

peers and seniors. By linking the history of his rise to the top of the party to the development of militant positions and practices of the MK, Landau also offers comparative perspectives on the histories of other Southern African liberation movements and the constitutive role of violence in their evolution. (Of course, Zimbabwe and Robert G. Mugabe come to mind, but not just them.) Moreover, the book certainly also is a contribution to historicizing the god-like figure Mandela became after the end of apartheid – at least for those without a solid grounding in the history of the movement and the struggle. But first and foremost, Landau's book portrays the future president of South Africa firmly as “an African nationalist, Black Marxist” (p. 295) and a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP) (which Mandela later concealed). Indeed, this is not great news, but it is likely to make us critically rethink much of the post-1994 hagiographic writing about Mandela and the “Rainbow Nation”. Hence, this book also provides an opportunity to reconsider Mandela, the ANC-SACP alliance, and their past violent option in a decolonial perspective. This also may shed some more light on current developments in a country that today is facing huge challenges both in terms of leadership and social cohesion.

**Robert Mayhew / Charles Withers**  
(eds.): **Geographies of Knowledge: Science, Scale, and Spatiality in the Nineteenth Century**, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020, 273 pp.

Reviewed by  
Alessandro Stanziani, Paris

The main aim of this collective volume is to put science and scientific thought into an appropriate spatial, social, and intellectual context. Against general histories of science that present the evolution of science as a pure theoretical enterprise, possibly universal (one science for the whole world), the authors insist on the role local specificities and space play in the history of science. The editors and most of the authors continually (maybe a little bit too much!) refer to the works of David Livingstone, a historian and geographer who during the last 30 years emphasized the location of science and the spatial scales of knowledge. Following this same path, the book presents three main sections: local studies, national studies, and global studies. The first section includes the chapters on Malthus's theory of population (Robert Mayhew and Yvonne Sherratt) and on the physicist John Tindall and his entourage in Belfast (Diarmid Finnegan). The second section introduces the theories of Henry Hotze on race and religion (Mark Noll), then to the disputes over race and religion in the nineteenth-century USA (Ronald Number), and finally to the evolution of the structuralist theory of evolution in

Germany (Nicolaas Rupke). The last and third section (global spaces of knowledge) focuses on the debates about the meridian (Charles Withers), botanic (Nula Johnson), and climate science in the colonial context (Vinita Damoradan), as well as the scientific and sometimes merely adventure expeditions to Africa (Dane Kennedy).

As is often the case in the edited volumes, the level of the chapters is uneven: some present interesting developments (the chapters on botany, Malthus, and climate science), whereas others are less elaborated. However, it is the architecture and questioning of the volume as a whole that deserve careful attention.

The three scales (local, national, and global) are separated into three sections: the editors highlight that the interplay between the scales are important, and, nevertheless, they defend the relevance of this partition. The problem is that, for example, Malthus's population theory (in the local studies section) is one of the most global and transnational approaches ever produced in politics and economics during the last three centuries. Of course, local influences mattered, but it seems difficult to almost exclusively underscore them and then include Malthus's theory in the section on the local knowledge. At the opposite end, the chapters on global knowledge could have been easily integrated with influences of local societies, which is perfectly shown in some chapters of this section.

In other words, it would have been possible in all the chapters to stress the co-existence of the three scales, even though their hierarchy may have changed over time. However, if the editors and authors were intended to justify the separation of these scales, then the introduction should

have included a more detailed questioning of the historical processes and their scales during the nineteenth century, as well as how these dynamics interacted in connection with knowledge construction.

The fact is that the volume starts from a critique of the history of knowledge "in an empty sky", which is certainly true in some introductions to scientific knowledge or histories written by scientists themselves. Instead, histories of science written by historians repeatedly refer to specific contexts, multiple scales, the original influences, the milieus, and the circulation and reception of knowledge. Intellectual history (of course, in its more recent shape, connecting ideas to social and political dynamics) adopts this same approach. Some of the chapters could have been easily included into volumes belonging to this tradition. The question therefore is what does geography bring. To some extent, utilizing the local and space in historical analysis is similar to the well-known process (for an historian) of putting a piece in its proper context. This involves examining different features, such as biographies, local conditions, broader circulations, institutional settings, and so on. In this regard, the spatial turn reproduces the same ambivalence as the conventional approach of placing objects in their proper contexts. On the one hand, we benefit from a better understanding of the social and political backgrounds and impacts of knowledge. However, on the other hand, one could just presume that one feature or another influenced a theory and its diffusion. Causality is an extremely slippery notion in history and the social sciences, and spatialization is not able to solve this question other than providing historical context.

This point, which is not addressed in the volume despite being widely discussed in the literature, deserves more attention. It is not by chance that some authors correctly called attention to hermeneutics despite not being discussed in the introduction. In the 1970s, the emergence of microhistory prompted reflection on the meaning of “context” and “explanation”, seeking to overcome the rigid opposition between the two. Unfortunately, the editors just call to mind microhistory and erroneously (as in much of the anglophone historiography) conflate it with the “local”. However, the origins of microhistory aimed at reflecting on the notion of scales, representativity, and context.

Another major insight deserves attention: connections between the scales. Except for some chapters in the third section, two angles are missing: first, the debate on multiple modernities and, second, connected history. In a volume devoted to the multiplicity of the scales of knowledge, one would have expected a discussion on both these points. The mere mentioning of multiple scales in itself does not help to take a position in the first debate: Were there multiple botanics, political economies, and weather forecasting, and how did a presumed universal science impose through its intrinsic ideals the strength of capitalism? This last point is just mentioned in the introduction, but we do not have any discussion and hypothesis between its emergence and the shifts in the scales of knowledge. To this end, one would have needed a deep discussion on the circulation of knowledge – not just, saying, the diffusion of Malthus’s ideas, but something close to connected history and the mutual, though unequal influence

between so-called local and global knowledge (Nuala Johnson’s chapter is one brilliant exception).

In short, this volume identifies some blind spots in the historiographical debates on knowledge and science, yet, further investigation is required to translate intuition into an appropriate epistemological turn.

**Claude Mazauric: D’Histoire et d’Historiens. Préface de Pascal Dupuy et Isabelle Laboulais, Paris: Hermann Editeurs, 2021, 351 pp.**

Reviewed by  
Matthias Middell, Leipzig

Claude Mazauric is one of the defining figures of a generation of historians of the French Revolution who contributed to a prominent strand of historiography, widely received not only between the 1950s and the 200th anniversary of the Bastille Storm in 1989 but also in the aftermath of the historiographical controversies of the bicentenary. On the occasion of his 90th birthday, Pascal Dupuy (Rouen) and Isabelle Laboulais (Strasbourg) compiled a volume documenting the many facets of a highly productive historian’s life, which revolves entirely around the revolution, as well as its political dimensions and its significance for the present (during the Cold War and afterwards). It goes without saying that the 350 pages are only an excerpt from the complete oeuvre. The numerous