—drove the boom, employing frontier crews of hard-working and hard-living young men. After the bust, further growth depended on effective “re-colonization”, the tightening up of connections between the core and the periphery. *Replenishing the Earth* is based on detailed case studies of a wide range of different places, and demonstrates the benefits of thinking beyond the boundaries of the British empire, and of examining how the British empire connected and compared with other global systems of power: in the case of Belich’s analysis, most notably with the nascent American empire.⁶³

There are now numerous geographies that historians can adopt when writing histories of global interconnection and/or empire. We are not restricted to a binary choice of working either on a planetary scale or within the confines of a single empire. Global historians have found innovative ways of slicing up the world by presenting comparative and connected histories of mountainous borderlands and oceanic worlds. Belich has devised a framework that is implicitly defined by human

processes rather than physical geography. The tensions between Global and Imperial history, and the uncertainties and imprecisions concerning their spatial frameworks that are evident among historians working in both traditions, should inspire us to further such geographic innovation.

Towards Connected Histories of Empire

As has been made clear above, in writing connected histories of empire we can build on some significant historiographical foundations. Some historians and historical geographers have already sought to explore themes of global interconnectedness, without succumbing to the planetary simplifications of some types of Global history. Some of the pioneering work in this regard has been undertaken by those who emphasise the importance of “imperial networks” and “webs of empire”. Notably, in studying how ideas about Aryanism were used around the British empire in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Tony Ballantyne has drawn on and developed the idea of webs of interconnection. These webs not only linked Britain with each of its colonies, but also created significant connections directly between different British colonies. Ideas about Aryanism did not just flow from Britain to India and New Zealand and back again, but also moved directly between India and New Zealand. For Ballantyne, the British empire thus encompassed a complex set of flows of human, cultural and material traffic, moving in many different directions. These flows supported the colonial order, but they could also be used by those who wished to resist British imperial expansion, helping them find allies and tools overseas. Britain might sit spider-like at the centre of the webs of empire, but other places were also significant if inevitably lesser “nodes” of influence and power. Ballantyne argues that we need to understand the webs of empire as fragile things, constantly being destroyed, demolished and then remade in different form.⁶⁴

Alan Lester has meanwhile traced the traffic of people and ideas through what he calls “imperial networks”. Initially, this concept emerged out of his analysis of humanitarian campaigning against the ill-treatment of indigenous peoples across the mid-nineteenth-century British empire, and the public-relations offensives launched by settlers in response to humanitarian attacks. Lester shows how humanitarians worked with their counterparts around the empire to develop a generalized indictment of settler violence, and how settlers in turn generated their own globe-spanning

imperial networks to defend themselves against humanitarian accusations.⁶⁵ Like Ballantyne, Lester argues that his networked conception of empire is of broader applicability. He emphasizes that “concepts such as networks, webs and circuits... [allow the] histories of Britain and its colonies to be conceived as more fluidly and reciprocally interrelated,” and are “very fruitful if one wants to consider metropole and colony, or colony and colony, within the same analytical frame, and without necessarily privileging either one.”⁶⁶

Lester, writing with David Lambert, has also encouraged historians to examine the “imperial careers” of people who lived and worked in multiple sites of empire. The life-histories—and life-geographies—of these individuals reveal the complexity of imperial networks that were hardly constrained by the formal boundaries of colonial states and the official channels that ran between them. Their journeys constituted new connections across empire and “facilitated the continual reformulation of imperial discourses, practices and culture.”⁶⁷ These people were what Transnational historians would call “connectors”—“intermediaries, go-betweens and brokers.”⁶⁸

Indeed, Lester and Lambert’s agenda connects with a broader recent trend in historical life-writing, using individual biographies as a means to illustrate large-scale structures of imperial and global interconnection. Linda Colley has thus surveyed the captivity narratives of British and Irish men and women from the early seventeenth to the mid nineteenth century, as a means to reveal “both the growing scale of Britain’s global reach and its persistent limitations.”⁶⁹ She has deployed a similar approach in *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh*, which explores how one woman experienced “some of the main forces of global change of her time.”⁷⁰ As Colley argues, one of the virtues of this approach is that it helps return a human dimension to our understanding of otherwise-impersonal global forces of change.⁷¹ Emma Rothschild has similarly pieced together the eighteenth-century lives of members of one family and “their households, friends, servants, and slaves.” She looks at how “information and expectations” connected individuals and groups across different sites of colonization.⁷²

This turn towards life-writing is also apparent in Global history. Natalie

Zemon Davis's study of Al-Hasan al-Wazzan, a sixteen-century Muslim writer, captive and traveller, pieces together one man's life in order to reconstruct long-range contemporary connections and networks. To achieve this, Zemon Davis struggles with the slippery life that Al-Hasan al-Wazzan lived. He changed his name, and other markers of his identity, numerous times through his life. He appeared as different people in different spaces.⁷³ These methodological difficulties have also been confronted by Imperial biographers. Kirsten Mackenzie's study of John Dow dealt with a character who similarly changed identity and created different roles for himself in different contexts. Tracing his life between Britain and Australia in the early-nineteenth century meant hunting for her own "trickster" in a number of different archives.⁷⁴

For Davis, as for Imperial historians, the study of the individual can serve to reveal the extent of the geographic interconnectivity of their times. Through Al-Hasan al-Wazzan, Davis reveals how the early modern Mediterranean world linked Europe to north Africa, and uncovered how through these circuits knowledge of the parts of Africa further removed from these immediate connections became available. As with the networks uncovered by Ballantyne, the geographies revealed by these connected lives do not always include Europe. For instance, Clare Anderson has married life-writing techniques with ideas drawn from the Subaltern Studies school of South Asian history, to look at the experiences and social worlds of subaltern men and women (as well as elite Europeans) who travelled across the Indian Ocean during the nineteenth century, negotiating the coercive networks of emergent British imperial authority.⁷⁵

These micro-historical studies of how individuals—imperial and subaltern—moved through the networks and webs that spread across the globe have built in part on the critical agenda of "New" Imperial historians. Like this work, it too has sought to bring imperial metropolises and colonies into the same frame in order to historicise notions of race, gender, class and nation.⁷⁶ Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne have continued to push this postcolonial agenda and sought to bring it into direct dialogue with Global history. In their edited collection, *Bodies in Contact*, they argue that colonial historians' methodological engagement with gender history should be included in the repertoire of approaches deployed by Global historians, and should be taught on World history courses. Through their focus on imperial ideologies of race,

gender and sexuality—as well as the social, political and economic realities of these norms—they hope the volume will offer “students of globalization an opportunity to appreciate the role of empires in shaping world systems by tracking embodied experiences across historical time and cultural space.”⁷⁷ In an even more recent collection, they have raised related concerns about the implications of connected history’s focus on imperial networks. In *Moving Subjects* they warn that the emphasis on the mobility of imperial actors relies on an implicit understanding of Global space as merely a surface across which individuals move. This, they argue, makes places defined as “local” appear as static. To counter this they reconceptualise local places as “translocal” spaces: specific arenas of interaction reproduced across the world through the establishment, maintenance and contestation of empires. These spaces might include sites such as ports, prisons, hospitals, and bedrooms, sites in which definitions of and relationships between colonizer and colonized played out. Their approach reminds us that whilst we trace long-range interconnections, we should also be sensitive to how these world-spanning imperial networks were predicated on interactions operating in local sites that were policed and contested.⁷⁸ They also makes us alive to the ways that the production of global spaces of connection, by implication, involves the production of fraught local spaces of interaction.⁷⁹

Such studies have helped us break out of traditional imperial, colonial and national units of analysis by tracking the people and channels of communication that traversed political boundaries and different localities even while, as Burton and Ballantyne show, they remade them. A rather different approach to writing connected history has come from those working with the concept of the “British world”, generally envisaged as a large-scale sub-division of the British empire characterised by very porous internal boundaries. Historians of the British world have dwelt on the cultural, political, economic and demographic links that undergirded a sense of common, imperial British identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That imagined British imperial community centred on English-speaking white settlers in the “dominions” of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as those who remained “at home” in Britain and Ireland. However, beyond these Anglophone hubs, the British world could also incorporate Francophones in Canada and Afrikaans-speaking whites in South Africa, British diasporic fragments scattered across the world and non-white colonial

subjects who were sometimes included within the cultural and political category of “free-born Englishmen”, however temporarily or precariously. Like other types of Imperial history that intersect with Global and Transnational historical themes, work on the British world has tended to focus on “connectors”, on flows of people, culture and material goods. Ideas have also been borrowed from recent literature on imperial webs and networks. The study of the role of migration in creating British communities overseas, and in setting up conflicts with Indigenous people and other migrants, has been critical here: Kent Fedorowich and Andrew Thompson present the British world as “a series of interlocking networks, webs and information flows, which ranged from family and community affiliations, to commercial, scientific and professional bodies, to educational, philanthropic, religious and labour groups.”⁸⁰ Writing with Gary Magee, Thompson has similarly suggested that British migration was accompanied by the creation of “trans-national networks,” binding the British diaspora together and shaping the nature of British overseas economic engagement. Imperial networks encouraged Britons at home to trade with Britons overseas, and also worked to limit commercial engagement with other places.⁸¹ Tamson Pietsch argues that we should think in terms of multiple British worlds, of competing and coexisting networks and shifting sets of interconnection that bound different groups of people together in many and varied ways.⁸²

In terms of understanding the role of empires in creating a more interconnected world, while avoiding the planetary simplifications that mar some brands of Global history, John Darwin has contributed perhaps the most significant large-scale study. In *After Tamerlane*, Darwin presents what he calls a “global history of empires”, examining the modern European empires as an integral part of a world-spanning history of commercial and geopolitical connection and contest. He shows how, since the fifteenth century, different power blocs, centred in different parts of the Eurasian landmass, and eventually in North America, have vied to harness the resources of distant areas in order to create a dominant commercial and strategic position for themselves. When those power blocs succeeded in bringing sufficient economic and military resources under their command, they became empires, which he views as “the default mode of political organization throughout most of history.”⁸³ Darwin traces the cobbling-together of the European empires of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the development of a British imperial predominance based

on victory over France and the possession of a geopolitical power-base in India.⁸⁴ He emphasises that empires were not all-powerful, transformative behemoths. To mobilise and combine resources drawn from distant and widely-separated parts of the globe, they had to make deals with and offer concessions to local elites, in turn leaving room for “the resilience of many of Eurasia’s other states and cultures in the face of Europe’s expansion.” The overall result of the creation of modern empires, Darwin argues, was globalization, or at least “semi-globalization”. Through empire, Europe drew the rest of the world into a new global economy, as producers of food and raw materials, as borrowers of European capital and as consumers of Western industrial goods. The result was the creation of a “vast semi-unified system of economics and politics, a common area from which no state, society, economy or culture was able to remain entirely aloof.”⁸⁵

In these respects, Darwin’s research agenda chimes with those of Global historians seeking to give globalization a history. Yet his argument also has particular implications for an Imperial history audience. Darwin argues that empires are generally, at heart, about connectedness. Empires build on and strengthen diverse sets of connections of trade, migration, and culture, often crossing oceans or continents in the process. The precondition for the expansion of empires is the existence of networks of connection operating at different scales: regional, continental and global. Empires establish themselves by tapping into these connections. They grow by fostering and furthering connections. They attempt to consolidate themselves by trying to survey and regulate connections. And they are undermined and destroyed by those networks and systems of connections that remain beyond their purview and control. This “ceaseless watch and ward” of connections is, for Darwin, intrinsic to all empires, not only modern empires, and not only European empires.⁸⁶ In making this argument Darwin presents the study of the history of empires as a crucial way of recovering the history of connectedness. We think that this is an important insight for Imperial historians, but with the caveat that we are wary of the under-examined slippage in Darwin’s work between his uncovering of the historical geographies of empires and his use the globe as a scale of analysis. As Burton and Ballantyne have urged, whilst studying this global interconnectedness we must also remain attentive to the related production of “translocal” spaces.

Unlike most connected histories of empire, Darwin also draws our attention to the connections that linked different modern empires together. He argues, for example, that the integration of intra-European trade during the nineteenth century was one of the bases for Europe's economic lead over the rest of the world, and for its imperial expansion. Similarly, he claims that the close interlock between the economies of Britain and the politically-independent US provided a crucial stimulus to British economic and overseas territorial expansion: "Americans were the indispensable sleeping partners of Europe's expansion into Afro-Asia."⁸⁷ As we have already seen, Belich's work helps us move in much the same direction, questioning the idea of a hermetically-sealed "British world". Together, Darwin and Belich help us understand how Britain and its settler offshoots related to the wider Anglophone diaspora, and to the growing agglomeration of geopolitical power that was the US.⁸⁸ Thinking about the connections that crossed imperial, colonial and national borders, and that bound different places into zones that did not neatly correspond with these political frontiers, must be a priority if we are to write truly connected histories of empire.

Conclusions

Comparative methods and a focus on connections have been marked features of Imperial history and Global history alike. In writing connected histories of empire, we can borrow some of the new, invigorating geographical frameworks that have been suggested by Global historians. We can also follow the lead provided by Imperial historians and explore how comparisons were made by contemporary historical actors. The use of "encompassing comparison", and the development of a sensitivity to the "politics of comparison" should, as both Stoler and Pomeranz have suggested, be seen as integral to the writing of connected history. Connected histories of empire might also be informed by the rich Imperial historiography that has revealed the webs, networks, systems and flows that linked up different sites of colonization. However, as the articles in this special issue suggest, these networks should not be examined within an analytical frame that is restricted to a single empire. Different empires were connected to one another, materially as well as through the "politics of comparison". These connections were thus more than imperial. But they were also less than global, in two senses. Firstly, these interconnections seldom spanned the entire globe. As research on borderlands has illustrated, the processes of imperial expansion and the

production of denser webs of interconnection in fact operated to marginalise and exclude some parts of the world.⁸⁹ Indeed, to describe these connections as global is to miss the simultaneous and linked process by which places previously networked could become disconnected.⁹⁰ Secondly, long-distant interconnections were seldom subjectively experienced as global. Individuals linked by these networks did not self-consciously conceive of themselves as operating globally. Usually, historical actors regarded themselves as working within the frameworks of empires and nations, even as they combined and switched between local, national and imperial (and ethnic, linguistic and religious) identities as needs might dictate at any given moment. Connected histories of empires should push us beyond traditional imperial boundaries, but not necessarily to a geographical scale encompassing the entire planet.

The essays in this collection demonstrate the value and potential of studies that deploy these comparative methods and move us towards a truly connected history of empire. Alex Middleton, Andrew Priest and Satoshi Mizutani's contributions all engage with the "politics of colonial comparison". Middleton's article explores British thinking about France's colonization of Algeria in the mid-nineteenth century. He argues that the British thought about the French empire as an "other", as a means to help them define what the British empire was by identifying what it was not. British commentators tended to argue that the French were too centralising, too intent on changing Algerian society and too violent in their treatment of Algerians. As a result, they claimed, Algeria generated little profit for France, and was the source of many problems. Pushing the geographical frontiers of comparative imperial history beyond Europe, Priest and Mizutani look at the US and the Japanese empires respectively. Priest examines the American political elite's views of the British empire at a time of continued US westward expansion. He argues that Republican policymakers and thinkers looked on the British empire with a mixture of suspicion and admiration, and often saw it as a generally positive presence in the world—certainly better than Spanish and French imperialisms. The British empire thus formed an important reference point in US thinking about world power and overseas expansion, and the idea of common Anglo-Saxon origins and virtues represented a significant ideological cement. Mizutani's contribution meanwhile looks at how the campaigns of anti-colonial nationalists deployed comparisons between empires, by

examining how two prominent Bengali thinkers compared the British and Japanese empires. The essay points towards the “anti-colonial politics of comparison” as an overlooked area of study. Through the responses of the Japanese government and Korean nationalists, Mizutani also reveals how comparisons with British colonial rule could be used to both strengthen Japanese claims to serve wider Asian interests, as well as to contest them.

The remaining two articles in this collection trace some of the connections that linked Britain and France, and their colonies, to areas beyond the formal geographic limits of their imperial influence. Esme Cleall shows how deaf people used a wide range of transnational connections to develop identities and communities. The broader sets of interconnection formed by the British empire offered an important foundation for such links, but this imperial connectedness needs to be placed in the context of a wide range of other long-distance connections, between empires, but also transcending imperial structures. In these further connections, Cleall demonstrates that Europe and the US loomed large. By focusing on deaf actors, the essay pushes historians to think more about the nature of connections and how ties were materially maintained. Joanna Warson’s paper meanwhile reveals the role played by French firms, with the tacit support of the French government, in busting sanctions imposed on Rhodesia during the 1960s and 1970s. This reflected broader French attempts to strengthen their international influence, particularly in Africa, and worked to delay the end of white minority rule in Rhodesia. It also had knock-on effects in other parts of Africa: black leaders in Francophone Africa seized opportunities to trade with Rhodesia, and thus to serve their own interests. Warson shows how an “entangled” or “connected” history of decolonization can complicate the separate and different traditions of writing about decolonization in Britain and France.

Most of the essays in this collection focus on contemporary comparisons and on the movement of people and ideas across the boundaries of empires. Warson’s article is concerned more with how political and economic influence was exerted across imperial/colonial boundaries: this is an important theme in writing connected histories of empire, to be pursued in tandem with social and cultural histories of connection and comparison. Arguably, one of the benefits of the “global turn” lies in the corrective it offers to the narrow fixation with cultural history that has developed

within Imperial history as a response to the “cultural turn” of the 1980s. Global history provokes us to think again about the “hard political and economic questions that were once central to imperial history.” Yet, in tackling these questions, it would be wrong to relegate cultural histories of empire to the side-lines, particularly given their utility in deconstructing the notions of race and gender that underpinned imperial power structures. Rather, connected histories of empire need to combine cultural, social, economic, political and intellectual approaches: “reintegrating these subdivisions rather than... asserting the paramountcy of one over another.”⁹¹ In rising to this challenge, we might hope to produce accounts that combine an awareness of large-scale and global transfers, power formations and inequalities, with an understanding of the roles played by human agency, chance and contingency in shaping the imperial past.

Notes

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² Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2014): 59.

³ Michael Adas, “Comparative History and the Challenge of the Grand Narrative,” in *A Companion to World History*, ed., Douglas Northrup (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2012): 229-243 esp. 238.

⁴ Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, “Empire and Globalisation: from ‘high imperialism’ to decolonisation,” *International History Review* 36 (2014): 142-170.

⁵ Hunt, *Writing History*: 52-54. Mazlish similarly defines Global history as the history of globalization: see Bruce Mazlish, ‘Comparing Global History to World History,’ *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28 (1998): 385-395.

⁶ Mazlish, “Comparing Global History,”: 385.

⁷ Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris and Jacques Revel, “Introduction: Space and scale in Transnational history,” *International History Review* 33 (2011): 573-584 quote at 573-4.

⁸ Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 57.

⁹ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a reconfiguration of early modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997): 735-762 quote at 762.

¹⁰ Charles Bright and Michael Geyer, “Benchmarks of Globalization: The global condition, 1850-2010,” in *A Companion to World History*, ed., Northrup: 285-300 quotes at 288.

¹¹ See, notably, John Darwin, “Imperialism and the Victorians: The dynamics of territorial expansion,” *English Historical Review* 112 (1997): 614-642 and C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British empire and the world, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989).

¹² This is despite it being one of the areas for future research identified in the groundbreaking essay by Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a research agenda”, in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial cultures in a bourgeois world*, ed., Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 1-56, esp.13, 28-9.

¹³ Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties : The politics of comparison in North American history and (post) colonial studies,” *The Journal of American History* 88 (2001): 829–65.

¹⁴ The importance of Pomeranz's book is hard to overstate, and the “great divergence” debate has dominated global history. See Maxine Berg, “Global History: Approaches and new directions,” in *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. Maxine Berg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, for The British Academy, 2013): 1-18, esp. 6–10.

¹⁵ For two important examples of both, see: Cooper and Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire*; Martin Thomas, *Crises of Empire: Decolonization and Europe's imperial states, 1918-1975* (London: Hodder Education, 2008).

¹⁶ These studies demonstrate in the process that it is an issue that cannot be resolved through an analysis of European states alone. See David D. Buck, “Was It Pluck or Luck That Made the West Grow Rich?” *Journal of World History* 10 (1999): 413–30.

¹⁷ A position now long critiqued: see Vicente L. Rafael, “The Cultures of Area Studies in the United States,” *Social Text*, 41 (1994): 91–111.

¹⁸ Indeed, he draws on some important antecedent work, such as: Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global economy in the Asian age* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998); Roy Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical change and the limits of European experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Janet

L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The world system A. D. 1250-1350* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁹ J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A study*, 3rd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968); Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A popular outline*, 13th ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966); John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 6 (1953): 1–15; D.C.M. Platt, "The Imperialism of Free Trade: Some reservations," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 21 (1968): 296–306; P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and expansion, 1688-1914* (London: Longman, 1993). The older version of Pomeranz's argument was made famous with regards to slavery in the British empire by Eric Williams in *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: Deutsch, 1964).

²⁰ P.H.H. Vries, "Are Coal and Colonies Really Crucial? Kenneth Pomeranz and the great divergence," *Journal of World History* 12 (2001): 407–46.

²¹ Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the making of the modern world economy* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000): 1–17.

²² *Ibid.*: 10.

²³ For an overview of the historical implications of these two different paths of development, see Kaoru Sugihara, "The European Miracle in Global History: An East Asian perspective," in *Writing the History of the Global*, ed. Berg: 129–44.

²⁴ Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*: 22–5. Pomeranz's argument for the importance of violence has found support in recent in depth comparative analysis of European maritime successes and failures in Asia. See: Adam Clulow, "European Maritime Violence and Territorial States in Early Modern Asia, 1600-1650," *Itinerario* 33 (2009): 72–94.

²⁵ Pomeranz's reciprocal comparative method has inspired other work seeking to compare Europe to other parts of the world whilst avoiding anachronism, also finding "profound similarities". See Prasannan Parthasarathi, *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not: Global economic divergence, 1600-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 1–13.

²⁶ Victor B. Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in global context, c. 800-1830*, vol. 1: *Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

2003) and vol. 2: *Mainland Mirrors: Europe, Japan, China, South Asia, and the Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²⁷ C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global connections and comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004): 469.

²⁸ *Ibid.*: 83.

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 476.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 11, 451.

³¹ See, for example, J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A comparative study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948).

³² Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, eds., *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial rivalry and colonial rule* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967); Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, eds., *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial rivalry and colonial rule* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971).

³³ Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The official mind of imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961); for how the field has changed since, see Durba Ghosh, “Another Set of Imperial Turns?,” *The American Historical Review* 117 (2012): 772–93.

³⁴ In the realm of cultural history, see John M. MacKenzie, ed., *European empires and the People: Popular responses to imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). For studies on medicine, see: David Arnold, ed., *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Poonam Bala, *Biomedicine as a Contested Site: Some revelations in imperial contexts* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009). For studies on punishment see: Frank Dikotter and Ian Brown, eds., *Cultures of Confinement: A history of the prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2007); Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao, eds., *Discipline and the Other Body: Correction, corporeality, colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

³⁵ Indeed, a move away from this largely economic discussion is advocated in Berg, “Global History: Approaches and New Directions”: 9.

³⁶ Interestingly it was Victor Lieberman’s frustrations at the limitations of precisely

this format that inspired his own vast comparative study. Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1: xix-xx.

³⁷ An alternative model for comparative edited collections is offered in Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen, eds., *Comparing Empires: Encounters and transfers in the long nineteenth century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011) where each section concludes with a commentary, making explicit comparisons.

³⁸ Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, "Particular or Universal? Historicising liberal approaches to empire in Europe," in *Liberal Imperialism in Europe*, ed. Matthew P. Fitzpatrick (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012): 1–24.

³⁹ Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen, "Beyond Rise, Decline and Fall: Comparing multi-ethnic empires in the long nineteenth century," in *Comparing Empires*, ed. Leonhard and von Hirschhausen: 9-35, esp. 15.

⁴⁰ Ann Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European identities and the cultural politics of exclusion in colonial Southeast Asia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34 (1992): 514–51. For other comparative histories of colonial cultures and their conceptions of race and gender, see: Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire: Race, gender, and family life in French and Dutch colonialism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998); David M. Pomfret, "Raising Eurasia: Race, class, and age in French and British colonies," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51 (2009): 314–43.

⁴¹ Martin Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, workers and protest in the European colonial empires, 1918-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 17–41.

⁴² Antoinette Burton has similarly argued that Global historians should think critically about how the idea of the "global" has itself been shaped by the political agendas of past and present empires. Antoinette Burton, "Not Even Remotely Global? Method and scale in World history," *History Workshop Journal* 64 (2007): 323-328.

⁴³ Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties": 847.

⁴⁴ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning narratives of modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); Sumit Sarkar, *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Postmodernism,*

Hindu fundamentalism, history (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). John L. Comaroff, “Reflections on the Colonial State, in South Africa and Elsewhere: Factions, fragments, facts and fictions,” *Social Identities* 4 (1998): 321–61; Cooper and Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony”.

⁴⁵ Such a shift is urged in Berg, “Global History: Approaches and New Directions”: 9–11.

⁴⁶ Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties”: 847.

⁴⁷ Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*: 10.

⁴⁸ Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, “Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands,” *Journal of World History* 8 (1997): 211–42.

⁴⁹ James C Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁵⁰ “Special Issue: Zomia and beyond,” *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010): 185–346.

⁵¹ Eric Tagliacozzo, “Ambiguous Commodities, Unstable Frontiers: The case of Burma, Siam, and imperial Britain, 1800–1900,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46 (2004): 354–77; Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and states along a Southeast Asian frontier, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁵² Mandy Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories beyond the state in the borderworlds of Burma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁵³ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*.

⁵⁴ K. N. Chaudhuri, “The Unity and Disunity of Indian Ocean History from the Rise of Islam to 1750: The outline of a theory and historical discourse,” *Journal of World History* 4 (1993): 1–21.

⁵⁵ Markus P. M. Vink, “Indian Ocean Studies and the ‘New Thalassology,’” *Journal of Global History* 2 (2007): 41–62.

⁵⁶ Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*.

⁵⁷ Clare Anderson, “Introduction to Marginal Centers: Writing life histories in the Indian Ocean World,” *Journal of Social History* 45 (Winter 2011): 335–44.

⁵⁸ Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the age of global empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006): 1–35.

⁵⁹ Ned Bertz, “Review: Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the*

age of global empire,” *Journal of World History* 18 (2007): 377-9.

⁶⁰ Richard Harry Drayton, “The Collaboration of Labour: Slaves, empires and globalizations in the Atlantic World, c.1600-1850,” in *Globalisation in World History*, ed. A. G. Hopkins (London: Random House, 2002): 98–115.

⁶¹ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “Some Caveats about the ‘Atlantic’ Paradigm,” *History Compass* 1 (2003): n.p.

⁶² Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions, challenges, and opportunities,” *American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 741–57.

⁶³ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-world, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁶⁴ Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

⁶⁵ Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating identities in nineteenth-century South Africa and Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001). Alan Lester, “British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire,” *History Workshop Journal* 54 (2002): 24-48.

⁶⁶ Alan Lester, “Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British empire,” *History Compass* 4 (2006): 124-141, quote at 124.

⁶⁷ David Lambert and Alan Lester, “Imperial Spaces, Imperial Subjects,” in *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial careering in the long nineteenth century*, eds., David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 1-31, quoted at 2.

⁶⁸ Saunier, *Transnational History*: 36.

⁶⁹ Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, empire and the world, 1600-1850* (London: Pimlico, 2002): 17-8.

⁷⁰ Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: How a remarkable woman crossed seas and empires to become a part of world history* (London: Harper Press, 2007): xxiii.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*: 300.

⁷² Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An eighteenth-century history* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011): 1-2.

⁷³ Natalie Zemon Davies, *Trickster Travels: A sixteenth-century Muslim between*

worlds (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007).

⁷⁴ Kirsten Mackenzie, *A Swindler's Progress: Nobles and convicts in the age of liberty* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁷⁵ Anderson, *Subaltern Lives*.

⁷⁶ Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1–56.

⁷⁷ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M Burton, "Introduction: Bodies, Empires, and World Histories," in *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History*, ed. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M Burton (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2005), 1–15, quoted at 8.

⁷⁸ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M Burton, "Introduction: The Politics of Intimacy in an Age of Empire," in *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire*, ed. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M. Burton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 1–28.

⁷⁹ The implications of this approach have been elaborated on further in: Burton, "Not Even Remotely Global?"

⁸⁰ Kent Fedorowich and Andrew S. Thompson, "Mapping the Contours of the British World: Empire, migration and identity," in *Empire, Migration and Identity in the British World*, eds., Kent Fedorowich and Andrew S. Thompson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013): 1-41, quote at 2.

⁸¹ Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of people, goods and capital in the British World, c.1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): xiii.

⁸² Tamson Pietsch, "Rethinking the British World," *Journal of British Studies* 52 (2013): 441-63.

⁸³ John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global history of empire since 1405* (London: Allen Lane, 2007): 23.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*: 160.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: 6.

⁸⁶ John Darwin, "Globe and Empire," in *Writing the History of the Global*, ed., Berg:

197-199 quote at 199. See also John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The global expansion of Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2012): 386-7.

⁸⁷ Darwin, *After Tamerlane*: 237-8, quote at 245.

⁸⁸ It has also recently been suggested that we need to think about the “borderlands” of the British world, how it related to the empires and sovereign states that surrounded it. See Jared van Duinen, “The Borderlands of the British World,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 15 (2014): n.p..

⁸⁹ A process richly illustrated in the chapter “Global Histories, Local Exclusions,” in Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin*.

⁹⁰ These concerns were raised about “globalization” in Frederick Cooper, “What is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African historian’s perspective,” *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 189-213.

⁹¹ A. G. Hopkins, “Back to the Future: from national history to Imperial history”, *Past & Present*, 164 (1999): 198-243, quotes at 199 and 204.