Production, Destruction, and Connection, 1750 to the Present. Part I: Structures, Spaces, and Boundary Making. On CWH volume VII,1

Matthias Middell

The Cambridge World History (CWH) vol. VII. 1, edited by John R. McNeill from Georgetown University and Kenneth Pomeranz from the University of Chicago, is the first of two volumes covering the period since the mid-18th century and is divided into four parts. The first part, "Material matrices", includes six chapters focusing on the material basis, not to say economic, of modern development, followed by the second part, "Population and disease", with four chapters. The third part, "Politics", focuses on many topics, dealt with in a single chapter each: international law, nationalism, imperialism, reactions to European expansion, colonization and its legacy, the history of genocides, and the history of communism and fascism. Finally, the last part, "World regions", sketches in six chapters the development in different regions of the world, beginning with the Middle East, reaching the United States via East Asia, Latin America, and Africa, to end with the Pacific. Each of the 23 chapters is written by highly respected specialists in the relevant subject matter and provide reliable interpretations of their respective topics, although space is extremely limited, as usually no more than 30 printed pages are available to summarize the essential events and structures that have shaped the world for more than 250 years. The editors very openly decline any illusion about the possibility to lead all the authors to one perspective and coherent interpretation while accepting that they remain guided by their individual theoretical points of view. McNeill and Pomeranz recognize the advantage of allowing experienced authors to use their own handwriting, so to say, and understand their editorial job as cooks who depend to a great extent on what fresh food is available on the market (p. 1).

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The introduction starts with justifying, above all, the caesura of 1750 and suggests a certain unity of the epoch since then while not excluding alternative possibilities of periodization. This decision, which probably was not made by the editors of the two volumes but by the editor of the whole series, is not as undisputed as it may appear. The issue has been discussed widely amongst world and global historians over the past two decades. The central questions are if there is a point in what one has previously called "modern history" when global connections take on a new quality and does the period since constitute a sort of time frame that one can call the immediate past of our present times. There are many answers in the literature, and they differ depending on both the historical period and the societal dimension authors have specialized in.

A striking example is the debate about "when did globalization start?" between Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, on the one hand – arguing in favour of a caesura in the late sixteenth century when silver became the basis for an interdependent world economy ranging from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Indian Ocean[1] – and Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson, on the other hand – demonstrating that price convergence across port cities did not happen before the 1820s.[2] Despite such views, as the editors of CWH vol. VII.1 laconically remark, it is rather a question of how globalization is defined than a fundamental dispute about facts that has stimulated this discussion. However, the debate goes deeper than simply setting the criteria for what we can call economic globalization, being the emergence of a sort of world currency versus the slow integrative process of global markets.

Christopher Bayly suggested to distinguish between an archaic and a modern globalization[3] and summarized what others had already insisted on with regard to the new quality of the global condition.[4] The central idea is that global connections have already been observed for a very long time, but a situation where these connections determine in essence the path a society takes is a relatively new one. Where exactly the point of no return

1 D. O. Flynn, Silver and Ottoman monetary history in global perspective, in: The Journal of European Economic History 31 (2002), pp. 9–43; D. O. Flynn / A. Giráldez, Conceptualizing global economic history: the role of silver, in: R. Gömmel / M. A. Denzel (eds.), Weltwirtschaft und Wirtschaftsordnung. Festschrift für Jürgen Schneider zum 65. Geburtstag, Stuttgart 2002, pp. 101–113; D. O. Flynn / A. Giráldez, Cycles of silver. Globalization as historical process, in: World Economics. A Journal of Current Economic Analysis and Policy 3 (2002) 2, pp. 1–16; D. O. Flynn / A. Giráldez, Path dependence, time lags, and the birth of globalization. A critique of O'Rourke and Williamson, in: European Review of Economic History 8 (2004) 1, pp. 81–108; D. O. Flynn / A. Giráldez / R. von Glahn (eds.), Global Connections and Monetary History, 1470–1800, Farnham 2003; D. O. Flynn / A. Giráldez, Born Again: Globalization's sixteenth century origins (Asian/Global versus European Dynamics), in: Pacific Economic Review 13 (2008) 3, pp. 359–387.

2 K. O'Rourke / J. G. Williamson, After Columbus. Explaining Europe's overseas trade boom, 1500–1800, in: Journal of Economic History 62 (2002) 2, pp. 417–458; K. H. O'Rourke / J. G. Williamson, When did globalisation begin?, in: European Review of Economic History 6 (2002), pp. 23–50; K. H. O'Rourke (ed.), The International Trading System, Globalization and History, vol. 2, Cheltenham 2005.

3 Ch. A. Bayly, "'Archaic' and 'Modern' Globalization in the Eurasian and African Arena, c. 1750–1850, in: A. G. Hopkins (ed.), Globalization in World History, New York 2002, pp. 47–73.

4 M. Geyer / Ch. Bright, For a Unified History of the World in the Twentieth Century, in: Radical History Review 39 (1987), pp. 69–91; M. Geyer / Ch. Bright, World History in a Global Age, in: The American Historical Review 100 (1995) 4, pp. 1034–1060.

towards such a global condition can be located on a timeline remains a matter of dispute. Historians of early modern times, on the one hand, collect evidence that the slave trade, long-distance merchants with their importing of luxury goods, missionaries, the circulation of ideas within the large gunpowder empires, as well as many other global connections of the centuries before 1800 are not that different from the ones emerging during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They are supported by political scientists who, for example, tell the story of a Westphalian system and the emerging problems of sovereignty within such a system.[5] Historians of the twentieth century, on the other hand, write their histories of the most recent past as if there is no connection to the eighteenth century whichis now more openly disputed as the origin of modernity.[6]

McNeill and Pomeranz do refer to these debates, but only in passing, and do not pretend that they have the key to the epoch's central characteristics. One has to read between the lines to decipher their interpretation, which is much more political than those provided by economic historians – hinting more at the complex puzzle that political scientists call too easily the world order. There are too many tendencies and dimensions that must be considered to speak only of one order, even when considering the fact that England and France fought bitterly for dominance in the various theatres of world affairs.

The editors and authors of the introduction to CWH vol. VII.1 point out that the epoch they present began with a world war that fundamentally changed the global order. With France's withdrawal from North America, a new balance of power emerged, and in a certain way the same was true for South Asia after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, which also led to France's withdrawal. Following the success story of the East India Company, which became a role model for other such enterprises (although very different in their relationship to statehood and free trade), European powers increasingly gained influence in the region. The editors also see the origin of the Atlantic revolutions in this world war, as the European powers faced enormous financial burdens. Even France staggered, facing a national bankruptcy, without which the unrest of 1789 and the transition from absolute to constitutional monarchy could not be explained.[7] Although the defeat of the Mongols by Qing China and the fact that China was given more or less its present territorial form, similar to the simultaneous Russian expansion and boundary setting to the east, is not directly or even causally related to the events in the Atlantic, it does indicate

5 About the much more complicated development of territory as a category necessarily related to this kind of understanding of sovereignty, see S. Elden, The Birth of Territory, Chicago 2013. As a critique to the mystification of the peace treaty of Westphalia amongst political scientists: A. Osiander, Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth, in: International Organization 55 (2001) 2, pp. 251–287; for a more recent opening in the discipline of international studies towards the interest amongst global historians for the nineteenth century, see B. Buzan/G. Lawson, The Global Transformation: The Nineteenth Century and the Making of Modern International Relations, in: International Studies Quarterly 57 (2013) 3, pp. 620–634.

6 A. Pečar/D. Tricoire, Falsche Freunde. War die Aufklärung wirklich die Geburtsstunde der Moderne?, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2015.

7 The argument has first been brought to the fore by Bailey Stone, The genesis of the French revolution. A global historical interpretation, Cambridge 1994 and later on further elaborated by L. Hunt, The Global Financial Origins of 1789, in: S. Desan/L. Hunt/W. M. Nelson (eds), The French Revolution in Global Perspective, Ithaca 2013.

that the parallelism of similar trends became more and more condensed over time, thus becoming an epochal signature.[8]

This signature, as stated by the editors of CWH vol. VII.1, most importantly contains the expansion of settler societies to the detriment of nomadic forms of life. McNeill and Pomeranz have thus found an original point of departure for the presentation of colonialism and imperialism and follow the theme across continents, pointing out how the settler colonies enforced a certain understanding of property and gained superiority over the decentralized tribal forms of organization through the centralization of state power, albeit slowly, as is evidenced by the persistence of the conflict well into the nineteenth century (for example, the eventually lost struggle of the Comanches and Sioux). Countertrends are necessarily part of this process description – especially in South Asia and the Middle East, where the "tribal breakout", described by Christopher Bayly,[9] slowed down the development of centralized states and allowed the British colonial power to expand its position, with relatively few resources, through alliances with nomads.

One would have liked to read an overall presentation that follows this proposed red thread of the volume, which is explained in a prominent place at the beginning of the volume. However, the genre introduction demands a fair reflection on all the other approaches chosen by the authors of the individual chapters. Accordingly, we will have to wait for further elaboration of this interesting way of reading the long nineteenth century's history.

The topic of demography and the history of industrialization lead the editors of the volume to question their chosen starting point of 1750, because until about 1850 there was hardly any significant increase in life expectancy, with population growth only occurring where birth rates were on the rise. So while the first 100 years of the period under consideration still belong to a pattern that can be described as pre-modern, a new pattern developed thereafter, leading to a dramatic increase in the world population based on the general industrial growth (from about 1820) and the increase in energy consumption (by a factor of 50 to 100), which started especially in the late nineteenth century.[10] Agriculture, in turn, was only affected by massive capitalization during the period 1850–1920, as described in the respective chapter by Giovanni Federico.[11] Much of what McNeill and Pomeranz compile from the current state of research, on which the following chapters build their arguments, is more in line with the a long nineteenth century as a great period of transformation.

8 The now most popular account of this global outreach of what had been previously addressed as Atlantic revolution is D. Armitage / S. Subrahmanyam (eds), The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840, Basingstoke / New York 2010, but there is a whole historiography feeding this attempt to overcome the limitations of a purely Atlantic perspective.

9 Ch. A. Bayly, Imperial Meridian. The British Empire and the World 1780–1830, London 1983, pp. 33–54.

10 See the chapters by V. Smil on energy, CWH VII.1, pp. 164–186, and by M. Livi-Bacci on demography, CWH VII.1, pp. 187–211.

11 CWH VII.1, pp. 83–105.

Here, the editors follow the central narrative of the transport and communications revolution that took place in the first half of the nineteenth century and lowered costs in such a way that, at the same time, the capacity for transregional trade grew to such a degree that an effective division of labour between different locations and production regions distributed around the globe became possible for the first time. Until then, long-distance trade had been driven by the demand for goods that were either not found (like gold and silver) or did not grow (like opium) in the region of demand itself. Most of the trade happened within what Fernand Braudel called an "économie-monde", which is perhaps best translated as large regional economic system.[12]

Roughly at the end of the second third of the nineteenth century, such an economic system was beginning to pay off, leading to specialization of certain products or services for which above-average productivity and a corresponding cost advantage were possible. Economically speaking, globalization as we know it today only began at this point in time, even though there had been, undeniably, exchanges of goods and credit-based trade over great distances, as well as migration, cultural exchange, and other forms of mobility, long before. When departing from this idea, one could thus read three different stages of modern world history into the short sequence of keywords – production, destruction, and connection – used in the title of the volume.

First, from the mid-eighteenth century to the first third of the nineteenth century – in which the Anglo-French competition upset an entire international order and this fundamental political-military destabilization gave rise to a new (presumably irreversible) balance of power between sedentary states and settler colonies, on the one hand, and nomadic groups, on the other – new horizons of expectation, initially regionally effective, emerged and condensed into globally effective ideologies. And this was essentially still based on the socioeconomic foundations and demographic patterns that had determined the world until then. Then a period of transformation began, which took place during a relatively short nineteenth century in core areas but which must weighed against a much longer view of its global expansion, as the more extensive monographs by Christopher Bayly[13] and Jürgen Osterhammel[14] have shown in detail. And this was followed by a period in the late nineteenth century that marks the definitive transition towards a world in which no society could any longer withdraw from the increasingly precise division of labour and, as a result, became dependent on the network of exchange relationships between societies.

If one assumes such a three-part transformation, there is no reason to doubt that further transformations within the framework of the global condition have happened and will happen in the future and that, perhaps, we may currently be confronted with the challenges of another such transition in the history of modern globalization. This would offer an interesting framework for the narrative of the development since the mid-eighteenth

12 F. Braudel, Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XVe–XVIIIe siècle, Paris 1979.
13 Ch. A. Bayly, The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914. Global Connections and Comparisons, Malden 2004.
14 J. Osterhammel, Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts, München 2009.

century. Again, the editors offer an attractive appetizer in the introduction to the two volumes, instead insisting immediately afterwards that the subsequent chapters will not be squeezed into such a straightjacket and therefore allow different general narrative patterns to be tested.

As already said, with an average length of 25 pages, the texts offer their authors extremely limited space for presenting developments spanning almost three centuries and the entire world. One can only praise the authors for how they deal with these constraints and make a reliable selection, focusing on fundamental contexts while remaining vivid and convincing with examples instead of getting lost in abstract discussions. At the same time, this style promotes a pragmatic positivism. The authors select from the historiographies they are most familiar with and present this state of research without much debate about perspectives on and alternatives to what is currently known. Many of the authors benefit from the fact that they have already dealt with comparable topics in general presentations elsewhere, where they sometimes had much more space available.[15] This does not prevent the possibility that alternative historiographies will soon emerge; however, for the time being, what has been presented is considered the state of the art.

One could argue that there is no historiography that, for pragmatic or ideological reasons, does not have its blind spots, but dealing with this is not the concern of this volume or of the entire CWH. The model against which most authors openly write, or against which they were recruited regarding their area expertise, is a now outdated Eurocentrism, being replaced by a narrative of world regional diversity. While this is managed well for volumes of the CWH that focus on the time up until the sixteenth century, this becomes more problematic for the volume discussed here. This is because the volume covers a time of condensed interactions between world regions and, at the same time, it must cover the establishment (albeit more slowly and only temporarily, as one must qualify) of hegemony first by Northwest and Central Europe and later by the USA.[16]

A central argument for beginning this volume in the eighteenth century is the replacement of a (last) stagnation phase of the world population between 1610 and 1680 (possibly, as Geoffrey Parker has pointed out,[17] caused by the climate change of the Little Ice Age) by a century of massive growth (by about 50%), which already signalled the even greater growth rates of the 19th century (about 80%) and the 20th century (225%). The basis of this growth changed from high birth rates to a major improvement in life expectancy and a simultaneous reduction in child mortality. This happened first only in a few countries and after the Second World War throughout the planet. But this disparity and

15 It would be too much to list here all the books written by the authors of this volume over the past years, but the general principle is that they have been selected exactly because they are the most prominent and often also the most prolific authors in the respective field.

16 Amongst the many interventions on the problem of how to conceive history after the deathly criticism of Eurocentrism, see A. Dirlik, Is there History after Eurocentrism? Globalism, Postcolonialism, and the Disavowal of History, in: Cultural Critique 42 (1999), pp. 1–34, and the distinction between different types of being Eurocentric: J. Osterhammel, Die Flughöhe der Adler. Historische Essays zur globalen Gegenwart, München 2017, pp. 101–114.

17 G. Parker, War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century, New Haven, London 2013.

the differentiated geographies can only be explained by a list of different factors, as the chapters on alimentation, on medical care, and on the availability of medicines (determined by scientific progress as well as by corporate interests) indicate,[18] not to mention the more or less successful efforts to limit or stimulate birth rates.

When confronted with such a multifactorial explanation, which is offered in a scattered manner over several chapters, the reader is left somewhat confused. A more editorial intervention in the logics of the individual essays would certainly have done the volume good at this point. The impression thus remains that the plea of the editors for a deeper world-historical caesura around 1750, or at least somewhere in the 18th century, is rather ignored by most authors or even openly and sceptically judged. The majority of the authors are not satisfied with the reference to the first appearance of new trends over the course of the nineteenth century (e.g. the change in the energy basis of human development or the introduction of machines and technologies during industrialization), pointing out again and again that the worldwide implementation of these developments took until far into the twentieth century to be considered "completed". So, one can only wonder whether the mid-eighteenth or the mid-twentieth century might have been the actual global caesura for many of the developments presented in the first part of this volume. The editors freely admit that this is a perfect opportunity to talk past one another, depending on whether one is looking at the first appearance of a phenomenon or its worldwide implementation.

Incidentally, the end of the second third of the twentieth century is also the point in time when the demographic growth spurt is slowing down and the continuing growth of the world's population is more an effect of earlier growth than its linear or even exponential continuation. Meanwhile, serious forecasts show the halting of world population growth before the end of the 21st century. But these insights remain relatively isolated from other topics in the volume, and one may ask how demography, which is given such a prominent place in the opening of CWH vol. VII.1, relates to other dimensions of social and political development and how to formulate such relationship more systematically.

The connection between industrialization and urbanization also seems less evident than conventional wisdom assumes. The megacities of the nineteenth century recorded the greatest growth, not as centres of manufactory production but as true portals of globalization due to their central position in communication and traffic (of goods as well as people). Furthermore, they acted as decision centres on the incipient worldwide flows, in which long historical experiences with global networking were institutionally bundled and culturally expressed.[19] Industrialization found its place in cities with less dynamic growth, which does not change the prominent position of places like Manchester had in the emergence of new industries. Instead, it makes us aware that urbanization was a

18 See in particular the chapters by M. Harrison on diseases, CWH VII.1, pp. 237–257, and by E. Manela on smallpox eradication, CWH VII.1, pp. 258–281.

19 C. Baumann / A. Dietze / M. Maruschke (eds), Portals of Globalization in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, Leipzig 2017.

much more complex process with deeper roots than a simple equation of the urban with the industrial.

Whether the pattern of Western (or Western-influenced) pioneering in the nineteenth century and global succession in the twentieth century is also consistent with the history of urbanization remains to be examined. No doubt the cities of the nineteenth century are role models, for example in the expansion of urban infrastructure, the development of a cultural magnet effect, and as centres of consumption. But are the megacities of the Global South really replicas or rather cities in their own right, even if many of them contain a colonial legacy in their centres?

One can follow this struggle with periodization through almost all chapters of the volume: Giovanni Federico, for example, to whom the sketch about agriculture was assigned, refers to the use of chemical fertilizers and industrially manufactured equipment from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and again to an extraordinarily slow spread from the pioneering locations across the globe. Even the massive increase of land used for agricultural purposes between 1850 and 1920 does not yet speak to an intensification of the production of agricultural products but rather to the expansion of more traditional forms of production, while the decline in the absolute number of farmers is only a phenomenon of the later twentieth century.

The transformation from a world in which most products (apart from a few luxury goods) were produced in the immediate vicinity to a truly global division of labour, which offered corresponding cost advantages because certain products were manufactured in places with the most favourable conditions (but which also caused growing demands on transport, administration, and transaction costs), had not really took off until the late nineteenth century. It was only at this time that functioning world markets emerged, linked by stock exchanges, telegraph systems, steamships, and railroads. There has been a long controversy as to which indicators could be used to measure the establishment of world markets.[20] The alignment of prices over long distances can be used as an indicator for this purpose, but this remains only a statistical approximation. In contrast, the orientation of entire societies towards the delivery of certain products to many different destinations on different continents has become the focus of research that traces individual fibres (such as cotton) or other raw materials (such as copper or rubber) from their origin to their processing into end products. As a result, an economic history emerges that leaves behind the framework of territories (often following the material made available by statistics that are produced by agencies established during the height of territorialization) and moves towards a systematic study of (border-crossing) value chains. At present, however, such an approach still serves more to illustrate global interdependencies than to become the theoretical-methodological foundation of globalization research.[21]

20 G. M. Winder, Conceptualizing the world economy: the world market, in: M. Middell (ed.), The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies, Abingdon/New York 2018, pp. 221–234.

21 It is not that this shift has not been suggested already for quite some time but it turns out to be extremely dif-

Undoubtedly, these processes had consequences for the mobility of goods but also people. The migration regimes adapted to the new requirements and opportunities of a world linked by markets. This also included the slave trade, which continued despite all efforts to abolish slavery (and in quantitative terms reached its peak during the nineteenth century[22]), and on which a highly productive and highly profitable plantation economy was built. For much of the nineteenth century, at any rate, there can be no talk of a rapid and clear transition from coerced to free wage labour, and even after that, numerous hybrid forms of labour relations continue to exist.[23] The remarkable progress that global labour history has made in recent decades is impressively reflected in this volume. One of the most interesting facets of the narratives offered in CWH vols. VII.1 and VII.2 is that these stories of *production*, the first keyword, are integrated with stories of consumption,[24] the emergence of new diets and lifestyles, and the establishment of a new infrastructure for these new cultural patterns. Such stories hint at the possibility that production and consumption histories sometimes follow different rhythms and are judged differently by the respective specialized historiography with regard to global convergences and divergences. These views are left as loose ends for further discussion, which seems to me very promising.

The chapters on the Atlantic revolutions, presented as a history of intertwined political emancipation processes, and on the emergence of globally effective ideologies, which can also draw on a rich output by recent research on interdependencies beyond the Atlantic region, contribute to the impression of a narrative of progress in CWH vol. VII.1. Nonetheless, these chapters sparingly make any comparison with other world regions and therefore do not further shake up the idea of the Atlantic as the epicentre of political renewal, while in other parts of this world history the attention to simultaneous or functionally equivalent developments in East Asia, for example, is significantly greater.

However, the editors are not content with tracing the slow emergence of the global condition in its materiality and cultural representations as a more or less linear process, rather devoting themselves, under the second keyword, *destruction*, and in a (albeit less extensive) part of their introduction, to the destructive tendencies of the period under discussion. The focus is on two epochs of (world) wars, namely the one between 1756 and 1815 and the one between 1914 and 1945. While a decline in the number of victims (amongst military and civilians) compared to the seventeenth century is recorded for the first period, the number of victims in the second period of the world wars skyrocketed, with 60 million dead during the Second World War alone. For the period between 1815

ficult either because the operationalization remains laborious or because thinking in terms of territories remains so attractive: T. K. Hopkins/I. Wallerstein, Commodity Chains in the World Economy Prior to 1800, in: Review 10 (1984) 1, pp. 157–170.

22 M. Zeuske, Out of the Americas. Slave traders and the Hidden Atlantic in the nineteenth century, in: Atlantic Studies 15 (2017) 1, pp. 103–135; id., Handbuch Geschichte der Sklaverei. Eine Globalgeschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Berlin/Boston 2019.

23 M. van der Linden, Workers of the World. Essays Toward a Global Labor History, Leiden/ Boston 2008.

24 F. Trentmann (ed.), The Oxford Handbook on the History of Consumption, Oxford 2012.

and 1914, a long period of peace can be recorded for Europe, but in other parts of the world the number of victims is remarkable – as a result of the enormous sacrifice of internal conflicts in China in the mid-nineteenth century and as a consequence of the genocidal wars against indigenous and above all nomadic populations over larger parts of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries, which were waged by colonial masters, settlers, and nation-builders. The destructive effect of industrialization on the ecological balance of humankind is mentioned only marginally in the introduction but is the subject of an impressive chapter by John McNeill directly following this introduction.[25] Not only the enormous increase in CO_2 emissions but also the radical reduction in biodiversity have become characteristics of a world history that, as the history of the Anthropocene, faces the challenge of a reconceptualization and renarration. The CWH as a whole, and this volume in particular, is distinguished by the fact that it already hints at this challenge, but the rather parallel presentation of related reinterpretations also illustrates how long the road to a world history that breaks away from old narrative patterns still lies ahead.

The third keyword of the introduction is *connection*, which makes the editors ask about convergences and connecting trends. They begin the corresponding reflections with references to the enforcement and expansion of large religious communities, which since the late nineteenth century have also been conceived of as world religions by a (secular) religious science observing them. From the tension between religion and secularity, the arc easily spans to include imagined communities, which, as nations, have demonstrated an astonishing assertiveness that even socialism and communism have failed to overcome.

The editors and Aviel Roshwald, to whom the chapter on nations and nation-states was entrusted, highlight the enormous dynamic inherent in this construction, which made it possible to transform a world of empires into a world of nation-states – even where the conditions for such a transformation were anything but optimal because no plausible basis for the idea of a homogeneous community with a common history and language could be found. Notwithstanding, the separation of the chapters "on nationalism" and "assessing imperialism" (Danielle Kinsley) does not make it easy to recognize that the most successful states of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were by no means pure nation-states. Rather, they made use of a long tradition of imperial techniques of domination and, with their imperialism, continued the marginalization and oppression of other communities – interestingly, not only outwardly but certainly also internally through colonization within the de jure national territory.

Beside religion and nationalism, the editors present consumerism as a further clamp that provides cohesion in the world because a world of world markets had to open, out of necessity, to an increasing number of new groups of buyers through mass marketing. While each of the three cultural reference systems initially means differentiation – from other

25 CWH VII.1, pp. 51–82.

belief systems, members of other nations, and other fashion styles – over time this differentiation allows reference to be made to models in distant locations with which physical contact is usually impossible or at least unlikely. Global connections are thus created between individuals and groups on different continents, but without them coming into contact with each other through personal encounters. The falling costs for copying such models as well as for their distribution facilitate this reference mechanism. Although fashion, music, sports, cinema, and theatre remain varied, a common feature across all genres and lifestyles is evident: the formation of overlapping imagined communities that are oriented towards globally circulating role models, charts, and record lists, which, in turn, are integrated into these communities' local way of life, thus creating a connection between far-flung and nearby corners of the world.

But here again, limits to such convergence can be identified, perhaps most clearly in the multiplication of ideas and practices of sexuality, on the one hand, and the alignment of family models and gender relations, on the other. While in the first trend increasing diversity can be observed, in the other trend an approximation of attitudes can be noted, even if it seems to be unsatisfactorily slow for one or the other (one can think of the demand for complete equality of the sexes). Which observation one puts on which side of the scales often appears to be a relatively arbitrary decision by the authors.

Where the idea of opposing trends does not easily address the complexity of global developments, there is another methodological instrument, which the editors unpack at the end of their introduction and which is used in greater detail in the chapters that focus on individual world regions:[26] the observation of different scales. Not everything discussed in CWH vol. VII.1 is actually planetary in size or range. However, a historiography that only knows local, national, and global scales does not have sufficient terminology for differentiation. Recent research on transregional processes offers a way out of this situation by calling attention to the fact that there are many developments that cover larger geographies than can be addressed with the categories of nations/states and regions/areas, but which nevertheless function below a level that is literally "global". Furthermore, transregional studies assume that many phenomena that we initially mark as global have their own geography, that is to say that they do not fit into the partly anachronistic categories of world regions, which partly owe their existence to colonial relations going back a long time or to obscure definitions corresponding to contingent short-term war requirements.[27]

If one looks at the two volumes in their overall composition, the editors have covered an enormous diversity of individual approaches and perspectives, as expressed in the individual essays, with two nets that are supposed to ensure cohesion. One net is reflected in the structure of the double volume and begins with the materiality of a world that is growing together, followed by a focus on men and women (as the population of the

26 J. Obert Voll presents the Middle East, M. Selden looks into East Asia in world history since 1750, J. A. Charlip focuses on Latin America, F. Cooper on Africa, while I. Tyrrell discusses the USA and Lionel Frost the Pacific.

27 Middell, Handbook of Transregional Studies, pp. 1–16.

earth) and their politics, and concluding with the division of the world into different regions. The second volume (discussed in more detail in this thematic issue by Stefano Bellucci), which must be considered together with the first volume regarding the editors' concept, is divided into social developments, cultural dispositions and outstanding moments of a longer-term development, and ligaments of globalization, which include rubber, drugs, the automobile, and the Anglo-American style of globalization.

Above this, however, we find another layer of categories used by the editors to link together contributions from the different parts of the two volumes, namely production, destruction, and connection. The result is a heuristic that is intended to guide the use of the volumes and probably makes the most of the publisher's fundamental decision to divide world history into small portions of 25 pages each, as it must be prepared in an accessible way for use in study courses. One can easily imagine the intellectual scruples expressed by editors and authors when confronted with the arguments of the sales department of the publishing house not to exceed the limitations set by reading lists at universities. In this respect, it can be said as a final evaluation that this volume offers an excellent summary of many new insights into recent world historiography – reliable, detailed, and vivid – but, at the same time, that the student consumers for whom this work is primarily intended have contributed more to its conception than is apparent at a first glance.