

Review article

History and globalization: reflections on temporality

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Globalization in world history. Edited by A. G. Hopkins. London: Pimlico. 2002. 665pp. Index. Pb.: £12.50. ISBN 0 7126 7740 2.

Global metaphors: modernity and the quest for one world. By Jo-Anne Pemberton. London: Pluto. 2001. 248pp. Index. Pb.: £16.99. ISBN 0 745 31653 0.

A sense of rupture with the past pervades the public consciousness of our time.¹

Globalization is a phase of capitalism, but not so much a new phase as a revival or resumption of a similar phase in the late 19th century.²

To chart the 'growth of nations', Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, it is essential to understand that they carry with them 'some of the marks of their origin'.³ And so it is with all social, political, economic and cultural institutions and forms of life. We are always already products of our past.

'Globalization' is the indeterminate and multivocal concept that has emerged as the most popular means of comprehending the alleged transformation of global order at the turn of the twenty-first century. Thus Malcolm Waters can claim that, while postmodernism was the defining concept (however opaque and elusive) of the 1980s, globalization is the 'key idea by which we understand the transition of human society into the third millennium'.⁴ The exhaustive 'great debate' over globalization illuminates and indeed perpetuates the existence of 'a global ambience of pervasive change',⁵ a foreboding sense that the

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¹ Martin Albrow, *The global age: state and society beyond modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), p. 1.

² Meghnad Desai, 'Globalization: neither ideology nor utopia', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 14: 1, 2000, p. 16.

³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (London: Longman, 1862 [1835]), vol. 1, p. 13.

⁴ Malcolm Waters, *Globalization* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 1.

⁵ Ronald Johnson, Peter Taylor and Michael Watts, 'Global change at the end of the twentieth century', in Ronald Johnson, Peter Taylor and Michael Watts, eds, *Geographies of global change: remapping the world in the late twentieth century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 4.

world is undergoing a historic revolution. Yet, as the two quotations at the top of this article illustrate, there is no consensus concerning the historical identity of the phenomenon.

Is globalization a radical departure from previous modes of global order? Or is it instead simply a continuation of existing trends clad in a different rhetorical cloak? Globalization theorists, proponents and adversaries alike, propound radically different answers to such questions. However, satisfactory answers require comprehensive historical investigation, and, as one distinguished historian has warned, the theorists have 'yet to engage with the historical literature in any depth or detail'.⁶ The globalization debate is pervaded by a lack of historical sophistication, sensitivity or understanding. Much work remains to be done here. Nevertheless, historians can also learn from the debate, escaping the fetters that the writing of 'national histories'—in the indomitable style of Ranke⁷—have imposed on many of them during the last century and a half.⁸ 'The study of globalisation promises to reinvigorate the appraisal of large slices of the past and to link history to the present in ways that ought to inform the discussion of contemporary issues.'⁹ While economic historians have begun to embark on this task, social, cultural and political historians lag behind.¹⁰ There is consequently scope for an important and mutually beneficial dialogue.

In this article, I sketch briefly the manner in which historical interpretations, either conscious or sublimated, shape globalization discourse. The two books under review, meanwhile, highlight the way in which a *historicized* approach to understanding global processes, one that explores patterns of continuity and change and which attempts to place the contemporary world in the context of past worlds, can shed light on existing debates.

The historical identity of globalization: four theses

The intrepid soul who enters into the globalization debate immediately faces a problem. There is currently a massive proliferation of academic and populist writing that strives to analyse—and usually either castigate or support—the multidimensional processes of globalization, and as yet there seems to be no end in sight to this deluge. Analysts have constructed a number of different typologies that attempt to corral this literature into a manageable schema. The most

⁶ A. G. Hopkins, 'The history of globalization—or globalization in world history?' in Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in world history*, p. 12.

⁷ For example, Ranke, 'The great powers' [1833], in T. H. von Laue, *Leopold von Ranke: the formative years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp. 181–218.

⁸ A. G. Hopkins, 'Back to the future: from national history to imperial history', *Past and Present* 164, 1999, pp. 198–244. While 'world historians' have for decades engaged in such work, they have remained marginal within the field as a whole. For a discussion of potential future directions, see Charles Bright and Michael Geyer, 'World history in a global age', *American Historical Review* 100, 1995, pp. 1034–60.

⁹ Hopkins, 'The history of globalization', p. 36.

¹⁰ Work in economic history includes Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and history: the evolution of a nineteenth-century Atlantic economy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), and Harold James, *The end of globalization: lessons from the Great Depression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

widely employed is the triadic model developed by David Held and his colleagues.¹¹ They claim that globalization arguments tend to fall into one of three broad categories: the hyper-globalist, the sceptical and the transformational. These categories refer primarily to differing interpretations of the structure of contemporary global order, for within each fall antithetical normative judgments about the perceived state of affairs. This schema is not concerned *primarily* with the question of historicity, although of course it touches on it. It is therefore useful to sketch a parallel typology that focuses more on the relationship between past and present by highlighting the different ways in which the historical identity of globalization (if it indeed has one) is conceived. The debate, I would argue, is structured by four theses: the novelty thesis, the thesis of return, the continuity thesis and the transformation thesis.

The novelty thesis

This is the view that globalization has no comparable past and thus represents an entirely new phenomenon, a novel though still evolving form of global order that in recent decades has reconfigured (and potentially erased) economic, political and cultural boundaries. This is the position advocated by many neo-liberals, but also by some trenchant critics of the system, including Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.¹² Novelists claim that the globalization of economic activity (in particular) is reshaping the ordering principles of the modern world, undermining the role of the state—the constitutive political unit of modernity—and revolutionizing the ways in which people interact. Kenichi Ohmae, for example, has claimed that ‘many of the core values supporting a world order based on discrete nation-states—liberal democracy as practiced in the West, for instance, and even the very notion of political sovereignty itself—have shown themselves in serious need of redefinition or, perhaps, replacement.’¹³ Novelists such as Ohmae often argue that these processes are inevitable and largely irreversible. Yet it is worth remembering that, as George Orwell remarked in ‘Politics and the English language’ (1947), polemically majestic adjectives such as historic, triumphant, inevitable and inexorable are more often than not ‘used to dignify the sordid processes of international politics’.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Hardt and Negri, in a postmodern Marxist vein, are also at pains to stress the ‘novelty of the structures and logics of power that order the contemporary world’.¹⁵

¹¹ David Held et al., *Global transformations: politics, economics, and culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999). A further useful typology can be found in Jens Bartelson, ‘Three concepts of globalization’, *International Sociology* 15: 2, 2000, pp. 180–96.

¹² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

¹³ Kenichi Ohmae, *The end of the nation state: the rise of regional economies* (New York: Free Press, 1996), p. vii. For variations on a (novel) theme, see Paul Andre Harris, ‘www.timeandglobalization.com/narrative’, *Time and Society* 9: 3, 2000, p. 319, and Zaki Laidi, *A world without meaning: the crisis of meaning in international politics*, trans. June Burnham and Jenny Coulon (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 97.

¹⁴ Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds, *The collected essays, journalism and letters of George Orwell* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), vol. IV, p. 131.

¹⁵ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 166.

The thesis of return

The adherents of this thesis understand the contemporary world as a replay of earlier forms of order, and in particular a return to political and economic conditions that obtained before the First World War. The intervening period, the span of Hobsbawm's 'short twentieth century', was merely a long detour.¹⁶ Many on the radical left, for example, view globalization as a reheated mode of imperialism, with the US picking up the hegemonic mantle assumed during the nineteenth century by Britain.¹⁷ In this vein, Samir Amin, for example, claims that 'Imperialism is not a stage, not even the highest stage, of capitalism: from the beginning it is inherent in capitalism's expansion. The imperial conquest of the planet by the Europeans and their North American children was carried out in two phases and is perhaps entering a third.'¹⁸ This type of argument is highly sceptical of the novelty thesis because it does not see anything particularly new in the underlying *telos* of 'globalization'. Despite various shifts in emphasis and deflections along the route, the logic of (capitalist) history is re-asserting itself.

Such scepticism about the possible transformation of world order is not confined to elements of the left, however, and one of the most interesting effects of the debate is that it obliterates any straightforward understanding of a left-right political spectrum. From a highly critical right-communitarian position, John Gray has branded contemporary capitalism 'Manchesterism *redivivus*'.¹⁹ In a self-consciously more optimistic style, the conservative historian Niall Ferguson argues that the US needs to reassert its global hegemony and, as the Victorian and Edwardian liberal imperialists attempted, to spread 'Western' values throughout the world. 'Political globalization is just a fancy word for ... imposing your views and practices on others.'²⁰ And this is something that Ferguson, for one, applauds.

The continuity thesis

The proponents of the continuity thesis do not believe that globalization represents either anything particularly novel or a long-delayed return to earlier forms of political-economic governance. They have an entirely different understanding of global political ontology, one in which massive change either is not possible or occurs slowly. The Cold War was not so much an exceptional detour as illustrative of the rule.

¹⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of extremes: the short twentieth century, 1914–1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994).

¹⁷ See e.g. Robert Biel, *The new imperialism: crisis and contradictions in North–South relations* (London: Routledge, 2000); Alex Callinicos, ed., *Marxism and the new imperialism* (London: Bookmarks, 1994); Leo Pantic, 'The new imperial state', *New Left Review*, 2, March–April 2000, pp. 5–21; Peter Gowan, *The global gamble: Washington's bid for global dominance* (London: Verso, 1999); Samir Amin, 'Imperialism and globalization', *Monthly Review* 53: 2, 2000, p. 6.

¹⁸ Amin, 'Imperialism and globalization', p. 6.

¹⁹ John Gray, 'The undoing of Conservatism', in John Gray and David Willets, *Is Conservatism dead?* (London: Profile, 1997), p. 5; but see also the comments in the new postscript to John Gray, *False dawn: the delusions of global capitalism*, 3rd edn (London: Granta, 1999), pp. 215–16.

²⁰ Niall Ferguson, *Guardian*, 31 Oct. 2001, p. 6. On the forerunner of this kind of view, see H. C. G. Matthew, *The liberal imperialists: the ideas and politics of a post-Gladstonian elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

We can divide the ‘continuity’ adherents into two separate strands, each with its own historical logic: those who believe that we are witnessing a gradual but perceptible division of the world into regional trading blocs, an economic and political process which has been developing steadily for decades and which challenges claims as to both the depth of ‘globalization’ and its reach (for much of the world is left undisturbed); and those, primarily self-proclaimed political realists, who remain unconvinced by the world-transforming rhetoric of the globalizers, believing instead that the perennial features of the international system remain largely undisturbed. They both agree on the chimerical nature of globalization, but differ on the degree of importance ascribed to the economic as opposed to the power-political.

The ‘economists’ often claim that we are witnessing the continuing *internationalization* of economic activity, and, if anything, the ‘triadization’ of the world into regional trading zones centred on Europe, Japan and the United States.²¹ ‘Globalization’ is not global. ‘The state’—which in this debate tends to mean certain powerful western states—is not about to be submerged under a tsunami of sovereignty-eradicating global capital, but (in many cases) is driving this process. It is at this point that the economic critique is joined by realists who view the state as the primary bastion of power in the international system, and who remain wary of assertions that economic interdependence renders traditional logics of *realpolitik* obsolete.²² We are most certainly not observing either the ‘end of geography’ or the even more elusive ‘end of history’.²³ Power and the self-interest of states will continue to shape the global landscape.

The transformation thesis

Transformationalists believe that we are witnessing a historic shift in the structure of global order. However, unlike the novelists, they do not believe that this is an unprecedented and largely ahistorical phenomenon, nor do they believe that it is inevitable. Globalization in one form or another has been developing in fits and starts throughout the modern age, as economies have become interwoven and technologies linked the communities of the world in a web of communication; however, they insist, its latest manifestation represents a profound qualitative shift. This position is elaborated most comprehensively by David Held and his colleagues. Transformationalists are wary of the perceived ‘essentialism’ of the preceding categories, and instead they deliberately propose a *via media*,

²¹ See Linda Weiss, *The myth of the powerless state: governing the economy in a global era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), and Paul Hirst and Graham Thompson, *Globalization in question: the international economy and the possibilities of governance* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996).

²² Kenneth Waltz, ‘Globalization and American power’, *National Interest* 59, 2000, pp. 46–57. Waltz thus remains convinced by the argument he articulated in his influential *Theory of international politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979). See also Duncan S. A. Bell, ‘Anarchy, power, and death: political realism as ideology’, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 7, 2002, pp. 221–39.

²³ Richard O’Brien, *Global financial integration: the end of geography* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1992); Francis Fukuyama, *The end of history and the last man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992).

claiming that globalization is a momentous phenomenon—one that is novel in many respects—but noting also that it is ‘a long-term historical process which is inscribed with contradictions and which is significantly shaped by conjectural factors’.²⁴ As such, globalization heralds great opportunities and poses profound dangers; it embodies a set of contested and contestable processes. ‘At issue is a dynamic and open-ended conception of where globalization might be leading and the kind of world order it might prefigure.’²⁵

Time, history and globalization: preliminary reflections

The debate among these four positions establishes the parameters of academic globalization discourse. However, the focus within that discourse is primarily on exploring the actual existence and potential scope of globalization, and the opportunities or benefits that might flow from it. It is a debate conducted across disciplines, but dominated by issues from international political economy—trade flows, import ratios, levels of economic integration, etc.—and questions over the potential withering of sovereignty. The historical claims made by the globalization specialists in the course of these deliberations are frequently superficial.

Moreover, there are significant gaps in the literature. For example, there is very little sustained analysis of the intellectual history of global interdependence. Just as for much of the previous century political and economic historians were preoccupied with writing ‘national history’, historians of political thought have also tended to focus their energies on the statist elements of political theory. There is much research to be done on the underlying ideas that animate and shape the multidimensional processes that are (potentially) restructuring the global order, and their relationship with previous expansionary ideologies.²⁶ Pemberton’s book is a welcome step in this direction.

Furthermore, there are interesting questions to be asked about the nature of temporality and its relation to globalization. Historical time can be understood in at least two senses. The first is simply ‘that which went before’, encompassing the totality of the past. This is the conventional understanding of ‘history’. The other refers to the way in which humans perceive time itself. The manner in which we interpret and frame the past—our understanding of the flow and meaning (if any) of history—inflects the way in which we conceive of the present and the future; it acts to shape the structure and horizons of human

²⁴ Held et al., *Global transformations*, p. 7.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ A notable (albeit partial) exception is work on early modern ideologies of empire: David Armitage, *Ideological origins of the British empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Richard Tuck, *The rights of war and peace: political thought and international order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the world: ideologies of empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500–c.1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: an intellectual history of English colonialism, 1500–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). The most comprehensive account yet of ‘globalizing’ ideologies is Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of trade: sovereignty, nationalism, and the Wealth of Nations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, forthcoming 2004).

experience. Nevertheless, while we are temporal beings, we have different senses of temporality. The same is true of theoretical programmes, which contain within them assumptions about the nature of historical time.²⁷ To give only one brief example from International Relations: many (neo)realist arguments, claiming to draw on the wisdom and experience of the ages, suggest that there are perennial features of intercommunal politics, and that as a result it is necessary to recognize these and to act in accordance with their dictates. In so doing, realists articulate a specific conception of historical time, as static and unchanging, and consequently they stress the *inescapability* of the logic of power politics. Such ‘realism’ thus forecloses the possibility of substantial global transformation; consequently, it annihilates the future through denying any possibility of transcending the obdurate trajectory of the past. Theorizing globalization is likewise reliant upon specific (and often conflicting) understandings of historical time, and this is a fascinating issue with which the current debate simply does not engage.

Another intellectual lacuna—and to my mind one of the most important topics that can be probed—is the notion of globalization as a cognitive phenomenon: in other words, the question of the way(s) in which people become conscious of the global as opposed to the international, the regional, the national or the local dimensions of individual and collective life, and how this impacts on both action and identity. If, as Chris Bayly has claimed, the modern world displays ‘the persistence of long continuities of form’ in globalizing processes,²⁸ why is it today commonly perceived that everything is new? What changes in society and polity, in collective consciousness, have acted as the condition of possibility for this shift? If the sceptics are correct, then it is a pressing question as to why so many people today—academics, politicians and the public alike—think that ‘globalization’ constitutes a fundamental transformation of world order.

Globalization and history

Past and present: the trajectory of multiple globalizations

Globalization in world history is the product of a series of millennium lectures hosted by the Faculty of History at Cambridge University. The result is an important but disjointed ensemble. This is understandable, given the enormous scope of the project, for, as the editor warns, ‘[t]he possibilities are as large as the concept itself and cannot be explored fully in a single volume.’²⁹ The book is both more and less than the sum of its parts: less in the sense that the picture it paints sometimes lacks coherence, offering interesting and provocative

²⁷ See e.g. Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures past: on the semantics of historical time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985); J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, language, and time: essays on political thought and history* (London: Methuen, 1972).

²⁸ Chris Bayly, ‘“Archaic” and “modern” globalization in the Eurasian and African arena, c.1750–1850’, p. 68.

²⁹ A. G. Hopkins, ‘Introduction: globalization—an agenda for historians’, in Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in world history*, p. 2.

fragments and historical snapshots; more in the sense that, despite this lack of consistency, a vivid picture of the historical richness and complexity of globalization emerges.

Aside from showcasing a plethora of individual arguments, the book seeks to make two general points. The first is that 'globalization'—defined by Bayly as 'a progressive increase in the scale of social processes from a local or regional to a world level'³⁰—is a far more multifaceted and deeply rooted complex of trends than many analysts appreciate. The second is that it is not simply a western phenomenon. In 're-mapping the geography of the subject', as Hopkins puts it,³¹ the contributors explore ancient and modern, western and eastern dimensions of globalizing processes. For example, Amira Bennison sketches the ideas and ideals of the *umma*, the universal Muslim community, while Hans van de Ven examines the vital role played by China, and especially its wide-ranging diaspora communities, in global movements. A key theme running through the book is the centrality of empires in spreading peoples, ideas and institutions throughout the world; the processes and their political and economic outcomes have been distributed unevenly, but the flow has not simply been from the 'West' to the 'rest'. The agents of globalization have been, at different times and in different places, religious leaders and belief-systems, adventurous monarchs, rapacious capitalists, nomadic soldiers and scholars, diasporic communities, traders, rogues and so forth. The intermingling of and tensions between them and established political and economic institutions and social systems form the backdrop to the world of today.

In his programmatic 'agenda for historians', Hopkins sets out a useful typology of historical globalizations, each different in its scope, forms and intensity.³² They are classified as 'archaic, proto, modern, and post-colonial', and the authors try (not always successfully) to employ this division as a structuring device. Post-colonial globalization is that on which the mainstream social science discourse focuses currently, and the book pays less attention to this than the others; it is, after all, an attempt to place contemporary developments in the context(s) of earlier periods.

Archaic globalizations are those that occurred before the age of industrialization and the rise of the modern state. Due to the enormity of time that this encompasses this is the most problematic of the categories, and it needs much more detailed specification before it can provide adequate analytical leverage. John Lonsdale, Bennison and, in particular, Bayly all engage with this topic. What emerges is a picture of the multiple ways in which expansionary tendencies manifested themselves in different cultural settings, and also of the inability of many of our current categories of political analysis to grasp these dynamics. In particular, they stress the role of universal (usually religious) belief-systems, and

³⁰ Bayly, "'Archaic" and "modern" globalization'.

³¹ Hopkins, 'Introduction', p. 2.

³² In a separate chapter ('The history of globalization—and the globalization of history?') Hopkins summarizes usefully the 'uneven and disconnected' historiography of globalization.

the complex patterns of production and consumption that led to globe-circling lines of trade and communication. These tended to operate mainly between key regions, for example around the coastal regions of Africa, India, China and Europe.

Proto-globalization refers to the period 1600–1800 when, throughout large parts of the world, political and economic institutions began to mutate; distinct state systems emerged, and trade, manufacturing and industry began to develop massively. The age of the modern state dawned. In particular, this was a time of western expansion; Tony Ballantyne describes the 1760s in particular as a ‘decade of globalization’.³³ Indeed, the Seven Years War (1756–63) can be classified as the first truly global war. Richard Drayton, meanwhile, provides a salutary reminder of the centrality of slavery in historical globalization.

Modern globalization evolved alongside the state, nationalism and full-blown industrial capitalism. New technologies allowed for ever greater extension, while the cosmopolitan ideals of earlier periods were flavoured and ultimately defeated by increasingly virulent strains of nationalism, especially within and between European imperial powers. However, once again, the authors are keen to ‘decentre’ Europe, and the essays by van de Ven, Bennison and Lonsdale trace other political trajectories, and also highlight the way in which indigenous cultures have reacted to, absorbed and sometimes reworked to their advantage the encroaching imperial cultures and institutions of the Europeans. Civilizations, empires, nations and other human collectives should not be viewed as monoliths, impregnable and undifferentiated, but more as porous and capable of massive transformations; such has been the result of the interaction of cultures over the last millennium. As Bayly stresses, each successive mode of globalization was layered on top of the previous ones, serving to channel and shape patterns of trade, consumption and communication. Moreover, they often coexisted for extended periods. The new always carries with it traces of the old.

This is not to say, of course, that all cultures have wielded equal power. David Reynolds, in his measured analysis of the role of the United States, sketches both the change and the continuity that the ‘American century’ has witnessed. Globalization did not start with America, he argues, for in its current forms it is a continuation of the patterns of integration that began in earnest in the nineteenth century, and which drew on earlier modes of European (imperial) globalization. He concludes his essay by claiming that ‘The twentieth century was neither the end of history nor the beginning of globalization.’³⁴ That in itself presents a research agenda for historians and social scientists.

Dreaming of the future: the technocratic–utopian ideal

Jo-Anne Pemberton’s central argument in *Global metaphors* can be seen partly as a counterblast to the type of claim made by Tim Harper in his excellent essay in

³³ Tony Ballantyne, ‘Empire, knowledge, and culture: from proto-globalization to modern globalization’, in Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in world history*.

³⁴ David Reynolds, ‘American globalism’, in Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in world history*, p. 258.

Globalization in world history, namely that, 'the interwar period marked the end of *fin de siècle* globalism and the beginning of *la tyrannie du national*'.³⁵ Instead, she argues convincingly that while the geopolitical storm clouds were gathering once again, there was also a remarkable outburst of globalist thinking, which, in its focus on technology and economic and political rationalization, bears a marked resemblance to contemporary globalization discourse. In particular, she structures her argument around the impact of the philosophies of William James and Henri Bergson, demonstrating their centrality—whether implicit or explicit—in discussions of global order in the years preceding the Second World War.

A guiding theme of this impressive study is the dual nature of 'modernity', the way in which the term implied both 'organisation and ungoverned energy'.³⁶ Early twentieth-century modernity thus contained two contrasting tendencies: 'Modernity denoted rational organisation based on objective social knowledge but it also implied an enthusiasm for waywardness and indeterminacy'.³⁷ The tension between these two positions is explored with penetration in the opening chapters. Thus, while the pragmatist philosophy of James, and the idea of flux in Bergson, were open to multiple interpretations and the extrapolation from them of varied political programmes, Pemberton argues that in the interwar period, in an environment permeated by an insidious sense of 'crisis', the balance tilted decisively towards organization: 'the philosophies of will and becoming associated with James and Bergson informed anarchistic celebrations of social chaos although they were often only a prelude to the attempt to construct an order of some kind whether in the form of fascist corporatism or a world state'.³⁸ This represented a desperate attempt to dampen the turbulence and tame the chaos.

Pemberton then explores the plans for rationalization and the world-state that proliferated in and around the intellectual arm(s) of the League of Nations. She focuses on how thinkers during the interwar period drew sustenance from the intellectual currents of the prewar era, but also on how the war reshaped the nature of political and moral debate and foregrounded the idea of western degeneration; the response was the articulation of a scientific–technocratic utopia. This was an idea that dissipated as the Second World War loomed, but reappeared in various forms thereafter, manifested in the environmental movement and the current fetish for global governance proposals. Pemberton adds historical depth to the analysis of contemporary globalism, of which she is highly (and rightly) sceptical: 'Globalization, understood in its expansive sense, is less a clearly discernible feature of experience than a rhetorical effect'.³⁹ It is one, moreover, that resonates with earlier prophecies about modernity, both

³⁵ Tim Harper, 'Empire, diaspora, and the languages of globalism, 1850–1914', in Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in world history*, p. 160.

³⁶ Pemberton, *Global metaphors*, p. 112.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

from the interwar years and more recently from scholars such as George Modelski.⁴⁰ *Global metaphors* ends with a critique of naïve and homogenizing political plans and a heavily qualified plea for statism-as-pluralism. Indeed, to an extent, we can see Pemberton's thesis as an exemplar of the continuity thesis.

Global metaphors is a timely and innovative addition to the intellectual history of global order. Questions remain, however. First, at times Pemberton seems to overlay her case for the pervasiveness of the scientific-technocratic utopian impulse, and in so doing neglects other more moderate strands of global thinking, often equally prominent.⁴¹ It is, of course, one of the major temptations of intellectual history to mistake part of any given conceptual space for the *Zeitgeist*. Moreover, there is the question of the degree of novelty embodied in much of the theorizing that she examines. At one point Pemberton argues that 'The overlap between the political rhetoric of the interwar period and that of today in respect to world affairs underlines the point that vaunted new directions in history are just as likely to reflect past imaginings and yearnings as the actual contours of unfolding events.'⁴² This is a judicious warning, but this 'overlap' does not apply only to the interwar period and our own; it applies also to previous ages, as *Globalization in world history* illustrates. For example, many of the images, anxieties and ideas of the 1920s were anticipated during the Victorian era.

Pemberton stresses the proliferation of organic and technologically infused imagery in global order theorizing during the interwar period.⁴³ She focuses also on the pervasiveness of ideas about speed and acceleration, and on wonder at the powers of electricity and instantaneous communications. Yet this did not represent a radical departure, for these notions were all common currency over 50 years beforehand. It is not clear from Pemberton's analysis whether she wants to make this link or not; it often seems as though she views the interwar period—at least, shot through the prism of early twentieth-century philosophy—as more novel than it actually was. Thus she is at times in danger of falling prey to the problem that she has sought to rectify. Plans for a globe-spanning state (albeit one circumscribed by 'Anglo-Saxon' racial boundaries) were propounded incessantly between 1870 and 1900, and they likewise relied on panglossian technological projections. This was largely a consequence of the revolution in communications. As J. R. Seeley wrote in his best-selling *The expansion of England* (1883), 'Science has given the political organism a new circulation, which is steam, and a new nervous system, which is electricity,' and consequently, as a result of the new technologies, 'distance has now no longer the important influence that it had on political relations.'⁴⁴ Edward Freeman,

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 156.

⁴¹ For an interesting discussion of a prominent aspect of the British debate, see Casper Sylvest, 'Internationalism in the Labour Party between the wars and the historiography of international relations', unpublished M.Phil. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2002. See also Jeanne Monefield, *Families of mankind: liberal idealism and the construction of twentieth century internationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁴² Pemberton, *Global metaphors*, p. 110.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 170–1.

⁴⁴ J. R. Seeley, *The expansion of England: two courses of lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1883), pp. 73, 74.

Seeley's counterpart as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, agreed: 'modern science', he wrote, 'has annihilated time and space.'⁴⁵ These comments could have been written by any one of the breathless prophets of modern globalization. Lord Salisbury, four times prime minister, claimed that the inventions of electrical engineers had 'combined together almost at one moment, and acting at one moment upon the agencies which govern mankind, the opinions of the whole of the intelligent world with respect to everything that is passing at that time upon the face of the earth.'⁴⁶

The use of organic metaphors in imagining global political formations was also widespread in the 1870s and 1880s. In particular, this mode of expression specified an intimate connection between empire, electricity and the mammalian body: hence Seeley's claim that electricity heralded a 'new circulation' for the 'political organism', and the Marquis of Lorne's discussion of political shocks spreading instantaneously through the imperial 'limbs'.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the idealist philosopher J. H. Muirhead declared that 'New arteries and nerve systems were beginning to be formed' between the various sections of the English-speaking race.⁴⁸ Forging an even more direct analogy, another observer claimed: 'Nowadays, the whole earth resembles, in a measure, one of our own bodies. The electric wires represent the nerves, and messages are conveyed from the most distant regions to the central plane of government, just as in our bodies, where sensations are conveyed to the sensorium.'⁴⁹

Pemberton stresses the sense of crisis gripping the western mind from the early years of the twentieth century.⁵⁰ Indeed, she views the century as one defined, to an important degree, by 'the ubiquity of a self-conscious rhetoric of crisis'.⁵¹ Yet the second half of the nineteenth century was also defined by a 'crisis of reason'.⁵² Across Europe, this could be traced to the monumental impact of specific scientific theories (in particular in geology and biology) and the concomitant dissolution of the bases of dogmatic religious faith.⁵³ As the jurist A. V. Dicey commented, during the closing decades of the century people witnessed that 'singular phenomenon which is best described as the disintegration of beliefs, or, in other words, the breaking up of established creeds, whether

⁴⁵ Edward Freeman, 'The physical and political bases of national unity', in Arthur White, ed., *Britannic confederation: a series of papers ... edited ... by A. S. White ... reprinted from the Scottish Geographical Magazine. With a new map of the British Empire* (London: G. Philip & Son, 1892), p. 52.

⁴⁶ Salisbury, speech reprinted in *The Electrician*, 8 Nov. 1889, p. 13.

⁴⁷ Marquis of Lorne, *Imperial federation* (London: Sonnenschein, 1885), p. 113.

⁴⁸ J. H. Muirhead, 'What imperialism means' [1900], in David Boucher, ed., *The British idealists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 243.

⁴⁹ Sir Gabriel Stokes, reply to Lord Salisbury, *The Electrician*, 8 Nov. 1889, p. 13.

⁵⁰ In so doing Pemberton elucidates interestingly the similarity between *fin-de-siècle* philosophies and postmodernism (see e.g. *Global metaphors*, pp. 9, 20).

⁵¹ Pemberton, *Global metaphors*, p. 161.

⁵² Burrow, *The crisis of reason: European thought, 1848–1914* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

On the function of the language of 'crisis' in political thought, see Istvan Hont, 'The contemporary crisis of the nation state in historical perspective' in his *Jealousy of trade*.

⁵³ John Burrow, *Evolution and society: a study in Victorian social theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), and Boyd Hilton, *The age of atonement: the influence of evangelicalism on social and economic thought, 1795–1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

religious, moral, political, or economical'.⁵⁴ Likewise, both the secular faith in, and the reactive fears of, the power of science to organize society rationally were far from new. The age of scientific utopianism spanned the second half of the nineteenth century. Thomas Carlyle, in an ambiguous vein, intoned that 'We war with rude Nature and, by our restless engines, come off always victorious, and loaded with spoils.'⁵⁵ The dangerous and dehumanizing spectre of machines and machine order, which terrified many of the critics of interwar rationalization, also scared Ruskin, Coleridge, Carlyle and, most famously, Nietzsche, who lamented 'our rape of nature with the help of machines and the completely unscrupulous inventiveness of technicians and engineers'.⁵⁶

All of this is not to suggest that the interwar years were a carbon copy of the Victorian age, any more than contemporary globalization is identical to the age of fascism and Stalinist five-year plans. There were, of course, great differences between the periods. After all, history is, as Paul Valéry once claimed, the science of what never happens twice. Rather, the point is that many of the themes that Pemberton finds resonating in the wake of James and Bergson can be found also in an earlier period. In light of this pattern of continuity, in beliefs and ideals, whither the modernity that she seeks to capture? We still do not know; as ever, its elusiveness escapes adequate specification.

Conclusions

What is often missing from the analysis of globalization is what Jacques Barzun has labelled a 'sense of history', a sense defined by the 'simultaneous perception of difference and similarity between past and present';⁵⁷ a consciousness, that is, of the continuities and also the innovations in any social, political, economic or cultural order. Both of the books examined here highlight the importance of such an approach. Historians can help to render contingent that which is so often naturalized as inevitable, as inescapable. They can eradicate the *telos* from processes ultimately subject to agency and political choice. An understanding of the historical identity of globalization, of the ways in which its manifold processes and our understanding of them have evolved out of the past, is essential for enriching and deepening the contemporary debate. Globalization analysts often claim that virtually everything is new or, conversely, that little or nothing has changed. The transformationalists who (sometimes) make more moderate claims about the historical identity of the present global order have likewise shown little willingness actually to grapple with the way in which this present

⁵⁴ Albert Venn Dicey, *Lectures on the relation between law and public opinion in England during the nineteenth century*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1914), p. 444.

⁵⁵ Thomas Carlyle, quoted in Michael Adas, *Machines as the measure of men: science, technology, and ideologies of Western dominance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 1.

⁵⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the genealogy of morality* [1887], ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 86.

⁵⁷ Jacques Barzun, *From dawn to decadence: 1500 to the present: 500 years of Western cultural life* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 47.

has emerged; there have been few attempts to identify the lines of rupture, the patterns of connection, sketching the differential trajectories of diverse forms of political endeavour and their transmutation over time and space. In order to hold any weight, all such claims require as a precondition a comprehensive understanding of the past (in so far as such a thing is available). It is this sense of history that is so glaringly absent from contemporary discourse, and which results in its peculiar tenor and tone, as if conceived in a temporal vacuum. It is a sense that we need to reclaim, and urgently.