



# Global History, Connected Histories: A Shift of Historiographical Scale?

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# Global History, Connected Histories: A Shift of Historiographical Scale?

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### INTRODUCTION

Globalization has become a recurring theme, not only in news headlines, but also in scientific research: economics opened the way and other social sciences quickly followed suit. This ubiquitous notion, however, is also an ambiguous and maybe even a contradictory one because of what Frederick Cooper termed its “conflictual polysemy.”<sup>2</sup> Are the two terms used in French, “*globalisation*” and “*mondialisation*” (one of which appears to be a mere transposition of the English word), equivalent and interchangeable?<sup>3</sup> “Global history,” “circulation,” and “connection” are all themes that exert an unquestionable appeal today. The fact that those themes have been adopted quite rapidly in a number of disciplines and editorial fields does not necessarily mean that they are valid scientific paradigms, relevant in all the domains in which they tend to be used.

We should also be wary of the legitimizing effect that can result from the simple import of themes from other academic or scientific contexts that are rarely explained or translated: being responsive to novelty does not necessarily mean that we have to abandon a critical viewpoint.

1. We would like to thank the CERI (FNSP, Paris) and the IHMC-CNRS for their help with the organization of the June 9, 2007 roundtable that provided the basis of this issue. We would especially like to thank Romain Bertrand (CERI), who contributed greatly to the organization of the roundtable and to the edition of this volume. Unfortunately, Serge Gruzinski, William Gervase Clarence-Smith and Patrick O’Brien could not join us on the day of the roundtable.

2. Frederick Cooper, “What is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian’s Perspective,” *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 189–213. This article is reused and further developed with the addition of other polysemous concepts (identity, modernity) in the second part of Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

3. The French translator of Frederick Cooper’s article cited above translated the term “globalization” as “*mondialisation*” (Frederick Cooper, “Le Concept de mondialisation sert-il à quelque chose? Un Point de vue d’historien,” *Critique Internationale* 10 (2001): 101–24).

In view of the approximations and shifts in meaning that surround the term “globalization,” we ought to more carefully distinguish between two different aspects of the term’s usage. On the one hand, it describes an historical process of economic and/or cultural integration on a global scale. This process is difficult to analyze because scholars disagree about its periodization and the choice of appropriate criteria to analyze it. Susan Berger’s theory, for instance, that a “first globalization” occurred with the modes of regulation of economic and social interdependencies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,<sup>4</sup> parts ways with the Braudelian tradition that identifies features of a global interdependency as far back as the early modern period, in the wake of the discovery of the New World. Others conceive global history as a specific approach to historical processes. Thus, understood within a methodological perspective, global history is viewed as a means to break down the compartmentalization of the historical gaze by embracing a contextual approach that can be enlarged to a planetary scale. Within this perspective, globalization is a way to study objects rather than an object of study.

While this Anglo-American impetus must be both taken seriously and questioned, we must acknowledge with Serge Gruzinski that the “alchemy of hybridization,” and the “intensity of circulation ... that reveals mixed landscapes” are rarely taken into account by French academics in general.<sup>5</sup> This is a surprising situation in view of the ferment among academics, not only in the United Kingdom and the United States, but also in continental Europe, particularly the Netherlands and in Germany, where “global” history studies are very active. At the same time, specialists in the history of imperial systems have championed the notion of “connected history” as a specific implementation of the global approach.

Thus, we wanted to interrogate both notions together and in parallel. The goal is to understand both the epistemological and the methodological dimensions of those fields of study, to evaluate their contributions and limitations, and explore the reasons why they seem to generate relatively little interest in France.<sup>6</sup>

Most of the articles included in this issue follow a roundtable organized by the Société d’Histoire Moderne & Contemporaine, which was held at its June 9, 2007 meeting. They also echo the collection of essays now published in issue 54-4 of the *Revue d’Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*. The various points of view represented in those essays mirror not only the diversity of the national contexts in which the authors work, of their disciplinary trainings

4. Susan Berger, *Notre première mondialisation. Leçons d’un échec oublié* (Paris: Seuil, 2003).

5. Serge Gruzinski, *Les Quatre parties du monde. Histoire d’une mondialisation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris: Point-Seuil, 2006), 31–32.

6. One should note, however, the essays collected under the title “Une Histoire à l’échelle globale” in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 56 (2001), 3–123, or the translation of articles such as that of Frederick Cooper (Cooper, Frederick. “Concept de mondialisation,” 101–24).

(history, political science, sociology), and of their objects of study, but also the variety of the ways in which they conceive the “global” or “connected” approach, because, while they use common labels and follow paths that can converge at times, their individual approaches are in fact sustained by a plurality of perspectives that can clash with one another. Our goal is to unravel the interests, possibilities, and limitations contained in that plurality.

### WORLD HISTORY AND GLOBAL HISTORY: CHANGE OF SCALE? SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE?

In the United States, William McNeil’s pioneering work, *The Rise of the West: A History of Human Community*, published in 1963, seems to have initiated the movement that, in the 1980s and 90s, took the name of world or global history. In fact, the first issue of the *Journal of World History*, which the University of Hawaii began publishing in 1990, opens with an article by McNeil entitled “*The Rise of the West after Twenty-five Years*,” which expresses satisfaction at the legitimacy the movement had acquired and the work it had achieved by then.<sup>7</sup> The journal is an official publication of the World History Association, which was founded in 1982 and counted 1,400 paying members in 2002.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, *World History Connected* (an online publication) and the *H-World* listserv, both created in 1994, together boasted 1,500 subscribers. In addition, the London School of Economics, building on the success of the Global Economic History Network it partially funded,<sup>9</sup> recently launched a *Journal of Global History* (published by Cambridge University Press), which covers the same area of study. It is also worth noting that the *American Historical Review*, the most prestigious and widely circulated American journal, introduced a new “Comparative/World” rubric in its book reviews section, and its December 2006 issue dedicated 25 pages to a debate between six historians (including Christopher Bayly) on issues in “transnational history.”<sup>10</sup>

In Germany, *Comparativ*, a journal that was recently launched, at first with the subtitle *Leipziger Beiträge zur Universalgeschichte und vergleichenden*

7. Between 1963 and 1990, *The Rise of the West* sold 75,000 copies. Jared Diamond’s book *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York, NY: Norton, 1997) is encountering a similar public success.

8. Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Oast* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003), 167. To compare, on the same year (in 2002), the American Historical Association counted 15,000 members, the Organization of American Historians 11,000, the Association of Asian Studies 7,500, the Latin American Studies Association 5,500, the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies 5,000, the African Studies Association 3,000, and the Middle East Studies Association 2,600.

9. Patrick O’Brien and Giorgio Riello are the organizers of this network. The case of Patrick O’Brien is rather remarkable: an authority on the English state and tax system in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he converted to global history and ended up playing a key role in its organization.

10. C. A. Bayly et al., “On Transnational History,” *American Historical Review* 111-5 (2006): 1440-1464. For a compiled list of recent publications, see: Raymond Grew, “Expanding Worlds of World History,” *Journal of Modern History* 78 (2006): 878-98 and Michael Lang, “Globalization and its History,” *Journal of Modern History* 78 (2006): 899-931.

*Gesellschaftsforschung*, is now defined as a “global” history journal, and the research center led by Matthias Middell at the university of Leipzig is very active in that area.<sup>11</sup> The Dutch case is even more remarkable: in 1977, the Institute for the History of European Expansion in Leiden started publishing *Itinerario*, first in the form of a collaborative report, and eventually as a genuine quarterly journal, but still in English. It was first conceived as a colonial history journal, but in 2004 the subtitle was changed from *European Journal of Overseas History* to *International Journal on the History of European Expansion and Global Interaction*. The approach is still, perhaps surprisingly, Eurocentric, but the global dimension is emphasized, as are the notions of global interaction and interdependency.

In English, the terms “world” and “global” are both used. “Global” is often used to emphasize the rise of interdependency and processes of integration on a global scale, while the term “world,” used as an adjective, can be synonymous with international or transnational, without necessarily implying an ongoing process of integration. For many authors, however, the difference is negligible: thus, in 1990, the *Journal of World History* presented itself as “a new forum for global history.”<sup>12</sup> Shifts of this kind have led some authors to carefully, sometimes painstakingly, explain terms and notions and map their uses, overlaps and differences.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Arif Dirlik stresses the necessary distinction between “worldwide” and “transnational.”<sup>14</sup> We can sense here how this historiographical movement is characterized both by a desire to return to a methodical elaboration of valid, ambitious interpretive paradigms and at the same time by the need to remain attentive to nuances in the various concepts it uses. In other words, the goal is to go back to a less partial, more general, interpretive framework, while staying clear of the schematic rigidity of outmoded “grand narratives” or of analytical systems that seem overly infused with a dubious “meaning of history.”

At any rate, regardless of the labels, global history and world history share two common goals. The first is to overcome the partition of historical research along national lines in order to take into account all the phenomena that occur across state borders. Indeed, partitions along national lines tend to disregard or

11. The title became: *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichenden Gesellschaftsforschung*. See also Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Peterson, *Geschichte der globalisierung. dimensionen, prozesse, epochen* (Münich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 2003) and works by Sebastian Conrad, such as “Europa aus der sicht nicht-westlicher eliten,” *Journal of Modern European History* 4 (2006): 158–170 and “Kulis, nach Preußen? Mobilität, chinesische arbeiter und das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1890-1914,” *Comparativ* 13 (2003): 80–95.

12. Foreword by the journal’s director, Jerry H. Bentley, “A New Forum for Global History,” *Journal of World History* 1 (1990): iii–v.

13. For instance, Bruno Mazlish, “Comparing Global History to World History,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28 (1998): 385–95; and “Crossing Boundaries: Ecumenical, World and Global History,” in *World History. Ideologies, Structures and Identities*, ed. Philip Pomper, Richard H. Elphick, and Richard T. Vann (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 41–52.

14. Arif Dirlik, “Performing the World,” *Journal of World History* 16 (2005): 406–7.

obfuscate all interactions or connections by assuming that borders are impervious, and by removing objects from their transnational contexts and linkages. For instance, how can we write a history of Ibero-America if we consider the Spanish and Portuguese worlds as strictly distinct? The second goal is to write a history of the world that is not solely dominated by a Western point of view. The combination of these two goals has led some authors to take on the legacy of the old tradition of universal history, while attempting to expand it through a clear rejection of their predecessors' Western ethnocentrism.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the aim is to do away with sterile national partitions and abandon the "grand narrative" of the Westernization of the planet. The history of the world cannot be reduced to "the rise of the West and the Westernization of the rest."<sup>16</sup>

All the authors of the contributions below agree, however, that we absolutely must circumvent the false conundrum implied by the two dominant approaches to "globalization." The first of these views globalization as a recent phenomenon and a feature of the modern era, and the other considers that men, goods, and ideas have always circulated and that the phenomenon is nothing new. On the contrary, we should seek to identify periods of expansion and regression, of opening and closing; in other words, we should strive to establish a periodization, to historicize globalization, and to be sensitive to the many different forms of contacts, interconnections, and circulations between the various regions, empires or cultural areas of the world.

Another goal is to abandon the economic determinism underlying some of the grand syntheses of world history, and instead to fully attend not only to ways of living, working, and consuming, but also to gender, cultural and religious practices, and the circulation of ideas and ideals. Hence, global history aims to be global not only by virtue of its object, but also by shunning historiographical fragmentation and disciplinary division, instead calling on all disciplines. The interest in climate and the environment, and particularly in issues regarding the relationship between human beings and their habitat, has led historians to turn to geographers, biologists, botanists, climatologists, dendrochronologists, and so on.<sup>17</sup>

15. Manfred Kossok, "From Universal History to Global History," in *Conceptualizing Global History*, ed. Bruno Mazlish and Ralph Buultjens (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 93–112; Gangolf Hübinger, Jürgen Osterhammel, and Erich Pelzer, eds., *Universalgeschichte und Nationalesgeschichte* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 1994); Anthony G. Hopkins, "The History of Globalization – and the Globalization of History?" in *Globalization in World History*, ed. Anthony G. Hopkins (New York, NY: Norton & Co., 2002), 12–44; see also the historiographical background provided in Patrick K. O'Brien, "Historiographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History," *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006): 3–39.

16. Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

17. Neva R. Goodwin, "The Rounding of the Earth: Ecology and Global History," in *Conceptualizing Global History*, 27–46. See, for instance, Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); William McNeil, *The Human Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); Philip D. Curtin, "The Environment beyond Europe and the European Theory of Empire," *Journal of World History* 1

## A CONTESTED POSITION

Of course, the multiplication of these types of studies must be understood within a specific context of production, at the crossroad between political circumstances and historiographical trends. The institutional academic landscape, as well as the level of funding for research it entails, plays a crucial role. In England, the old Empire and imperial ambitions helped to establish a solid tradition of colonial history, rooted in academic institutions that have survived to this day.<sup>18</sup> In the United States, as Jean-Paul Zuniga reminds us in his essay, an early form of global history, centered on the Atlantic world, emerged under the name of “Atlantic history” within the specific context of the Cold War. The assertion of world history in recent years has also taken place within a specific context: confronted with the predominance and, often, the conservatism of U.S. history on American campuses, advocates of global history struggled to further open their departments to the study of other civilizations.<sup>19</sup> In the 1990s, their goal was to make room for the history of non-Western worlds on undergraduate syllabi<sup>20</sup> that had been traditionally focused on “Western civilization” from Ancient times on.<sup>21</sup> Another task was to create doctoral programs that would train a pool of researchers specialized in “world history.”<sup>22</sup> By the 2000s, world history had gained some legitimacy in the eyes of university administrators and of the federal government, but it was hard hit by September 11: suspected of promoting relativism and of demoralizing the nation, “world history” became embattled, confronted with the success of Samuel Huntington’s view of a “clash of civilizations.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, the assessment that Patrick Manning offered in 2004 reveals mixed results and points to both advances and setbacks.<sup>24</sup> Its success is perhaps greater in

(1990): 131–150; Richard Grove, *Ecology, Climate and Empire: Colonialism and Global Environmental History, 1400–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

18. See Christophe Charle, “Les Historiens et la conceptualisation des sociétés impériales en France et en Angleterre.” In *La Société civile: savoirs, enjeux et acteurs en France et en Grande-Bretagne, 1780–1914*, ed. Christophe Charle and Julien Vincent (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011), 205–234.

19. The turmoil caused by Thomas Bender’s book, *A Nation among Nations: America’s Place in World History* (New York, NY: Hill & Wang, 2006), shows how sensitive the topic still is today.

20. During the first years of college, the curriculum is not very specialized, resembling how history is taught in French high school; thus, this reaches students well beyond the ranks of those who will later major in history. The goal here is to contribute to the education of the well-rounded college graduate.

21. For instance, T. H. Vadney recounts the debates at the University of Manitoba regarding whether the “western civ” survey course be replaced by a “world history” course. (“World History as an Advanced Academic Field,” *Journal of World History* 1 (1990): 209–23).

22. Thomas Bender, Philip M. Katz, and Colin Palmer, *The Education of Historians for the Twenty-first Century*. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

23. Charles W. Hedrick Jr., “The Ethics of World History,” *Journal of World History* 16 (2005): 33–49 and Jerry H. Bentley, “Myths, Wagers and Some Moral Implications,” *Journal of World History* 16 (2005): 51–82. In fact, September 11 and the idea of a “clash of civilization” is almost an obsessive motif in the introductions to books published after 2001.

24. Patrick Manning, ed., *World History: Global and Local Interactions* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), 229ff. For an overview of the state of education and doctoral programs, see also Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History*, 327–360. For an overview of curriculums, see

anthropology (a discipline inherently more open to non-Western cultures) and in government or political science departments, which are interested in the historical background of current political issues resulting from economic globalization.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, one could sneer at this agitation inside the gilded cages of American campuses and view them as mere legitimation strategies or as schemes to carve new academic spaces, within the context of disguised political battles.

But we should also consider seriously what is at stake in those struggles from a purely historiographical, hence scientific point of view: is it actually possible to write a history that crosses borders and avoids ethnocentrism? In France, those questions are all too often considered with some kind of condescending skepticism, to such a point that the historiographical issues debated by the international community of historians are barely noticeable in the country. For instance, Kenneth Pomeranz's argument about the "great divergence" that occurred between East and West at the turn of the nineteenth century is debated in many journals and symposiums around the world, except in France, to the great surprise of our foreign colleagues.<sup>26</sup> Of course, one would be well-advised not to follow every trend coming from the United States: we can deprovincialize French historiography and open it up to the world without necessarily falling into a slavish imitation of a model conceived somewhere else. We already know the risks involved in symbolic legitimation through cultural importation, and the dangers of internationalization of research that would be reduced to pure and simple Americanization.<sup>27</sup> Does this commendable cautiousness, however, justify a retreat behind our borders and the decline of French research on the international scene in some areas of study? Referring to a session of the 19<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Historical Sciences held in Oslo in 2000, which was dedicated precisely to "The globalization of history: concepts and methods," Roger Chartier noted: "the fact that, in most cases,

Kevin Reilly, ed., *World History: Selected Reading Lists and Course Outlines from American Colleges and Universities* (New York, NY: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1985).

25. Thus Bruno Mazlish, *The New Global History* (London: Routledge, 2006); this examines very modern themes such as the role of multinational corporations, the impact of the Cold War, the new role of NGOs, etc. "Global History" then becomes a very broad label.

26. Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); the author argues that China and Western Europe were equally advanced at the end of the eighteenth century, and thus raises anew the question: why did the Industrial Revolution occur in Europe rather than China? Equally astonishing is the silence on Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

27. Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant justly note that "the symbolic dominion and influence exercised by the USA over every kind of scholarly and, especially, semi-scholarly production, notably through the power of consecration they possess and through the material and symbolic profits that researchers in the dominated countries reap from a more or less assumed or ashamed adherence to the model derived from the USA" and that leads to "the actual 'globalization' of American problems" ("On the Cunning of Imperialist Reason," trans. Derek M. Robbins and Loïc Wacquant, *Theory, Culture & Society* 16 (1999): 45–46).

the most passionate pleas for global history rely on works published in one single language – English – should be a cause for concern...”<sup>28</sup>

In fact, the current situation of French historiography seems completely paradoxical. Some of its leading figures have established its fame with master works that crossed borders with ease: Braudel's Mediterranean, Chaunu's Atlantic, or Vilar's Catalonia, among others, come to mind.

In 1969, Pierre Chaunu called for “an history of how civilizations and cultures opened up to the world and encountered one another.” He argued that “we must break with States,” at a time when Braudel advocated the study of “the overlaps between civilizations” that had occurred, for instance, in the Iberian Peninsula or in the Balkans.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, however, reports from the CNRS (The National Center for Scientific Research) lamented the exclusively French focus of French historical studies, estimating that 75 percent of our research was on French history.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the statistical analysis of the directories published by the Institute of Modern and Contemporary History (IHMC-CNRS) for early modern and modern history in 1982 and 1991 reveals that, in both years, 55 percent of French historians worked on French history.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in 1995, Christophe Charle reached the conclusion that “the comparative history that Marc Bloch advocated, the history without borders that Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel exemplified and the committees of the CNRS called for, that history has remained an unfulfilled wish.”<sup>32</sup>

At the time of writing, such a statistical analysis is not available for 2000, but a quick sampling is suggestive enough. The directory lists about 2,000 researchers (compared to 1,235 in 1991), but for some geographical areas of study, the index recorded no additional names, while the overall number had increased by 62 percent.

28. Roger Chartier, “La Conscience de la globalité,” *Annales. HSS*, 56 (2001): 120.

29. Serge Gruzinski offers a useful reminder in “Les Mondes mêlés de la Monarchie catholique et autres ‘connected histories,’” *Annales. HSS* 56 (2001): 88–89.

30. CNRS, *Rapport national de conjoncture*, Paris, 1960, quoted in Christophe Charle, “Être historien en France: une nouvelle profession?” in *L'Histoire et le métier d'historien en France, 1945–1995*, ed. François Bédarida (Paris: Éditions de la MSH, 1995), 27. This Gallocentric theme also appears in the CNRS reports of 1963 and 1969.

31. *Les Historiens français de la période moderne et contemporaine: annuaire 1982 et 1991* (Paris: IHMC-Éditions du CNRS, 1982 and 1991). Those directories list all the historians currently active, without any distinction between institutions (that is, including universities, *grands établissements*, teachers-researchers at the secondary level, and so on), but on the basis of voluntary declaration (with a reply rate of about 60% on average). They list 1,267 names in 1982 and 1,235 in 1991. See Christophe Charle, “Les Historiens français de la période moderne et contemporaine. Essai d'autoportrait,” *Lettre d'Information de l'Institut d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 19 (1982): 8–18.

32. Charle, “Être historien,” 28. On this legacy, see Lutz Raphaël, “The Idea and Practice of World Historiography in France: The *Annales* Legacy,” in *Writing World History, 1800–2000*, ed. Benedikt Stuchtey and Eckhardt Fuchs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, and London: German Historical Institute, 2003), 155–71.

**NUMBER OF RESEARCHERS BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA STUDIED IN 1991 AND 2000<sup>33</sup>**

Year:	1991	2000
Total active:	1235	2090
Active researchers indexed by country:		
United States	76	77
Russia and Slavic nations	53	29
Scandinavia	19	10
China	13	19
Japan	14	15
Pacific/Oceania	8	5

The current situation is due in part to this legacy and to a number of institutional constraints that shaped the training of previous generations of scholars: when the academic job market was particularly weak and most doctoral graduates had to teach in middle and high schools, when funding was scarce (after the massive hiring of the early 70s but before the new research grants created in the mid-80s), everything seemed to encourage scholars to focus on French history. Today, few French scholars who study other countries have achieved the rank of Professor, and, at the universities, thesis advisors often do not seem very interested in having students study other countries because of their own lack of direct knowledge of foreign archives. Research work on distant cultural areas or that requiring a particular linguistic fluency, only seems to thrive at specific and highly specialized institutes (CNRS, EHESS [*École des hautes études en sciences sociales*], Inalco, EPHE [*École pratique des hautes études*], and so on). In return, the existence of those institutes seems to justify the university's lack of interest in "distant" or "specialized" topics. In many other countries, universities actually welcome specialists working on foreign countries, and do not reward the study of national history in any particular way – and for those who do, the imbalance between foreign and national history is far less glaring than in France.

This is not the whole story, however. Indeed, the context has now changed and new generations of researchers are today more sensitive to the internationalization of research. They are more inclined to work on foreign countries or to bring in cross-cultural perspectives, *histoire croisée* ("crossed" history), and transnational approaches and put them at the core of their questioning. Those scholars now seem to be hitting a glass ceiling of sorts and are struggling to obtain full institutional recognition. Their areas and objects of study are often deemed legitimate or important, but little is done to address the specific

33. Daniel Roche (ed.), *Répertoire des historiens français de la période moderne et contemporaine. Annuaire 2000* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2000). Unfortunately, the structure of the geographical index (split between regions) does not allow one to calculate the ratio of historians working on France history. This inquiry should be taken further on the basis of the database itself.

problems that their fieldwork entails and the material or temporal difficulty they face to access archives.

When, for instance, a particular union of teacher-researchers insists, in its platform for the 2007 CNU (*Conseil National des Universités*) election, that it should be one of the criteria to grant sabbaticals, and made it a talking point of its campaign, it is probably because the idea is far from obvious or that it tends to remain a wish rather than an actual practice.

Should we blame the parochialism of the French University, the fundamental conservatism of an institution which, compared to its counterparts in other countries, is reluctant to open to the world? The rigidity of the compartmentalization between disciplines, and the corporatist defense of the fenced-in domain of each subfield or historical period, which is still very fierce (and perhaps further strengthened today at the prospect of cuts in the number of positions), certainly encourages everyone to dig in their heels. This attitude, although understandable, intensifies the movement of retreat. Is there any room left for themes or questions that cross those many boundaries? By definition, practicing global history or adopting a connected approach entails running across chronological and institutional divides shaped by Eurocentrism. How do we pigeonhole a researcher who works on historical comparisons of the industrial revolution in Europe and China, so that we can give him or her an academic position?

The proliferation of scattered historical objects certainly plays a part in this purely Gallic form of excessive focus. Rhetorical pledges to micro-history often function as a convenient alibi to obfuscate a plain and simple perpetuation of a traditional type of studies that owes nothing to Italian *microstoria* except its restriction to a local context.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, we should examine another element that we shall call “the national obsession,” perceptible in many French cultural milieu, and manifested by either a form of confidence or the voicing of laments which, for being critical, are no less obsessional. This national influence reaches back to the genesis of the historical discipline and the elaboration of a national narrative in France.<sup>35</sup> We can also wonder whether the proliferation of research on “French exceptions,”

34. Such a collateral effect (that convey both an atomization of social history and an interpretive renunciation) had in fact already been clearly pointed out (at the end of the 1980s), and had led to a call (in various places and milieu attached to all the aspects of social history) for a collective brainstorming to avoid and go beyond it by adopting new approaches in which the question of scales was to become key. For instance, see Daniel Roche, “Les Historiens aujourd’hui. Remarques pour un débat,” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’Histoire* 12 (1986): 3–20; Christophe Charle (ed.), *Histoire sociale, histoire globale? Actes du colloque des 27–28 janvier 1989* (Paris: Éditions de la MSH, 1993); or “Histoire et sciences sociales: un tournant critique?” *Annales ESC* 43 (1988): 291–93. In hindsight, Serge Gruzinski is inclined to think that “the interest in microhistory has trained our eyes to observe what is nearby so well that some researchers have ended up neglecting what is far off” (“Les Mondes mêlés,” 88). We will return to this question momentarily.

35. Pim Den Boer, *History as a Profession: The Study of History in France, 1818–1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). Also see Steven Englund’s critique of the *Lieux de mémoires* endeavor: “Note critique. De l’usage de la Nation par les historiens, et réciproquement” and “L’Histoire des âges récents. Les France de P. Nora,” *Politix. Travaux de Science Politique* 26 (1994): 141–58 and

on the specificity of the French “republican model” (whether in the form of deconstructions of its myths or denunciations of its dark contradictions),<sup>36</sup> as useful as they are, further legitimize a form of Gallocentrism and encourage a lack of interest in the rest of the world. Should public debate in the media, as profoundly shaped as it is by those national perspectives on history, set the priorities of the scientific agenda? These questions should at least be discussed at a time when, on top of it all, the “big” French publishers in the social sciences offer fewer and fewer translations of foreign works and are reluctant (one wonders what kind of job their editorial advisors are doing) to publish works on the history of foreign countries, whether comparative or general, allegedly because “it does not interest readers”. This Gallocentric narrowing is indeed a general problem. There are, however, resources and energies (it suffices to look at the remarkable work of the “small” publishers or of certain research teams) that can help us embrace greater and broader horizons.

### MULTIPLE STAKES

“Global history,” “connected history,” “comparative history,” “*histoire croisée*,” and “transnational history:” the constant back and forth between these rather diverse approaches and analytical categories is an indication of the instability of the historiographical moment we are trying to assess, at a time when it is still unfolding.

We should probably heed Christopher Bayly’s recent call not to exaggerate the significance of historiographical shifts,<sup>37</sup> especially because the questions that underlie those changes have been discussed for almost two decades—including in France—using other concepts and different labels.<sup>38</sup> We should not exaggerate either the overall coherence of the studies grouped under the label or the banner of global history in its massive Anglo-American version. Nor should we overestimate the results of those studies. Many seem to be mere patchworks of ill-assorted case studies, stretched over a *longue durée*, that do encompass all continents, but without much consistency.<sup>39</sup> The rejection of any

159–68; or the unveiling offered by Jean-Frédéric Schaub in *La France espagnole. Les Racines hispaniques de l’absolutisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 2003).

36. On the effects of anachronism, ideological projection, and heuristic blockage that those reconstructed formulas of a “republican model” as an abstract and active entity can have; for instance, on the global understanding of colonialism in historical complexity, and not just in its French guise, see the analyses of Frederick Cooper and Emmanuelle Saada in “Lectures autour de F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History*,” *Politique Africaine* 105 (2007): 241–57.

37. Interview of C. A. Bayly entitled “I Am Not Going to Call Myself a Global Historian,” *Itinerario* 31 (2007): 7–14. Accused of practicing a traditional kind of colonial history, he replies that “post-colonialism is more a ‘brand name’ than a new way of doing history or the social sciences.”

38. See in particular the works mentioned below in note 48.

39. See, for example, recent works such as Philip D. Curtin, *The World and the West: the European Challenge and the Overseas Response in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Patrick Manning (ed.), *World History: Global and Local Interactions* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006).

form of ethnocentrism prevents the adoption of a single point of view, which, alone, could unify those studies into a coherent whole. Conversely, other studies are very sensitive to the different geographies and temporalities of the various regions of the world, but end up proposing historical macro-reconstitutions that are akin to an alternate “grand narrative” whose sole benefit is to enlarge the focus to include perspectives other than that of the remarkable achievements of the West. Thus, while retaining an all-encompassing approach, Anthony Hopkins<sup>40</sup> insists that, despite the unequal distribution of power on a global scale, the “rest of the world” played an active role in the “joint” production of history.<sup>41</sup> This point has led to a questioning of the notions of “center” and “periphery,” fueling animated discussions of the theory of “world systems” that Immanuel Wallerstein elaborated following Fernand Braudel.<sup>42</sup> Hopkins also intends to avoid Rostow’s stages of growth.

The result is a general typology that distinguishes, from the Middle Ages on, four historical forms of globalization (“archaic” globalization; “proto-globalization;” “modern” globalization, that is, taking place after 1800; and finally “post-colonial” globalization), which, in the end, somewhat resemble the stages of Rostow’s scheme.<sup>43</sup> One can sense here the temptation of a new universal history of sorts that would mobilize broad interpretive frameworks, such as the ones Charles Tilly or Theda Skocpol use in their political sociology.<sup>44</sup> It is also easy to understand why Frederick Cooper has faulted some global history studies for reintroducing an implicit teleological bias.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, the same kind of all-encompassing approach, with a strong penchant for generalization, is found among most historians of the economy who, like Hopkins, seek to elaborate a rather general frame of reference. The fact that most economic historians in the Anglophone world are closer to economists than to historians, and their focus is on the period after 1800 rather than before, have a significant impact on their line of questioning and their relation to archival documents: they seek to compile series of data and evaluate trade flows and geostrategic balances of power, often within a macro-evolutionist

40. An English historian specializing in the history of the British Empire, but who relocated from Cambridge to Austin, Texas.

41. Hopkins, *Globalisation in World History*, 3.

42. In addition to the perspectives presented in the essays below by S. Subrahmanyam and R. Bertrand, one can refer to the questioning of I. Wallerstein’s periodization offered by Janet Abu-Lughod in *Before European Hegemony: The World System A. D. 1250–1350* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989) and in her contribution to Andre Gunder Frank and Barry K. Gillis, eds., *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* (London: Routledge, 1993).

43. Written by Christopher A. Bayly, Chapter 3 has been in part translated into French: C. A. Bayly, “La mondialisation avant la mondialisation”, *Sciences Humaines* 185 (2007): 50–55.

44. The same issue regarding a questionable degree of generalization arises for some works on the global history of labor. For the contributions and limitations of those works, see Marcel Van Der Linden, “The ‘Globalization’ of Labor and Working-Class History and its Consequences,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 65 (2004): 136–56 and Jan Lucassen, ed. *Global Labour History: A State of the Art* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2006).

45. Cooper, “Concept of Globalization,” 189–213; and Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*.

perspective that seeks to isolate a limited number of measurable factors that can validate such-and-such an hypothesis. Researchers in the field, who are aware, as Giorgio Riello points out in his essay, that the necessary documentary evidence cannot be collected directly by an individual scholar, engage in collaboration and work together to link the results of their individual inquiries.

These historians of cultures and civilizations reason more in terms of immaterial contacts and circulation: they analyze acculturation, cultural transfers, and hybridization within a non-quantitative perspective, which, while looking for connections and articulations, seeks to be especially attentive to contexts. To do so, scholars work directly on traces and sources in order to elucidate actual practices.

This approach is global because it shuns the divisions delineated by state borders to focus instead on connections, movements, transfers, influences, relations, and even continuities that have long been ignored or minimized. Sanjay Subrahmanyam calls this approach “connected history,” in which the historian acts as an electrician of sorts, repairing the continental and intercontinental connections that national historiographies have obfuscated by seeking to render their borders impervious.<sup>46</sup> The goal is not to synthesize or aggregate a collection of national histories still compartmentalized within traditional political borders. On the contrary, the goal is to re-establish those “connected histories” in order to question what specialists in such-and-such a country consider as the “‘established facts’ of their respective historiographies.”<sup>47</sup> Nor is this a new kind of comparative history on a global scale that aims to provide a morphological catalog of similarities and differences, thus running the risk of extracting objects from the contextual systems that frame them and give them meaning.<sup>48</sup>

46. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” in *Beyond Binary Histories: Re-imagining Eurasia to c.1830*, ed. Victor Lieberman (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 289–316; Gruzinski, “Mondes mêlés,” 87.

47. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Du Tage au Gange au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: une conjoncture millénaire à l’échelle eurasiatique,” *Annales. HSS* 56 (2001): 83.

48. See the observations of Roger Chartier concerning the difficulties of comparative history that stem from the tension between, on the one hand, the morphological approach that establishes the relations between various forms (esthetic, ritualistic, ideological, etc.)—without any evidence of cultural contact—and that can lead to identifying decontextualized invariants, and, on the other hand, the historical approach that identifies circulations, borrowings, hybridizations (“Conscience,” 121–22). It is also as part of this attempt to overcome the limits of comparative history that various notions have been proposed and put to use, notably that of cultural transfers (see, among others, Michel Espagne and Michael Werner (eds.), “Transferts culturels franco-allemands,” *Revue de Synthèse* CIX (2) (1988): 187–287; Michel Espagne, “Sur les limites du comparatisme en histoire culturelle,” *Genèses* 17 (1994): 112–21), or that of *histoire croisée* (M. Werner and B. Zimmerman, “Penser l’histoire croisée: entre empirie et réflexivité,” *Annales HSS* 58 (2003): 7–36 and “De la Comparaison à l’histoire croisée,” *Le Genre Humain* 42 (2004): 7–240. For the many debates on the perspectives and limitations of the comparative approach, see also Hartmut Atsma and André Burguière (eds.), *Marc Bloch aujourd’hui. Histoire comparée et sciences sociales* (Paris: Éditions de l’EHESS, 1990); Pierre Bourdieu, Christophe Charle, H. Kaelble and J. Kocka, “Dialogue sur l’histoire comparée,” *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 106 (1995): 102–4, and the many debates surrounding Marcel Détienne’s book, *Comparer l’incomparable* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

Connected history has a different goal: to tear down the compartmentalization between national histories and “cultural areas” in order to shed light on modes of interaction “between the local and regional level on the one hand (what we could call the micro) and a supra-regional level that can sometimes be global on the other hand (what we could call the macro).”<sup>49</sup> According to Subrahmanyam, the alternative to the “grand narrative of modernization” is not to be found in an atomization of our objects of study, as the postmodernists would have it, but in the study of multifaceted interactions, beyond the political partitions (national or imperial) and on various scales.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the approach does not consist of simply adopting a different scale, but in stepping aside to get to a different vantage point, “by moving laterally” in order to identify connections that had been hitherto hidden or unseen.<sup>51</sup>

Connected history resorts to the same decentering techniques that are the strengths of comparative history and *histoire croisée*, two approaches that are careful to always contextualize actors, objects, and practices that are actually comparable.

The “globality” or interconnection examined here has both spatial and temporal dimensions, and strives to situate not only the various ways in which spaces are connected to one another, but also the ways in which different temporalities intersect, each following its own rhythm. Of course, all of this requires operating at the level of individuals, of actors and their strategies, as do some sociologists and political scientists who seek to dissect institutional arrangements, within a constructionist perspective, in order to shed light on the networking that underlies them.

There are two main consequences to all of this. First, in those conditions, the concept of acculturation or hybridization naturally plays a key role. In his contribution, Sanjay Subrahmanyam challenges rhetorical uses of the notion of otherness that exaggerate cultural differences in order to argue more forcefully that cultures are allegedly impervious to hybridization and cannot be fully comprehended by or compared to one another. The second consequence is that connected history necessarily relies on the changes of scales and effects of discrepancies that help reveal what would otherwise be overlooked or invisible. Hence, *microstoria* and connected history are hardly incompatible. On

49. Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories,” 299. We leave aside the discussion on the contributions and limitations of the notion of “cultural area” that Denys Lombard conceives not as a closing but as inherently linked to the comparative approach (“De la vertu des aires culturelles,” in *Une École pour les sciences sociales*, ed. Jacques Revel and Nathan Wachtel (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 121); see also Sebastian Conrad, “Vergleich, transfer, transnationale geschichte? Zur methode der *area studies*,” *Doitsu Kenkyū* 39 (2005): 3–25.

50. On those aspects, see the essays by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Romain Bertrand, and Karen Barkey below.

51. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11. A comparable approach is deployed in Jocelyne Dakhli, “La Question des lieux communs. Des Modèles de souveraineté dans l’islam méditerranéen,” in *Les Formes de l’expérience. Une Autre histoire sociale*, ed. Bernard Lepetit (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), 39–62.

the contrary, they both seek to tear down barriers by bringing together social, economic, cultural, and political aspects; they both aim to render the substance of social interplay and the global nature of the exchanges at its core. In other words, this global history that seeks to identify connections, interactions, or junctions and operates on different scales, is indeed a “total” but also a “situated” history. It differs from total history or from the “syntheses” of our predecessors in that it constructs its questions from a situated vantage point, which is obviously not a universalizing point of view. Thus, connected history does not claim to offer a reformulation of a grand and all-encompassing explanatory narrative. We should not let ourselves be misled by words: global does not mean totalizing.

The contributions collected here do not offer a ready-made research agenda, but a call to fully open our windows, to see and think broadly. The implementation of the suggestions presented here will certainly give way to debates and adjustments. Of course we should be wary of mere fads, and focus instead on evaluating both the heuristic potential and the limitation of an approach. Thus, responding to a certain fetishization of the “circulation” paradigm, Jean-Paul Zuniga rightly stresses how necessary it is to account for the social horizon of the circulations we study by paying attention to the modes of appropriation, negotiation, adaptation, and so on; the horizons of reception; and the social contexts that both enable and shape those circulations.<sup>52</sup>

We will let the reader be the judge. At this point, however, it already seems a positive sign for the future of this discussion that those works of global history have already led to a new division of scientific labor: whether historians, sociologists, or political scientists, the contributors to the roundtable do not hesitate to disturb disciplinary boundaries and to practice social sciences “globally.”

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52. This is also the direction taken by the editorial board of the *Annales*, which openly distances itself from some of the contributions published in its 2001 collection of essays on global history (*Annales HSS* 56 (2001): 4).

**Abstract**

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**Global History, Connected Histories: A Shift of Historiographical Scale?**

The success of “globalization” has lately given a new topicality in France to problems concerning “The World” and “Global History”. However, this is less a question of explaining globalization’s long historical process than of enlarging the focus, especially in order to go beyond national compartmentalization. The situation of French historiography is paradoxical since the broad standpoints proposed by F. Braudel or the comparatism extolled by M. Bloch and L. Febvre were, for many reasons, disregarded between 1970 and 2000. These reasons, which we analyze in this paper, are at the same time institutional and political in nature. We shall emphasize the new fruitfulness of transnational approaches, of “entangled” or “connected” history, which highlight, among other things, the phenomenon of situated and properly contextualized circulation.

**KEYWORDS:** historiography, twentieth century, comparatism, transnational history, global history, scale, circulation ■