

Caught Between Pedagogy and Politics: The Challenges of Teaching Globalization in the Twenty-First Century

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IN 2003, as the term “globalization” became ubiquitous in scholarship and popular culture, Peter N. Stearns urged readers of *The History Teacher* to address the concept in their pedagogy.¹ Scholars and teachers took up the challenge, dedicating an immense amount of effort to debating, defining, and explaining the term “globalization.” But the word refused to accept academic discipline. To the contrary, since Stearns wrote about it in these pages, globalization has found its way into an even greater number of conversations—about the rise of ethnonationalist movements, for example, or COVID-19—wherein it has come to convey an even wider variety of meanings. For history teachers, this poses a unique problem. It may be impossible to fully characterize fast-changing contemporary developments, but in what follows, I offer a brief overview of globalization’s twin journeys into popular discourse and academic scholarship over the past several decades. I then take a closer look at two of the most significant problems that teachers of globalization face today. The first, which we might call a “space problem,” involves helping students visualize the shapes and spaces of globalization, defined broadly as increasing human interconnection. The second, which we might understand as a “time problem,” involves demonstrating

to students that globalization does not inevitably progress over time. I consider these problems from the vantage point of my own teaching of the Atlantic World, an epoch of global interconnection, but a scholarly field built out of older histories of European imperial expansion, which bring their own baggage to the conversation. My main purpose in what follows is to suggest how history teachers can conceptualize and organize their responses to the assumptions about globalization that students today bring to the study of history.

I. The Globalization Problem

Without question, students remain interested in globalization. At one university where I recently taught, student demand for introductory-level history classes entitled “Globalization” far outstripped demand for “Modern History,” although the content of the two courses overlapped significantly. Finance majors enrolled in “Globalization” in search of knowledge that might allow them to master today’s chaotic flows of global capital, while activists enrolled to mount a more effective challenge to the injustices that these capital flows create. While few of these students could define globalization, most knew it had become a major public conversation, and believed it was in their best interest to learn about it.

The supply of pedagogical material on globalization has grown in tandem with student demand. As an instructor of a class called “Globalization,” I was flooded with offers from publishers for introductory-level texts bearing titles such as *Geographies of Globalization* (Routledge, 2015), *Globalization in World History* (Routledge, 2016), and *Globalization: A Reader for Writers* (Oxford, 2013).² The texts themselves, produced by authors from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, are heterogeneous—monographs, textbooks, and anthologies; long and short; theoretical and empirical.

Within this booming globalization marketplace, however, authors disagree on what it is, exactly, they are selling a conversation *about*. Some hew closely to their disciplinary backgrounds. Economists tend to understand globalization in terms of market integration.³ A historian’s introductory textbook of 2010 defined it as a “process of transformation of local phenomena into global ones,” and, in the same breath, “a process by which the people of the world are unified into a single society and function together.”⁴ A sociologist in 2005,

throwing grammar to the wind, described globalization as “a society without borders or a borderless world.”⁵ Other scholars find the term too capacious to be reducible to a single disciplinary approach. One professor of politics and government claimed that globalization “resists being confined to any single thematic framework,” and asserts that it is “best thought of as a multidimensional set of social processes” with “important *discursive aspects*” to boot.⁶

A generation ago, “globalization” had a far narrower definition. In the 1970s and 1980s, it primarily signified the deliberate international activities of modern business corporations. In 1989, for example, *Computerworld* announced, “As corporations continue to see greater competition coming from abroad, they should look to telecommunications as a tool in their globalization efforts.”⁷ Globalization, during these decades, was a conversation for experts and insiders. Anyone talking about it was probably in the business of furthering (or perhaps thwarting) the transnational business activities under consideration. Gradually, however, the definition broadened. By the 1990s, people were using the word “globalization” to describe changes in *political* conditions that made this selfsame transnational corporate activity possible. In 1996, the *Toronto Star* explained to its readers that “globalization is the elimination of worldwide barriers to trade and investment, so that corporations can operate freely wherever they want to go. It means a market-based, single world economy.”⁸ In other words, globalization now signified a form of politics as well as a form of business: it was the set of political initiatives that facilitated large-scale business across borders. It was still something that had only happened very recently.

During the last decade of the twentieth century, the term acquired popularity even more rapidly. As Stanley Fischer has observed, the term “globalization” did not appear even once in the pages of *The New York Times* in the 1970s; in the 1980s, it appeared, on average, less than once per week. By the second half of the 1990s, however, the word appeared nearly three times per week, and in the year 2000 alone, there were 514 stories in the paper that made reference to “globalization”—on average, once or twice per day.⁹ In retrospect, the reasons for this change are clear. The Cold War’s end, booming market economies, new communications technology, and the dismantling of global trade barriers in the 1990s seemed to herald the arrival of a new age, in which capitalism’s global triumph would lift all boats.

Many people, understandably, found these developments exciting. As governments facilitated transnational economic exchange, a self-congratulatory literature anticipated the arrival of complete global interconnectedness—a world without boundaries. Such a vision both attracted and concerned scholars: as Peter Stearns cautioned in these pages in 2003, “the term [globalization] is faddish and, in many renderings, partisan, often standing for a loud approval of the forces of contemporary capitalism and American foreign policy.”¹⁰ After validating concerns about the term’s political baggage, however, he proceeded to urge scholars to engage with it.

Engage they did. Over the past decade and a half, the globalization conversation has drawn in even more participants, and has come to address even more topics. The American presidential election of 2016 brought particular attention to globalization defined as the movement of jobs across borders, but scholars, journalists, and members of the public continue to use the term “globalization” to signify movements toward a very diverse set of economic conditions, social relationships, and cultural attitudes. In public conversation, use of the term has shown no sign of slowing. *The New York Times* referenced globalization in 433 articles in 2010, and in 544 in 2016 (topping the year 2000’s total by thirty).¹¹ However, no consensus about the word’s definition has emerged. In fact, its brief has widened. The current edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, curiously, still offered a definition of globalization hailing from the 1970s and 1980s:

the action, process, or fact of making global; *esp.* (in later use), the process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale, widely considered to be at the expense of national identity.¹²

The “in later use” part of this definition would have made perfect sense to a businessperson in the 1970s, but the definition’s final clause skips over the ways in which governments themselves set corporations loose. It focuses, instead, on the ways in which corporate expansions have, in their turn, diminished the power of the nation-state—or rather (and the *OED* is curiously hesitant here), *are perceived* to have diminished that power. Globalization, though still a recent phenomenon, is thus transformed from a consequence (of business activities, facilitated by governments) into a cause (of the perceived diminishment of national feeling). Its own cause no longer seems clear, and even its outcomes now appear to be principally a matter of public perception.

In popular media, the nature and origin of globalization also remain murky. Popular writers use the word to gesture to a set of associations or to convey a feeling, rather than to refer to specific corporate initiatives or political processes. In a single recent week in *The New York Times*, one or two references to globalization seem to understand it in accordance with the old-fashioned definition: the internationalizing efforts of corporations. In that same week, however, globalization was also used to signify “a structural force” that makes present-day Americans feel as if they are suffering from natural disaster; to represent the contemporary subtext of a historical novel in which famous New World conquistadors hobnob with famous European historical figures; to explain how Guatemalans learned about basketball; and (in a speech by Pope Francis) to refer, in a metaphorical sense, to worldwide callousness to the fate of one’s fellow humans.¹³ The term generally continues to refer to a vaguely economic process, while now additionally conveying the sense that this economic process has shaped all aspects of human life. Globalization appears both as a driver of global change and as an outcome of an impossibly wide variety of social processes.

In more formal academic settings, social scientists have managed to organize and refine some of globalization’s diffuse characteristics, but they have reached no consensus. Some continue to put economics first. One introductory textbook, for example, takes globalization to signify “the ongoing process of integrating the norms of market economies throughout the world and binding the economies of the world into a single uniform system.”¹⁴ Two sociologists describe globalization, more simply, as “the processes by which more people across large distances become connected in more and different ways.”¹⁵ Some definitions introduce profound epistemological doubts: in a widely circulated work for non-specialists, Professor of Global Studies Manfred Steger defines globalization as a “*set of social processes* that are thought to transform our present social condition into one of globality,” with globality signifying a “*social condition* characterized by the existence of global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make many of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant.”¹⁶ The phrase “social processes” suggests that globality is a real, measurable phenomenon, but the phrase “are thought to transform” introduces a chasm of doubt about globalization’s reality. Other scholars, by

contrast, understand globalization as an empirically measurable phenomenon, whose emergence can be pinned to a particular moment in historical time. Jan Aart Scholte, for one, defines globalization as “the spread of suprataritoriality,” that is, the emergence of a world in which “social connections...transcend territorial geography.”¹⁷ Scholte’s definition, like Steger’s, looks toward the arrival of a world in which societies transcend existing boundaries, but in other respects, it is markedly different. The boundaries broken in Steger’s vision of a globalized world might be any that currently exist (say, cultural, political, or social) and humans might break them in any number of different ways. For Scholte, however, boundaries are firmly spatial in nature, and they have only *really* been broken over the past half-century, thanks to recent technological advances in instantaneous communications, and to the integration of various kinds of global markets and financial systems.¹⁸

In spite of their disagreements, social scientists have tended to agree that globalization involves transformations that take place over time, and thus that it is a type of historical process. And indeed, by the early 2000s, some historians were beginning to find the idea of globalization a helpful way to frame their research questions. The excitement generated by the public globalization conversation allowed scholars both to imagine globalization as a powerful force that shaped history in a number of places and times, *and* to pinpoint its specific historical origins. Early adopters included historians inclined toward the social sciences, such as economic historians, who sought to define the onset of the globalization age in quantitative terms.¹⁹ In one high-profile exchange, for example, Kevin O’Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson defined the process as “the integration of international commodity markets,” and thus argued that the first real age of globalization began in the early nineteenth century. Their opponents, also economic historians, maintained that this integration began in 1571.²⁰

While many economic historians believe that the global integration of capital markets generally spread prosperity, another camp of scholars adopted a similar definition of globalization in order to offer a more critical perspective. Today, such articles run in journals like the *Journal of Global History*, established in 2006 to address “the main problems of global change over time, together with the diverse histories of globalization.”²¹ Some of the journal’s articles deal with “problems” of the sixteenth century, others with problems of the

twenty-first. *Critical Historical Studies*, launched in 2014, takes a more explicit institutional stance: it seeks to investigate the history of capitalism in a global framework because of “the challenges...posed by...the rapid advance of economic globalization” and related global transformations, made particularly visible within the past several decades.²² *History of the Present*, founded in 2011, similarly aims to denaturalize the vision of capitalism that undergirds dominant narratives of global development (read: globalization). In one particularly vivid recent article in this journal, Augustine Sedgewick identified the metaphor of “flow”—pervasive in transnational history—as one that “mistakes a capitalist fantasy” that “everyone and everything is already liquid, already money,” “for a naturally existing reality.”²³ Each critical article like this one freezes the idea of globalization momentarily, revealing the bedrock beneath it, but the idea inevitably runs free again; it remains, in the broader conversation, as slippery as water.

World history predates the study of globalization, but as the latter’s brief has expanded, world historians have tended more toward accommodation than toward intra-disciplinary war. Twenty years ago, Bruce Mazlish could distinguish a more focused “global history,” organized around a whole-planet vantage point and a relative openness to presentism, from a more diffuse “world history” that focused on “systemic processes and patterns among a wide variety of historical and natural phenomena that affected diverse populations.”²⁴ In 2015, however, the scholars and high school teachers on the H-Net listserv “H-World” seemed to feel that extensive meditation on the difference between the two fields “may not yield particularly productive results.”²⁵ A still more recent work, historian Sebastian Conrad’s *What Is Global History?* (2016) even refers to “global/world history” in its first paragraph as if the two terms were interchangeable.²⁶ In general, this accommodation signifies that the history of globalization is gaining ground. Historians we might have previously called “world historians” for their work on broad time scales and across vast landscapes, even those without close ties to the social sciences, generally do accept that globalization is occurring, even though they declare it contingent and episodic, and raise concerns about its consequences.²⁷ Peter Stearns writes, for example, of “the accumulation of different types of connection” over the course of human history, generally speaking,

and John and William McNeill (the latter identified by Mazlîsh as “the premier figure of modern world history”) concur that human history over time has tended toward interconnection.²⁸ David Northrup identifies a Great Convergence beginning after the year 1000 C.E.²⁹ Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla envisions a “first globalization” in world history, c. 1400–1750 C.E., though not one that could be characterized as a “desirable, linear development.”³⁰ These scholars still grapple, however, with globalization’s intellectual roots in the late twentieth century. Francesca Trivellato, acknowledging the contemporary connotations of the word “globalization,” argues that studies of medieval and early modern merchant networks and diasporas “advanc[es] a less Eurocentric, less hierarchical notion of what we may call ‘globalization before globalization.’”³¹ Most historians who use the word, however, have found ways to work through their hesitations about its applicability to centuries past. Maya Jasanoff, for one, describes Joseph Conrad as someone who embodied globalization even though he wouldn’t have known the word.³² Identifying globalization “before globalization” seems feasible to many in a way that, for example, transnational history before the nation is not.³³

A fourth group of historians engaged with the idea of globalization is made up of the methodologically broad-minded: some who insist on a version of history that cannot limit itself to one methodology or another, and others who adapt the term to help them generate a set of questions relevant to their own fields of inquiry. “Globalization,” writes Lynn Hunt, “is not limited to the exchange of goods or foodstuffs. It can be defined in economic, technological, social, political, cultural, or even biological terms.”³⁴ Cátia Antunes and Karwan Fatah-Black offer, in an essay collection, “a universalist approach of historical globalization...[defined as] the interconnectedness of all aspects of social life and particularly the elements that make it historically dynamic and interdependent.”³⁵ One of the broadest possible definitions of globalization makes it intellectual or cultural, a matter of the human mind. Adam McKeown takes it to signify “that period in which a sense of living in the midst of unprecedented change has dominated social and personal sensibilities.”³⁶ Given such a definition, globalization resonates strongly with older historiographical conversations about modernity, thus opening up a whole new set of questions about chronology and terrain.

Still, large numbers of historians—including me, when I was first handed a class entitled “Globalization”—have remained skeptical about the uses of the word. Though notorious for their absorption of approaches from multiple disciplines, historians as a whole have lagged in creating their share of introductory textbooks on globalization.³⁷ Several decades into the conversation, in fact, historians are not only far from a consensus about the word’s meaning, but remain in disagreement on whether it is appropriate for scholarship or teaching at all. A striking number continue to use the word in scare quotes. In 2004, for example, C. A. Bayly wrote that he intended *The Birth of the Modern World* to demonstrate “the interconnectedness and interdependence of political and social changes across the world well before the supposed onset of the contemporary phase of ‘globalization’ after 1945.”³⁸ These distancing quotation marks were not just an early adopter’s prudence. In an introductory work on the Silk Road published in 2013, when any number of definitions of globalization had become available to historians, James A. Millward wrote, “qualitatively speaking, the silk road...accomplished the same sort of things we attribute to ‘globalization’ today.”³⁹ Some quotation mark users address the term’s embedded problems head on: Dominic Sachsenmaier argues that the “true complexities” of the “changing world” “are often hidden behind the buzzword of ‘globalization.’”⁴⁰ Others are more circumspect. In her discussion of the global diffusion of tobacco—a topic that would suit the broadest and most politically innocuous version of the word—Marcy Norton uses the word “globalization” in her undergraduate-friendly monograph’s epilogue title and sub-headers, but refrains from using it in body text.⁴¹

Why continue to hold the word at arm’s length? Hunt ascribes historians’ slowness to take up the topic of globalization chiefly to their traditional “straitjacket of nation-centered history writing,” which scholars and pedagogues should of course strive to escape, but there are other reasons worth considering.⁴² While sociologists, interdisciplinary globalization specialists, and economists are deeply interested in pinpointing the origins of globalization in history, historians seem to be particularly skeptical of the term for its presentism. Some, however, citing observations made by Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century, criticize it for its claims to novelty.⁴³ Those who understand globalization to

signify technological developments can dispute it because they see important interconnections happening before the technological developments in question. Those who take it to mean, in a celebratory sense, global economic market integration under Western-style, post-Cold War rules can dispute it because they do not see it as a positive development.⁴⁴ And those who understand globalization as a top-down process can argue that history often works from the bottom up.⁴⁵

Over the past two decades, then, a sprawling conversation has emerged, which spans a number of deep crevasses. Historians who accept globalization as a real phenomenon are divided from those who ignore it, dispute it, or set it in skeptical quotation marks. Among historians who accept globalization, those who see it as a quantifiable economic process are divided from those who see it as a cultural or intellectual one. Historians who believe it to be a recent phenomenon are divided from those who believe it is many centuries old. Historians who, in the broadest sense, believe globalization to have favorable outcomes, are divided from those who use the term to criticize its consequences. And finally, historians who are in dialogue with the social scientists are divided from those who believe globalization is an ineffably historical process: contingent, narrated, ambiguous, and multifaceted. All of these fault lines among scholars and teachers are under constant pressure because students and members of the public remain fascinated by the word “globalization.” They hear it constantly used to explain a great number of historical phenomena, but they constantly receive mixed messages regarding its definitions, its causes, its outcomes, and the political signals they might send by using it in conversation.

In sum, fifteen or twenty years ago, globalization was an “if” question, in that teachers had to decide if they should tack a recent historical development called “globalization” on to the end of a survey class. Today, globalization is a “how” question, in that teachers must decide how to deal with the fact that students assume “globalization” has been happening at all times and in all places. Teachers must also deal with the political baggage that comes along with these students’ assumptions, of which the students themselves may or may not be aware. To put this in the terms of Susan A. Ambrose et al., students who only fifteen years ago might have had an “insufficient prior knowledge” problem with globalization now

have an “inappropriate prior knowledge” problem.⁴⁶ And given the divisions among those producing globalization scholarship, picking up a handful of academic books on the topic is not going to resolve matters very swiftly. Today’s sprawling, all-encompassing definitions of globalization can cause at least two kinds of problems for history teachers. The first is the problem of visualizing this new, vast globalization as it sprawls across space, and the second is the problem of demonstrating to students that globalization does not inevitably advance over time.

II. The Space Problem: Continents, Oceans, and Maps

During the first lecture of “Globalization I,” students brainstorm answers to the question “What are some historical events that we could consider part of the globalization story?” This quickly becomes a confidence-building exercise. Given the number of extant definitions of globalization in academia and popular discourse, just about everyone is right. My opening lecture slide then defines our subject in the broadest possible terms: globalization as the story of increasing human interconnection. Uh-oh: we are ten minutes into lecture, and the topic has already become overwhelming. Since globalization is now everything, and everywhere, how can we start to see it?

The good news, as most teachers already know, is that we are living in a golden age of maps and visualizations. Static and animated maps relevant to the history of globalization are not only available in paywalled academic journals, but are also immediately accessible in popular media: “The Atlantic Slave Trade in Two Minutes” on *Slate*, the world’s most important physical barriers in the *The Washington Post*, even, heaven help us, immigration flows in the *Daily Mail*.⁴⁷ These maps and visualizations are dramatic and instructive, helping students apprehend vast historical changes in very short order. The bad news is that even the best of these maps mislead students, and many of them reify the prior assumptions that students most need to unlearn.

Take, for example, the continents. Exchange between continents is an easy starting point for the history of globalization, because its importance is immediately obvious to students. Happily, many historians agree with them: economic historians have used



Figure 1: A so-called T-O map, reflecting a vision of the world that had become profoundly Christian by the Middle Ages. Printed at Augsburg, 1472. From a description by the Christian bishop Isidore of Seville. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T_and_O_map_Guntherus_Ziner_1472.jpg>.

intercontinental commodity exchange as a globalization benchmark, and Atlantic World historians have defined their field around the interactions of peoples from different continents.⁴⁸ As continental contact requires little explanation, it can be pressed into service immediately. I have asked students exploring a museum, for instance, to find an object that demonstrates the influence of peoples from at least two continents.

Alas, continental connection cannot be where the lesson ends, for continents are as much ideas as they are physical realities.

Their definitions and boundaries have always depended on historically specific patterns of connection, exchange, and political domination.⁴⁹ Europe's early modern Christians, for example, divided the world into continents according to the logic of the ancient T-O map (**Figure 1**), but the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire sprawled across all three of Christian Europe's original continents.⁵⁰ If I talk about continents connecting in the 1500s, am I deploying a fundamentally Christian idea? Ought I to accept, from my students hunting for evidence of continental connections, an object demonstrating exchange between Ottoman Europe and Ottoman Asia? It is only Week 1 of "Globalization I," and we are already facing the weighty intellectual legacy of European imperialism head on.

All right, perhaps we can soft-pedal the history of continents at the dawn of the Atlantic age while retaining the significance of ocean crossings. For oceans, we can surely agree, are not just human constructs. They are real physical barriers, which blocked mass migration and exchange for the vast majority of human history. And indeed, some historians have preserved the oceans even while discarding the continents. In their fascinating book *The Myth of Continents* (published in 1997, just as the term "globalization" exploded into public conversation), Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen proposed the continents' overthrow. However, the global organization scheme with which they proposed to replace the continents maintains a broad deference to the dividing power of the oceans, "because the earth's largest oceans posed the greatest challenges to regular communication in the premodern era"⁵¹ (**Figure 2**).

But the oceans, like the continents, are more subjective than they seem when we look at them on a map. And like the continents, they raise questions about what kinds of interconnection are most important to teach about. Ocean voyages are pleasingly simple to map, and the longer they are, the more important they look, in textbooks or on the websites of popular newspapers. But if ocean crossing can stand in for global interconnection, then European-helmed voyages necessarily appear as the first global ventures, and thus as the people whom the broadest-level story must follow.⁵² If we become too enamored with maps of ocean voyages, then we run the risk of leaving the oceans just as they appeared in the high school textbooks of the 1950s: fields of European innovation and domination.

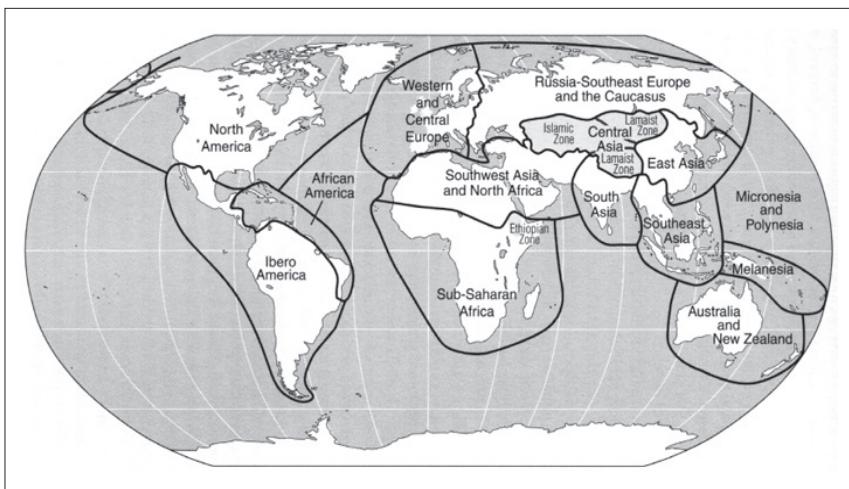


Figure 2: “Heuristic World Regionalization Scheme,” Map 10, in Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997). Published by the University of California Press.

The story of oceans-as-global-dividers, moreover, resolves little for those who study change over time.⁵³ Crossing oceans can be a misleading synecdoche for boundary crossing during periods when empires’ relationships to the oceans were themselves rapidly transforming. A journey that represented truly audacious boundary crossing in one age, by the next might be rather routine. It is crucial, therefore, that we provide alternative stories and comparison cases with seductive visuals of their own. The story of the Chinese navigator Zheng He is helpful because we can explain why Zheng did not *have* to do the kind of thing that Christopher Columbus did.⁵⁴ (Zheng also had a ship that made the *Santa María* look like a bath toy, and it looks great on a lecture slide.)

Some historical comparisons are harder to display on slides. Long before the expeditions of Zheng He or Columbus, Chinese traders conveyed goods for thousands of miles along Chinese rivers. A question that should trouble those teaching globalization is whether their voyages were less “global” than those of the ocean-crossing Europeans because they took place within a realm that had already been politically and economically consolidated.⁵⁵ Many early

modern European ships, moreover, were essentially couriers for Asian and African buyers and sellers.⁵⁶ How might we demonstrate that these savvy, sedentary consumers were, in some ways, the real ocean-crossers? Alas, few visuals are as powerful as a set of lines drawn across a map of the world.

It is worth recalling, here, that most contemporary maps of historical data mislead viewers because of the way they are made. Most are constructed using geographic information system (GIS) software, which allows a historian to plot historical data onto contemporary maps. This kind of map conveys more information than its maker intends. Richard White, citing Henri Lefebvre, has argued that historians generally take one of three theoretical approaches to space: representations of space (i.e., maps); representational space (that is, space “as lived and experienced through a set of symbolic associations”); and “spatial practice” (that is, how people move through space).⁵⁷ White points out that historians, though relatively attentive to representations of space, have been neglectful of spatial practice, and that the use of GIS software has made matters worse with its unquestioning acceptance of not-quite-contemporary space, space as it is depicted on the late twentieth-century maps used by the GIS software itself. Seventeenth-century voyagers do not really belong on late twentieth-century maps, for these maps do not reflect how they saw the world. As the field moves forward, we ought to create, demand, or just keep an eye out for a new generation of digital history visualizations that might allow us to overcome this obstacle. These new visualizations might not just allow us to visualize data overlaid on a supposedly objective (i.e., contemporary) reality, but might also immerse the viewer in systems of perception *as* they changed over time. They might depict, for example, how oceans and continents actually shrank as crossings become more frequent and efficient. Until these visualizations arrive, we are stuck with maps that awkwardly bind the centuries together.

Stymied by the teaching problems presented by the Atlantic Ocean and its continents, I recently found inspiration in a body of scholarship on an earlier age of globalization. The Silk Road, as scholars have recently argued, cannot be accurately represented by lines on a map. “From its inception,” Valerie Hansen writes, this intra-continental pathway “was shown as relatively straight and well-traveled, but it never was. [There was] no clearly marked, paved

route across Eurasia...but instead a patchwork of drifting trails and unmarked footpaths.”⁵⁸ The Silk Road only really existed in the minds of the guides who could determine the best way between one town and the next. “Because there was rarely a discernible route,” Hansen writes, “travelers almost always hired guides to take them along a particular section, and they frequently shifted to another path if they encountered obstacles.”⁵⁹ The desert Silk Road was an ever-changing mental construct; it was whatever, and wherever, a set of local experts determined it to be. The Silk Road took on a different character, however, when its travelers arrived at oasis towns. Thanks to the continuous, widely recognized authority of local rulers, the Silk Road’s towns did not exist only in the minds of its guides. These towns were “real” in a very different way; they could be placed on maps with confidence.

To travel along the Silk Road was thus to journey through a bifurcated political geography.⁶⁰ The desert Silk Road was indeterminate, wild, and solitary, defined by the guides who best understood its ever-changing local ecological and political conditions. The urban Silk Road was named, settled, and law-abiding; a far broader set of peoples agreed on its reality and characteristics.

This new history of the Silk Road offers a high-level framework for teaching today’s globalization-minded students about subjectively defined spaces like the Atlantic, as well as the connections made among its peoples. For the Atlantic Ocean, though capacious and geographically indeterminate like the Silk Road, was never a space without logic or rules, defined paths, or dividing lines. It was, rather, a hybrid space: defined partly by physical boundaries, and more significantly by people—broad constituencies who held the space in their minds rather than the individual actors who might have traversed it “first.” Different groups of stakeholders conceptualized (and thus made) different parts of the Atlantic, and when their conceptualizations overlapped or shifted, the world changed. Voyages across the Atlantic, like Silk Road treks, were collaborative journeys along a shifting set of lines, determined by economy, technology, conflict, and environment, and navigated by those with expert knowledge of physical and political climates.⁶¹ Their precise courses were determined through expertise and experience, in the face of human and natural hazards. The broader lesson here is that the study of globalization must attend to the ways

in which spaces and pathways of interconnection are given specific contours by ideas, daily practice, and political force, by systems, institutions, and groups. Globalization's unevenness does not have to be reduced to faster vs. slower, or winners vs. losers—different paths can be, quite simply, different.

If we conceive of our task in this way, as the problem of explaining the contours of a world that is part physically defined and part communally defined, then we can turn to our existing pedagogical resources with fresh eyes. Some of these resources are quite venerable. The history of empire, for example, explains how the contours of global trade were formed by changing imperial demands. Empires “created the administrative infrastructures to help or impede the circulation of products...developed political economies to regulate that circulation...[and] were the frameworks for the construction of trust among social agents and for legal and social enforcement.”⁶² More recent projects that trace the contours of oceans, seas, and basins—the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean—are also part of the study of globalization. Some conceive of lines instead of spaces, tracing the networks and routes of long-distance exchange. Ian Steele’s “English Atlantic,” for example, is a set of routes: sugar routes, tobacco routes, Western routes, and Northern routes, whose *systematization* (rather than first traversal) defined the arrival of a new age.⁶³ Studies of global port cities are studies of the points where lines intersect: in Boston, Amsterdam, or Livorno, the resources of a hinterland pooled before pouring out into a wider world.⁶⁴ Still other kinds of useful projects focus on the human mind itself as the place where new worlds were shaped. Alison Games’ *Web of Empire*, for one, addresses a set of individual cosmopolitans who applied their experience in one region to their ventures in another, building an empire “on the ground, in the peripheries” through “models devised in different colonial and commercial settings” that could be “adapted and transported.”⁶⁵ And some of the most helpful works are brand new, affiliated with the “spatial turn,” which denaturalizes space by tracing the political contours and the human understanding of space, or territory. As two scholars recently argued in the *Journal of Global History*, “Globalization can be interpreted as a dialectical process of de- and re-territorialization,” including “challenges to existing borders...and the establishment of new borders.”⁶⁶ Here, too, is the kind of globalization story worth translating for the classroom.

One final way that we can counteract the power of maps that over-privilege long lines is by focusing on the interplay of longer and shorter lines—that is, between long-distance and short-range commerce, the global and the local.⁶⁷ Long-distance journeys, after all, were only possible when they were supported by powerful local economies and societies, and many who participated in long-distance travel only went a part of the way.⁶⁸ Spain’s treasure fleets entranced its rivals because of the immense wealth carried by each individual ship—this was wealth that could be stolen. But the *flotas* were only possible because of wealth-producing local infrastructure and populations, which were far more difficult to steal. As late as 1790, the three largest cities in North America remained the Spanish-American hubs of Mexico City, Havana, and Puebla, Mexico.⁶⁹ It was humans who made treasure. Even piracy itself depended on local infrastructure—as recent scholarship has shown, Caribbean pirates were locals, deeply embedded in their own commercial and social systems even as they preyed on the long-distance shippers.⁷⁰ The globalization story, then, is not always in ever-lengthening lines, but in sets of longer and shorter lines. As these lines evolved in relationship to one another, our brief has become more complicated still. To talk about space, we must also talk about time.⁷¹

III. The Time Problem: Boundaries, Economics, and Technology

My students tended to arrive in “Globalization I” fundamentally confident in the inexorability of human interconnection over time. While it remains to be seen how the current pandemic will transform the prevailing tendency to equate interconnection with progress, most of my students have been particularly confident in the inevitability of three things: the breaking of physical boundaries and barriers, the integration of global markets, and the development of technology. Their confidence was, of course, misguided, but it was not their fault. Popular media encourages us to see the advance of globalization everywhere, and academic scholarship, as we have seen, has swept up even anti-globalization movements into a broader story of *the process of globalization*, whose main premise is the existence and historical consequence of the process itself.

Yet as even the most confident students must acknowledge, we today have a great deal of technology at our disposal, but we do not live in an evenly interconnected or a boundary-less world, nor is there any evidence that we will arrive there. Above, I viewed this as a problem of space—of how globalization’s shapes could be productively visualized. We can also, however, consider it as a time problem. To help break down students’ assumptions about the inexorability of dissolving boundaries over time, we must pair studies of boundary breaking with studies of boundary making over time, through which we can discuss which kinds of boundaries matter most, and to whom, and why.

For historians, studies of *political* boundary making are fairly easy to find. All early modern state making, for example, is boundary making. The state places clearer bounds around its people, and subsequently draws more heavily on its “own” people’s resources to make bolder outward-reaching claims. To wit: Christopher Columbus’s boundary-breaking expedition was made possible, in part, by the consolidation of early modern Spain. But political borders are not the only kinds of boundaries that matter. Many forms of cultural and social boundary making cannot—and should not—be reflexively mapped back on to politics in order to prove their significance. After all, empires are not the only institutions that have separated people from one another, or established the contours of global exchange. I teach here in the spirit of Trivellato (although I have had to paraphrase her words), who has argued that a “heterogeneity of governance forms coexisted across time and space more than it evolved along a continuum of development.”⁷² The family, the religious community, and the corporation are governance institutions that predated the rise of global empires, and often worked at odds with them, even when nestled inside them. Capitalism itself, defined carefully enough, can be taught as a boundary-making as well as a boundary-breaking institution. It creates certain “free” global markets while allowing itself to be reinforced through certain systems of power; it builds empires and subverts them at the same time. I like to give students the original charter to the Dutch West India Company to analyze. Business majors delight in what they recognize. Aspiring lawyers pore over the contractual language. Everyone can come to see the importance of what the company does and, even more importantly, what it does not owe to the state.



Figure 3: An artificial island built at Dejima, Japan to contain foreign traders. “Ground-plan of the Dutch trade-post on the island Dejima at Nagasaki,” Isaac Titsingh, *Bijzonderheden over Japan [Details of Japan]* (The Hague, Netherlands: Weduwe J. Allart, 1824). Koninklijke Bibliotheek (National Library of the Netherlands), <<https://www.kb.nl/themas/geschiedenis-en-cultuur/koloniaal-verleden/nederland-en-japan-400-jaar-handel>>.

The creation and defense of intellectual boundaries, too, is a story worth integrating into the teaching of globalization. Ignorance, barriers to knowledge, resistance to knowledge, provincialism: these terms carry negative baggage. In the teleological globalization narrative, they represent stasis, and must inevitably be overcome. Yet this is far from the case, for these forms of boundaries are collective, often deliberate human constructs, at once material and ideological, sometimes for better and at other times for worse. Even—or particularly—in periods of rapid global integration, micro-politics and provincialism are worthy of study. Philadelphia in the 1790s, for example, was one of the most sophisticated commercial ports in the Anglophone world. Its merchants sent goods to scores of destinations

around the world, using the most sophisticated technologies of finance that had ever been developed. Yet, as I learned in my own research, so intense was the provincialism of the city's commercial population that when the Insurance Company of North America's president proposed moving its offices twelve blocks away from the waterfront to reduce its officers' risk of yellow fever, the company's dismayed secretary noted his own preference, instead, for a move to Wilmington, Delaware, where, presumably, safer waterfront realty would be available. "At 12th Street," the secretary sighed, "it will be nearly as difficult to do business with us as if we were at Wilmington."⁷³ I have no reason to doubt his opinion. Provincialism, in cases like this, is not the absence of global insight. It is, rather, a demonstration of the finely honed micro-geographical knowledge of a market maker. For merchants reluctant to walk uphill, the single mile dividing the harbor from 12th Street was effectively equivalent to the forty miles separating Philadelphia from Wilmington. If the world is tending toward interconnection, as many globalization scholars argue, then periods of stasis, and outbursts of cosmopolitan chauvinism, merit particularly close investigation. We must teach students, moreover, to study them dispassionately. For sometimes they reflect ignorance, sometimes they reflect culture, and sometimes they reflect mastery.

Perhaps the most dearly cherished student assumption, at the private university where I taught globalization, is that *economic* interconnection among regions of the world is normal, and will naturally progress unless specifically halted. This assumption trickles in, without a doubt, from political conversations, in spite of the existence of an enormous advanced literature to the contrary, and in spite of the power of contemporary nationalist political currents (it's too soon to say whether political change will upend this assumption in the decades to come). To historians, it is obvious that markets are deliberately formed, and that trade is intertwined with un-economic processes like state machinations as well as with religious projects, scientific endeavors, and the like. But students benefit from learning about times and places where commercial barriers were deliberately created with particular, productive ends in mind. Consider, for example, the famous image of Dejima, the minuscule artificial island built by the Japanese to contain foreign traders in Nagasaki Harbor in the first decades of the seventeenth century (**Figure 3**). The image of containment is almost too perfect.

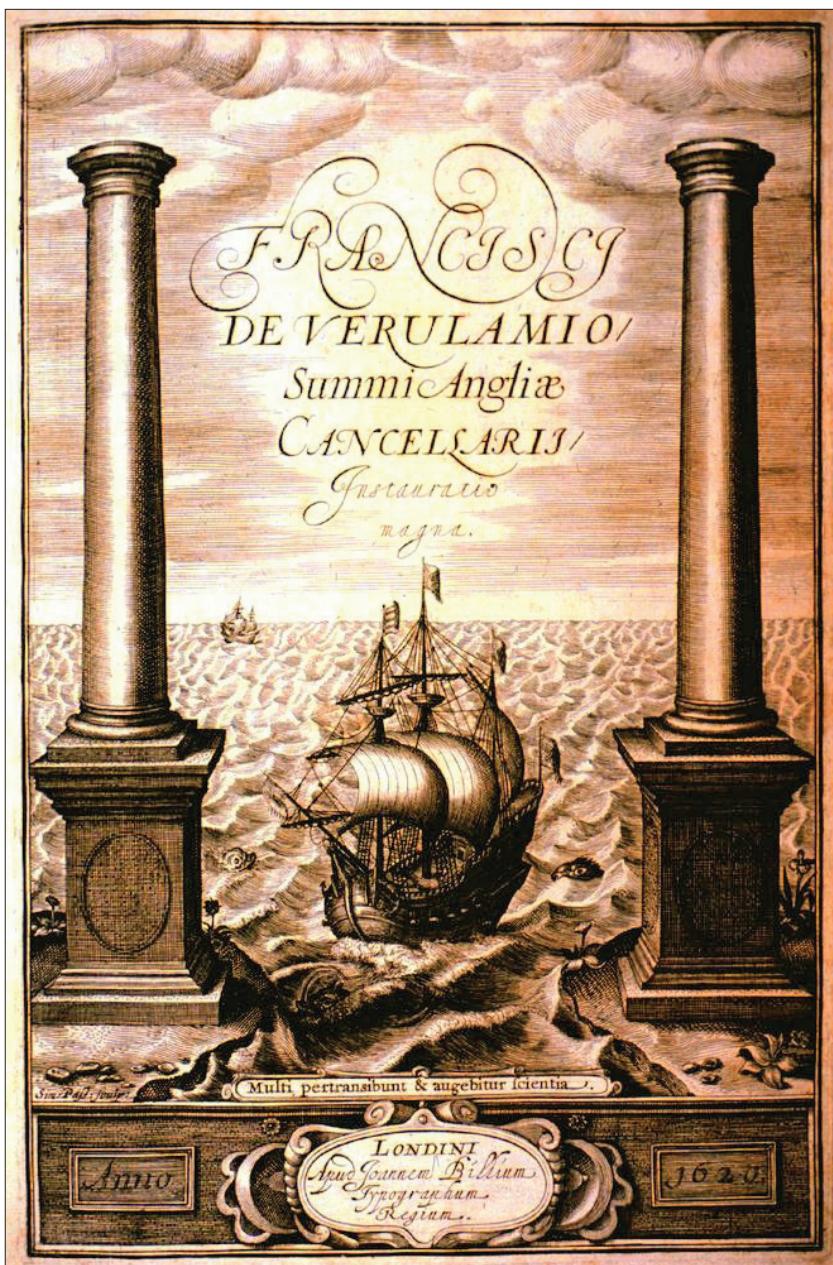


Figure 4: A ship sails through the Pillars of Hercules. Engraved title page, Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* from *Instauratio Magna* [The Great Instauration] (London, 1620). <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bacon_Great_Instauration_frontispiece.jpg>.

The Western foothold, famously, was limited to a single island, linked to the mainland by a single, narrow passageway guarded on both sides. Depicted in this way, Dejima seems to represent “Eastern” resistance to the kind of “Western” encroachment represented in the 1620 frontispiece of Francis Bacon’s *The Great Instauration*, in which European ships sail beyond the Pillars of Hercules and into the Atlantic’s great unknown—its future represented by unbounded space (**Figure 4**). The spatial narrative tells itself too clearly: resistance (Eastern) is specific, confined, deliberate, and bounded; contemporary expansion (Western) is broad, boundless, and flows with the course of the (natural) winds. Yet in reality, the creation of Dejima was itself a way forward, a specifically chosen trade space rather than an emblem of (small-scale, specific, precarious) resistance. It was an attempt to implant visiting traders within a space acceptable to government. As Adam Clulow writes, the Japanese seventeenth-century shogunate announced his reception of the head of the Dutch factory at Dejima by calling out to him as “the Holland Captain,” which situated him as “the captain of a small piece of territory within the shogun’s realm.”⁷⁴ With the tiny Dejima defined as his physical territory, the captain could be integrated into the narrative of Japanese sovereignty.

The globalization narrative writ large needs more economic narratives like these: restrictions that were resounding successes, or global interconnections that were consciously rejected or eliminated rather simply failing for intuitive, obvious, or “natural” reasons. After all, trade cannot be dichotomized into closed and open, blocked and free. To offer another example: as McKeown has observed, piracy could be eliminated by legal, military, and territorial authorities only when these authorities were able to impose tariffs to offset the expense of enforcement. Thus, the maintenance of “free” trade actually required the creation—and maintenance and continual adjustment—of so-called trade “barriers.”⁷⁵

A third student assumption about globalization’s inexorability has to do with technology’s role in facilitating human interconnection. A generation of work on the history of technology has not prevented first-year undergraduates from arriving on campus assuming that the inevitable progress of technology is the main driver of the process of global integration. Here, as with globalization as a whole, it is better to run towards the problems rather than away from them. It is important even for historians fearful of technological determinism

to acknowledge the ways in which technology is transformative in order to gain student trust in the narratives for which it is not—for example, the oceangoing ship, as a technology, really does set the age of oceanic expansion apart from that of the Silk Road. But as we can also show, the “ship” is more than the sum of its material parts. While the history of transoceanic imperial expansion tends to default to a vision of a ship as a single, European-led unit, histories of sailors’ national and ethnic diversity have demonstrated their enormous social complexity.⁷⁶ We can and must use this knowledge to show that the ship is a social (and, thus, a political) machine as well as a physical one. Recent scholarship on political economy has drawn “technical” topics into a broader set of social, cultural, and political narratives; globalization technologies like the ship deserve the same kind of contextualization.

VI. Conclusion

The word “globalization” appears to be here to stay. Twenty years after the idea of globalization burst into popular consciousness, it maintains a prominent place in public conversation. It also remains immensely popular with university students, who put their trust in its explanatory power, even though it has been used to signify an impossibly broad number of things, and even though it remains tethered to a public conversation over which teachers have little control. Confrontation, however, remains a better strategy than evasion. For student beginners, in particular, historians must do more than simply argue that globalization was not inevitable, and that it was more complicated than it first appears. We have the opportunity and the responsibility to demonstrate that globalization is not a story of the inevitable technical triumph over distance, nor of the inevitable rise of free trade, nor of the emergence of a mood of global unity. Nor is it even a set of specific barriers holding or failing against a powerful, diffuse tide, nor merely a flow of integration that creates some winners and other losers.⁷⁷ Rather, we can show that globalization is the strategic destruction of certain *specific* barriers, accompanied by the creation of new barriers and the strategic retention and recasting of other barriers, equally specific. We can show that globalization has a shape, and that its shape changes over time. We can show that the most important force in changing its

shape is collective human choice. To date, these approaches have most eloquently been framed in political terms (as studies in imperial and legal history, political geography, transnational history, or spatial history), but they cannot and should not be limited to politics. We will need new maps, replete with new lines, new spaces, and new ever-changing boundaries, to organize this conversation.

Notes

The author wishes to thank Nathan Perl-Rosenthal and the participants in the Global Maritime History Conference at the Huntington Library in 2016, as well as Elizabeth Blackmar, *The History Teacher's* referees, and the Boston College History Department.

1. Peter N. Stearns, "Treating Globalization in History Surveys," *The History Teacher* 36, no. 2 (February 2003): 154.
2. Publications with the word "globalization" in the title have multiplied exponentially since the mid-1990s. Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2014), 45.
3. Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "When Did Globalisation Begin?" *European Review of Economic History* 6, no. 1 (April 2002): 23-50.
4. Peter N. Stearns, *Globalization in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1.
5. Peter Urmetzer, *Globalization Unplugged: Sovereignty and the Canadian State in the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 5.
6. Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2003), xi.
7. Alan J. Ryan, "Globalization Spins on Telecom Axis," *Computerworld*, 17 April 1989.
8. David Crane, "Growing Toll of Losers Raises Questions About Push to Globalization," *Toronto Star*, 6 February 1996.
9. Stanley Fischer, "Globalization and its Challenges," *American Economic Review* 93, no. 2 (May 2003): 2.
10. Stearns, "Treating Globalization in History Surveys," 153.
11. These figures were collected from a Lexis Nexis search, 31 August 2016.
12. "Globalization, n." *OED Online*, September 2009, <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/272264>>.
13. Noam Scheiber, "Obama's Budget Seeks to Ease Economic Fears for U.S. Workers," *The New York Times*, 9 February 2016; Sean Trende, "Trump's

Ceiling of Support May Be Limited,” *The New York Times*, 11 February 2016; David Brooks, “The Roosevelt Approach,” *The New York Times*, 16 February 2016; Larry Rohter, “Review: In Alvaro Enrigue’s ‘Sudden Death,’ a Farcical Duel with Topspin,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2016; Billy Witz, “Guatemalan Athletes are Dribbling, and Not Only With Their Feet,” *The New York Times*, 11 February 2016; “5 Things to Know about the Pope’s Trip to Mexico,” *The New York Times*, 11 February 2016.

14. Peter von Sivers, Charles A. Desnoyers, and George B. Stow, *Patterns of World History, Volume 2: Since 1400* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1107.
15. Frank J. Lechner and John Boli, eds., *The Globalization Reader* (Chichester, United Kingdom: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 2.
16. Steger, *Globalization*, 7-8.
17. Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 62.
18. Scholte, *Globalization*, 70.
19. On “hard” vs. “soft” globalization (i.e., globalization as outcome of economic process vs. globalization as a term that more broadly “evo[kes]...a compressed and intensified world”), see Jan de Vries, “The Limits of Globalization in the Early Modern World,” *The Economic History Review* 63, no. 3 (August 2010): 711.
20. O’Rourke and Williamson, “When Did Globalisation Begin?” 25. See also the rebuttal by Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, “Path Dependence, Time Lags and the Birth of Globalisation: A Critique of O’Rourke and Williamson,” *European Review of Economic History* 8, no. 1 (April 2004): 81-108.
21. *Journal of Global History* home page, Cambridge University Press, <<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-global-history>>.
22. *Critical Historical Studies*, “The Program of CHS,” The University of Chicago Press, <<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/journals/chs/program>>.
23. Augustine Sedgewick, “Against Flows,” *History of the Present* 4, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 143.
24. Bruce Mazlish, “Comparing Global History to World History,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28, no. 3 (Winter 1998): 387.
25. Daniel Squizzero, comment posted 1 May 2015, in “Defining Global History vs. World History,” H-World discussion forum, H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online, 31 March 2015, <<https://networks.h-net.org/node/20292/discussions/66052/defining-world-history-vs-global-history>>.
26. Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 1.
27. Emma Rothschild frames this as “the history of the end, or the reversibility of globalization” in “Globalization and the Return of History,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 115 (Summer 1999): 108.
28. Stearns, *Globalization in World History*, 6; J. R. McNeill and William H. McNeill, *The Human Web: A Bird’s-Eye View of World History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), cited by Helge Wendt and Jürgen Renn, “Knowledge and Science in Current Discussions of Globalization,” in *The Globalization of*

Knowledge in History, ed. Jürgen Renn (Berlin, Germany: Max Planck Research Library, 2012), 49; Mazlish, “Comparing Global History to World History,” 386.

29. David Northrup, “Globalization and the Great Convergence: Rethinking World History in the Long Term,” *Journal of World History* 16, no. 3 (September 2005): 249–267.

30. Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, “The Spanish Empire, Globalization, and Cross-Cultural Consumption in a World Context, c. 1400-c. 1750,” in *Global Goods and the Spanish Empire, 1492-1824: Circulation, Resistance, and Diversity*, ed. Bethany Aram and Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 277.

31. Francesca Trivellato, “Introduction: The Historical and Comparative Study of Cross-Cultural Trade,” in *Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000-1900*, ed. Francesca Trivellato, Leor Halevi, and Cátia Antunes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7.

32. Maya Jasanoff, *The Dawn Watch: Joseph Conrad in a Global World* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 7.

33. Transnational history, which “explor[es] actors, movements, and forces that cross boundaries and penetrate the fabrics of nations,” is a highly compatible project, albeit one that remains tied, by definition, to the age of the nation. Matthias Middell and Katja Neumann, “Global History and the Spatial Turn: From the Impact of Area Studies to the Study of Critical Junctures of Globalization,” *Journal of Global History* 5, no. 1 (March 2010): 160.

34. Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*, 53.

35. Cátia Antunes and Karwan Fatah-Black, “Introduction,” in *Explorations in History and Globalization*, ed. Cátia Antunes and Karwan Fatah-Black (New York: Routledge, 2016), xlvi.

36. Adam McKeown, “Periodizing Globalization,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 63 (Spring 2007): 219.

37. Antunes and Fatah-Black, “Introduction,” xiii; and Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*, 46, have both made this observation.

38. C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 1.

39. James A. Millward, *The Silk Road: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

40. Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History: Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

41. Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 257.

42. Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*, 46.

43. Urmetzer, *Globalization Unplugged*, 38.

44. Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*, 1. Scholarship is also divided on whether globalization is Western-driven or whether it undercuts narratives of Western domination. A particularly nuanced take comes from Akira Iriye, who periodizes the matter: before 1945, he writes, interconnection took place primarily under Western auspices, but ever since, non-Western countries and

peoples “have been actively making history.” Iriye, *Global Interdependence: The World After 1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 5.

45. Lynn Hunt discusses historians’ strengths in bottom-up studies of globalization in *Writing History in the Global Era*, ch. 2. In his most recent edition of *Globalization in World History* (2017), Peter Stearns notes that he has included “a broader discussion of regional reactions”—that is, he continues to view globalization, implicitly, as a “top-down” global process, but broadens his discussion of the topic to include bottom-up response. Publicity e-mail to the author from Routledge, 25 August 2016.

46. Susan A. Ambrose, Michael W. Bridges, Michele DiPietro, Marsha C. Lovett, and Marie K. Norman, *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 18, 20.

47. Andrew Kahn and Jamelle Bouie, “The Atlantic Slave Trade in Two Minutes,” *Slate*, 25 June 2015, <https://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_history_of_american_slavery/2015/06/animated_interactive_of_the_history_of_the_atlantic_slave_trade.html>; Max Fisher, “40 More Maps that Explain the World,” *The Washington Post*, 13 January 2014, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/01/13/40-more-maps-that-explain-the-world/>>; Ellie Zolfagharifard, “Watch Two Centuries of Immigration to the US: Incredible Animation Shows the Populations that have Arrived in America since 1820,” *Daily Mail*, 9 May 2016, <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3581712/Watch-two-centuries-immigration-Incredible-animation-shows-populations-arrived-America-1820.html>>.

48. “Atlantic history...operates upon new assumptions about how to understand the remarkable nature of interactions between different peoples and cultures on four continents and many islands...” *Oxford Bibliographies: Atlantic History*, ed. Trevor Burnard, Oxford University Press, <<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/obo/page/atlantic-history>>. For more evidence of both the importance of continents and the problems they pose for historians, see Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, “Born with a ‘Silver Spoon’: The Origin of World Trade in 1571,” *Journal of World History* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1995): “For our purposes,” they write, “global trade emerged when all important populated continents began to exchange products continuously—both with each other directly and indirectly via other continents—and in values sufficient to generate crucial impacts on all the trading partners” (p. 201). In a follow-up article, Flynn and Giráldez subtly revise their framework, recasting the moment of true global integration as one that drew the Pacific Ocean (“one-third of the surface area of the earth”) together with “the American landmasses and the Atlantic Ocean,” along with the final third, “the Afro-Eurasian complex.” Flynn and Giráldez, “Path Dependence, Time Lags and the Birth of Globalisation,” 82. Jan de Vries in 2010 adapted Flynn and Giráldez’s definition, but focused his own analysis on “intercontinental trade between Europe and Asia,” that is, between two subunits of the same land mass. Jan de Vries, “The Limits of Globalization in the Early Modern World,” 715.

49. Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

50. For maps produced by the Ottoman Empire, which place less emphasis on the kinds of boundaries that early modern Europeans tended to prioritize, see Palmira Brummett, “Mapping the Ottoman World—Imagining the Early Modern Ottoman Space, from World History to Piri Reis,” in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15–58.

51. Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, 142.

52. “Firsting,” as Jean M. O’Brien has called it, is the construction of historical narrative that emphasizes European arrival and links it with modernity, implicitly excluding indigenous peoples from the possibility of a shared modernity or a modernity of their own. Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 6.

53. The “heuristic world regional scheme” Lewis and Wigen offer as a substitute for the conventional modern-day set of continents, though it “focus[es]... on historical processes” in preference to “political and ecological boundaries,” nonetheless inevitably divides the earth into fixed, separate spaces. Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, 187.

54. For an assessment of the limited utility of some works in this genre, see Judith Wyman, review of *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405-1433* by Louise Levathes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) in *The Historian* 60, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 654–655.

55. Francesca Trivellato, “The Organization of Trade in Europe and Asia, 1400–1800,” in *Cambridge World History Volume 6, The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE, Part 2 Patterns of Change*, ed. Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 161.

56. Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 392–396, 438–439.

57. Richard White, “What is Spatial History?” *The Spatial History Project* (2010), Stanford University, <<https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29>>.

58. Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (London, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2012), 8.

59. Hansen, *The Silk Road*, 8.

60. For an introduction to the term “political geography,” see John A. Agnew, “Global Political Geography Beyond Geopolitics” (review), *International Studies Review* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 91–99. Nearly eliminated from academic conversation in the mid-twentieth century due to its shameful association with the Nazi ideology of geography as national destiny, “political geography” reemerged in the 1980s as scholars became interested in “how geographical representations and practices (from the labels given to world regions and their rankings in strategic hierarchies through notions of containment and domino effects to shifting patterns of trade and investment flows) influence elite and popular approaches to world politics.” It includes, as well, study of topics such as “how historical change

alters understanding of the influence of geographic ‘facts’” (p. 93). Compare, here, Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen’s use of the term “metageography,” that is to say, “the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world.” Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, ix.

61. Lauren Benton’s descriptions of empires’ relationship to space show that neither lines nor spaces are complex enough visualizations: empires “composed a fabric that was full of holes, stitched together out of pieces, a tangle of strings...an empire’s spaces were politically fragmented; legally differentiated; and encased in irregular, porous, and sometimes undefined borders.” Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2.

62. Yun-Casalilla, “The Spanish Empire, Globalization, and Cross-Cultural Consumption in a World Context,” 278.

63. Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1750: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), ch. 1.

64. See, for example, Catherine Cangany, *Frontier Seaport: Detroit’s Transformation into an Atlantic Entrepot* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2014).

65. Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11.

66. Middell and Neumann, “Global History and the Spatial Turn,” 152.

67. Gregory E. O’Malley, *Final Passages: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619-1807* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

68. Hardly any travelers journeyed the full extent of the Silk Road; most made “smaller circuits...a few hundred miles...between their hometown and the next oasis.” Hansen, *The Silk Road*, 10.

69. James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2009), 39.

70. Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

71. According to some, the study of globalization risks over-privileging that which is global in scope and economic in nature. Lynn Hunt, for one, writes in *Writing History in the Global Era* that “The...overarching globalization paradigm has two potentially troubling consequences: it shifts attention to macro-historical (worldwide) and especially macroeconomic trends, and it ensconces the assumption that economics shapes all other aspect of life” (p. 59). As the rest of this article demonstrates, many scholars who consider their focus to be globalization in fact address local issues (and their relationship to global change) with great interest and subtlety.

72. Trivellato, “The Organization of Trade in Europe and Asia,” 173.

73. Ebenezer Hazard to Robert Ralston, 28 August 1797, Box 2, Samuel Hazard Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA).

74. Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 112.
75. McKeown, “Periodizing Globalization,” 223.
76. See, for example, Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen Sailors: Becoming American in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), for the complexities of national identity. On ethnic and racial identity, see Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Slaves, Sailors, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000). The *Journal of Global History*’s July 2016 issue argues that the “critical sites of the nineteenth century...were the phenomena that connected discoveries, mental maps, world regions, and the relationship between the land and the sea.” Martin Dusinberre and Roland Wenzlhuemer, “Editorial - Being in Transit: Ships and Global Incompatibilities,” *Journal of Global History* 11, no. 2 (July 2016): 155.
77. Sedgwick, *Against Flow*.



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