13

Assessing imperialism

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If we were to look at a political map of the world in 1750, the most dominant configuration would not be nation states but empires. The same is true for a map of 1850, especially when we remember that most of the nation states of Europe at that time were also empires or aspiring empires. The categories of "empire" and "nation" were not mutually exclusive, and people around 1850 were more likely to consider the two as simultaneous and mutually beneficial rather than as diachronic and antagonistic. We would expect a map of 1950 to reflect nation-state hegemony, especially with the rise of the United Nations in 1945, but, even then, we would still be able to observe empires in operation around the world. Growing United States and Soviet power at that time could be framed as imperial paradigms in their own right. Empire has been a fundamental structure of world history for thousands of years, and this has continued to be the case in the last few hundred years, the so-called modern period. "By comparison," as historians Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper argue in their *Empires in World History* (2010), "the nation-state appears as a blip on the historical horizon, a state form that emerged recently from under imperial skies and whose hold on the world's political imagination may well prove partial or transitory."[1]

This chapter will discuss four related questions about the history of imperialism since about 1750, and the way this has been studied. The first and second might appear simple, but have engendered much heated debate in academic and public circles: "What are empires?" "How did they work?" The traditional approach described imperial expansion as a monolithic extension of core power, but scholarship of late has come to appreciate the ways in which imperial formation was incomplete, heterogeneous, and contingent

1 Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 3.

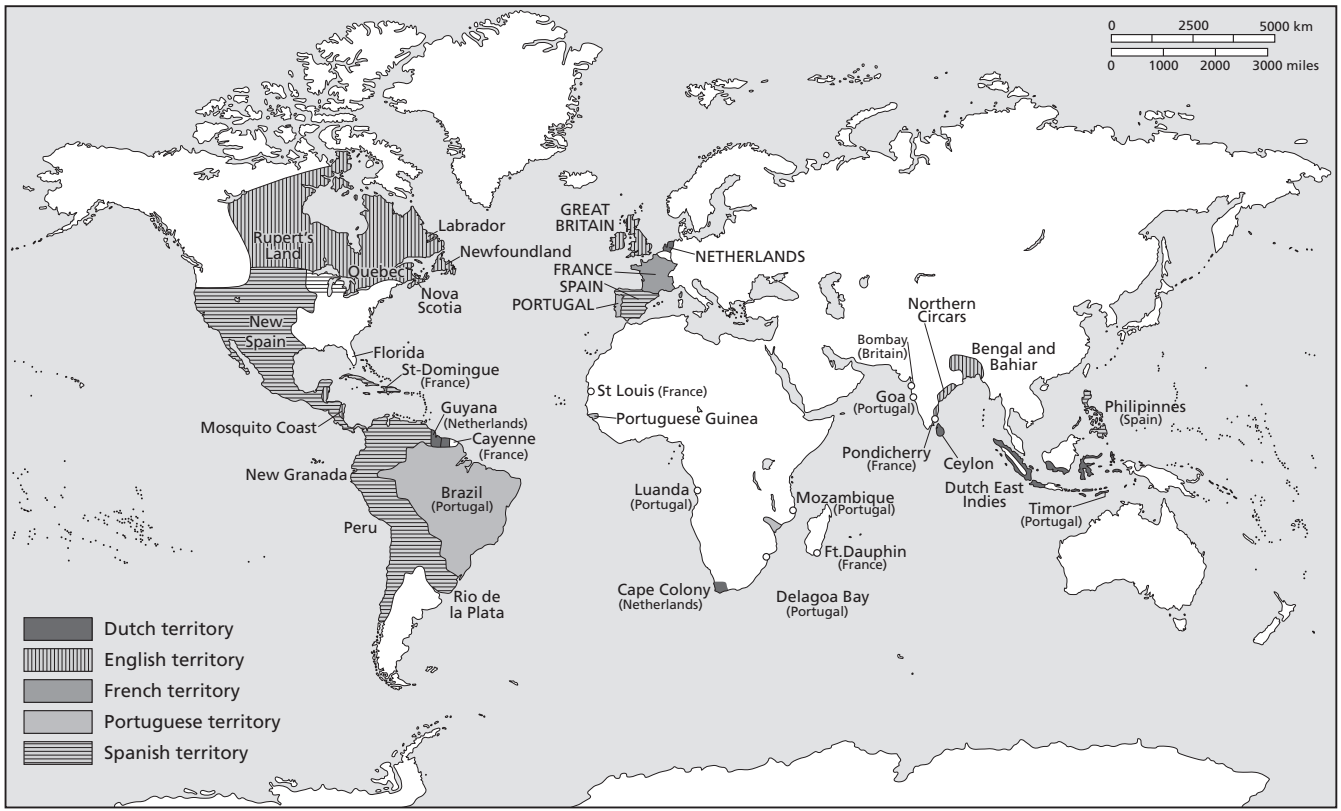
upon local conditions. In that regard, the third question, "How did resistance matter?" is one of the most pressing in imperial studies today. The final question arises from the endurance of empire in human history, and speaks to issues of change within this continuity, "How was modern imperialism different from earlier efforts?" This question contends with the transnational and global "turns" in imperial scholarship and discusses different approaches to the relationship between imperialism and globalization. Some would argue that the two phenomena were (and continue to be) essentially the same process, while others who write the history of connections that cut across or "provincialize" imperial structures have revealed a less deterministic relationship between the two.

What are empires?

Across the world in the middle of the eighteenth century there were dozens of political units that people at the time recognized as empires, colonies, and metropoles (or "seats" of imperial power). World historians have tended to divide these formations into two basic categories: "land" and "overseas" empires. The land exemplars included the Russian, Ottoman, and Qing empires, which had expanded over centuries through military conquest, annexation, and alliances from smaller core areas to rule vast contiguous territories, as well as slightly smaller land-based empires such as the Austrian or the Mughal (Map 13.1).

The overseas empires in 1750 were largely European, the result of colonial ventures that began in the late fifteenth century. Portuguese colonies included Brazil, small posts along the east and west coasts of Africa, and at Goa, Sri Lanka, Macao, and a few other places in Asia. Spain built the largest colonial empire in the western hemisphere, and also established colonial rule in the Philippines. In the seventeenth century, the Dutch won their independence from Spain, and established more colonies and trading centers in South Africa, the Americas, and Southeast Asia; they became the major European power in the Indian Ocean basin. A second wave of colonization that began in the 1660s resulted in French and British colonies in North America, the Caribbean, and South Asia. Wars in the last half of the eighteenth century gave Britain many of France's overseas colonies, and it became the major power in the Indian Ocean, eclipsing the Dutch. Although Britain lost much of North America with the American War of Independence (1776–1783), it retained territory that would become Canada and in 1787 it established a penal colony in Australia (Map 13.2).

Map 13.1 Eurasia in 1750, with Russian, Ottoman, Qing, Austrian, and Mughal empires



Map 13.2 European overseas empires in 1783, showing those of Portugal, Spain, the Dutch Republic, France, and Britain

While dividing empires into land- and sea-based makes sense for an introduction to the topic, it also has important disadvantages. One is the tendency to dismiss land empires as pre-modern, inward-looking, and "Oriental," and valorize European sea-based formations as the engines of modernity and globalization. Another is the tendency to classify an empire into one category or the other, and thus to overlook the simultaneity of land and sea projects in every empire in this period as well as ignore those that did not fit easily into a category. The Spanish Empire, for example, is sometimes left out of these discussions, as it defies easy categorization, with its large swaths of land claims in the Americas, Europe, and Southeast Asia, trading enclaves along the west coast of Africa, plantation operations in the Caribbean and Philippines, and vast trade networks that spanned the Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans. Likewise, to imagine the British Empire as essentially a seafaring effort is to dismiss the land empires it attempted to govern in North America, South Asia, and Australasia. The same could be said for the Portuguese in Brazil and the French in North America, Southeast Asia, Algeria, and West Africa. The territory and populations these countries claimed authority over in their "overseas" empires, in many cases, went beyond mere enclaves and was on a scale far greater than that of their land and population governance in Europe.

Conversely, the Ottoman Empire, often seen as a classic land empire, could just as easily be framed as an empire built on controlling seaways – the Red, Black, and Mediterranean Seas – and it was Ottoman control of the Mediterranean that propelled Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese traders into Atlantic exploration.[2] For Russia, mercantilist activities based out of St Petersburg nearly monopolized the lumber trade in northern waters, and Crimea was a valuable Black Sea territory. The Chinese Qing empire consciously prioritized Central and Northern Asian expansion over seafaring efforts, but was still very invested in maintaining control of overseas trade in East and Southeast Asia, which it did quite successfully until the Opium Wars with Britain, beginning in 1839.[3] Less well-known eighteenth-century empires, such as the Asanti in West Africa, the Iroquois

2 Dina R. Khoury and Dane K. Kennedy, "Comparing empires: the Ottoman domains and the British Raj in the long nineteenth century," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27:2 (2007), 233–244. See Peter F. Bang and C. A. Bayly, eds., *Tributary Empires in Global History* (London: Palgrave, 2011), p. 6, for a counter-argument.

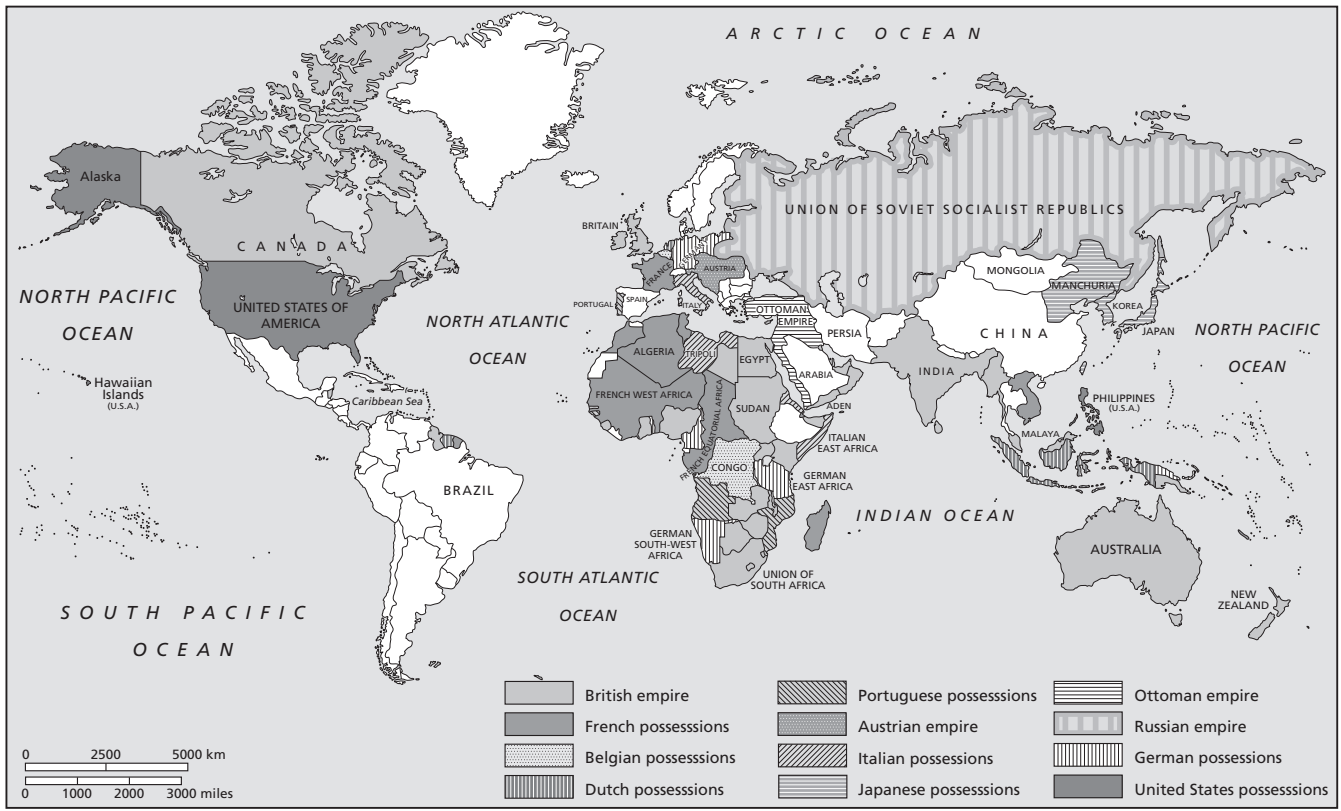
3 See Eric Tagliacozzo and Wen-Chin Chang, eds., *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

Confederacy in North America, Kamehameha I's Kingdom of Hawai'i, and Tipu Sultan's Kingdom of Mysore in South Asia, also sustained themselves by asserting authority over both territory and waterways. Thus, while the "land" versus "sea" distinction might help us imagine zones on a map, it does not really facilitate a complex understanding of what empire entailed.

The empires that were created or expanded in the nineteenth century also combined land and sea power. In 1858 the British government took over the rule of much of India from the private East India Company, and then expanded British holdings to include Burma, Malaya, and parts of Borneo. At the same time the French seized Vietnam, and then Laos and Cambodia to form French Indochina in 1887, and the Dutch government took over direct control of Java and other islands from the Dutch East India Company, leaving Siam as the only independent state in Southeast Asia. Between 1880 and 1914, Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, and Italy scrambled to grab parts of Africa, and by 1914 controlled almost all of the continent except Ethiopia and Liberia. At the end of the nineteenth century, the United States took control of the former Spanish colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, and Japan annexed Taiwan and made Korea a protectorate (Map 13.3).

Whether they divide empires into land- and sea-based or not, most considerations of empires have tended to view them in political and military terms, that is, as territorial conquests by an established state. Since at least Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the first volume of which was published in 1776, that definition has been the most common, and has been generally used in the large and long-standing field of "imperial history."[4] This type of history was thought of as independent from "national history" and concentrated mostly on military strategy, diplomatic arrangements, wars, and the personalities and motivations of powerful "men on the spot" who won territory, people, and resources for the empire they served. Some historians have sought to break up this emphasis on the "great men" of empire-building by focusing on other aspects of economy and society, such as religion and trade, but they still generally maintain the idea of an empire as an essentially bounded entity, with obvious borders and characteristics, in the charge of a handful of visionaries or fools, depending on how they kept,

4 Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, abridged (London: Penguin, 1952), pp. 55–59, 89.



Map 13.3 Major overseas empires in 1914

expanded, or lost parts of the empire.[5] Readers of recent books by Niall Ferguson or John Darwin will find their emphasis on political economy, diplomats, and influential personalities in line with this tradition of scholarship.[6]

This view of empires as bounded political territories has shaped popular understandings of empire, for which one need look no further than video games. Like the board games of an earlier generation, games such as the *Age of Empires* and *Europa Universalis* series present a picture of empire-building as the projection of a homogeneous, socially and politically stable "core" out into the world to reproduce itself and assimilate others. A "blue" territory, for example, while struggling to advance itself in overdetermined technological ways, takes over areas of the map and those areas turn blue. Perhaps blue fights against red and yellow countries, factions that are, themselves, trying to turn large swaths of the map red and yellow. Victory is achieved with force; if the armies of red and yellow are annihilated, blue can impose its will on the rest of the map and it is, literally, game over.[7]

Within the last several decades, some historians, working to practice what they call "new imperial history," have developed a more flexible conceptualization of empire, one that stresses power inequalities in many realms rather than the concentration on politics, technology, and the military that has traditionally dominated both scholarly and popular views of empire. This newer view pays more attention to resistance, hybridity, the enduring effects of colonial violence, cultural difference within empires, and cultural and social issues more generally. In *Bodies in Contact* (2005), for example, new imperial historians Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne have posited this definition of empire: "webs of trade, knowledge, migration, military power, and political intervention that allowed certain communities to assert their influence and sovereignty over other groups . . . these 'imperial webs' functioned as systems of exchange, mobility, appropriation, and extraction, fashioned to enable the empire-building power to exploit the natural resources,

5 For the newest research in this historical tradition, see the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, which began publication in 1972, and concentrates primarily on the British Empire. See also *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, especially Robin Winks, ed., *OHBE,* Vol. 5*: Historiography* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

6 Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

7 For a deeper and more optimistic discussion of video games, see Matthew Wilhelm Kapell and Andrew B. R. Elliott, eds., *Playing With the Past: Digital Games and the Simulation of History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

manufactured goods, or valued skills of the subordinated group."[8] This web concept allows us to view imperial formation as territorial but also as financial, cultural, and informational. In this understanding, an empire does not even have to be governmental in terms of state power, but could include multinational companies and other kinds of transnational organizations, such as the Roman Catholic Church or the World Bank.[9]

Studies that use this broader definition of empire often focus on cultural issues, and are sometimes carried out by scholars of literature as well as historians. For example, in the eighteenth century empires were often equated with living bodies that have arms, hearts, heads, tongues, bosoms, births, growths, declines, and deaths. This corporeal metaphor extended to overseas settler colonies, which were imagined to be children of established parental bodies. Colonial rebellions, such as the American Revolution, were depicted as children acting out against their parents, because of either over-indulgence or neglect in their upbringing. As the literary critic Anna Mae Duane has argued, American independence did not obliterate the parent–child metaphor; instead it led to an intense late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western interest in "proper" parenting and the ideals of healthy childhood, with the stakes of childrearing seen as bound up in imperial maintenance.[10]

The notion of "imperial webs" has not been accepted by all, as some scholars want to maintain a distinction between empires formed by state governments and those that were less overt, militarized, or official, such as "spheres of influence" or "informal empires" or sometimes "soft empires."[11] But trying to distinguish between formal and informal empires can be as difficult as trying to distinguish between land- and sea-based ones. This can be seen in efforts to delineate the boundaries of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, for example. Historians Anthony Hopkins and Peter Cain have argued that the backbone of British imperial expansion was the practice of "gentlemanly capitalism" or a propensity towards facilitating overseas investment that entangled the aristocracy and the British government in myriad territorial claims, economic revolutions, and diplomatic emergencies. In Hopkins and Cain's analysis, the "informal" locations of

8 Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 3.
9 Ibid. pp. 1–5.
10 Anna Mae Duane, *Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim* (Athens, OH: University of Georgia Press, 2010), pp. 129–131.
11 Stephen Howe, ed., *The New Imperial Histories Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 3–11.

British power – much of Latin America, and Brazil in particular – were just as instrumental to British imperialism as was British direct rule in the Raj of India. They call for scholarship that is not invested in delineating boundaries between formal and informal or hard and soft empires, but instead focuses on analyzing the two as different aspects of the same project.[12] The Brazilian example makes their case very well: although slavery was abolished in the formal British Empire in the 1830s, British financiers and business-owners continued to profit from their heavy interests in Brazil's slave labor economy. Brazil operated as an informal colony of Britain in the nineteenth century, with British financiers comprising a powerful lobby against abolitionism; slavery was not abolished in Brazil until 1888. The informality of Brazil within British imperial networks thus facilitated a level of exploitation that could not be achieved under formal conditions, and to argue that this exploitation is outside the purview of the historian of the British Empire would be to ignore this crucial piece of imperial political economy.[13]

Just as there are complications in delineating the outer boundaries of empires, it is difficult to find areas within empires that were wholly untouched by imperialism. To capture this idea, historians have developed the concept of "internal colonialism," which refers to the creation of structural and cultural power inequalities *within* subsets of empires such as colonies, metropoles, and nation states. Nation-building projects in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were often promoted through "unification" or "confederation" narratives, but entailed the subordination of certain groups within an asserted national boundary. "Frontier" expansion, aboriginal policy, and indigenous resistance movements, in much of the Americas, Algeria, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, are classic topics of internal colonialism, but we could just as easily consider the "forging" of Britain, Spain, Germany, or Italy as internal colonialism as well. Each of these national histories can be seen as expansionist narratives where one state – England, Castile, Prussia, or Piedmont, respectively – asserted its will over surrounding states and worked to incorporate them into a nationalist vision that maintained supremacy for one state. Persistent independence movements in Scotland and Catalonia belie these developments as inevitable or

12 P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688–2000*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1–61, 271–274. For discussions of US involvement with and informal empires in Latin America, see also Gilbert Michael Joseph et al., eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of US–Latin American Relations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

13 Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade Since 1807* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 83–110.

uncontested. Ironically, the designation of "land empire" makes the reality of internal colonialism obvious and immediately does away with any notion that the Russian, Austrian, Mughal, or Chinese empires – just to give a few examples – were homogeneous, tension-free entities.

Given the flexibility of conceiving of empires as networks that gave rise to relationships of inequality, and the problems of delineating clear boundaries between informal capitalist networks, formal political networks, and other kinds of exchange after 1750, one might ask the question, "When *aren't* we studying empires?" This is a productive question, because it forces us to evaluate any given web or network with the question of imperialism in mind, rather than make prior assumptions about when and where empire applies. Instead we ask: Did a given network give rise to power inequalities? Was it part of a pattern of exploitation, and did it empower organizations and individuals associated with formal states? Reflecting this change in perspective, Burton and Ballantyne, for example, see empires after 1750, "not as coherent wholes that can be recovered in their seamlessness, but rather as the accumulation of often incommensurate fragments."[14] They follow anthropologist Ann L. Stoler's insistence that we approach imperial studies not through the assumption that colonial regimes were all-powerful and had well-defined, singular motives and jurisdictions, but that they were "uneven, imperfect, and even indifferent," to many developments within them. Add to this the study of how imperial networks changed over time and imperial history becomes very complex work with only, as Stoler puts it, "working concepts" of imperialism for us to grasp onto and continually re-evaluate in different historical contexts.[15] A universal definition of empire is impossible to achieve.

How did empires work?

In contrast to the video game example above in which blue absorbs or assimilates as much as possible to the blue condition, scholars such as Burbank and Cooper have shown that colonial empires operated through maintaining or creating difference. Establishing an empire that worked over time meant establishing an unequal power relationship between at least two groups, traditionally described as the "colonizer" and the "colonized."[16] The

14 Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Empires and the Reach of the Global, 1870–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 22.
15 Ann L. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), p. 206.
16 Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, pp. 11–13.

assertion of this power relationship, often known in historical scholarship as the "imperial project," was manifested in many ways, from obvious physical domination in terms of military and territorial power to more subtle interaction, such as one group's endeavor to write the history of another. There was (and is) no such thing as an empire of equals, a situation that led V. I. Lenin and other founders of the Soviet Union to claim that they were working against imperialism by promoting class equality within the Soviet Union itself.[17] It follows that empires *required* a certain degree of diversity within them for this unequal power relationship to be asserted and justified.

Two models of describing the relationship between "colonizer" and "colonized," or metropole and colony, predominate in studies of empire. The more traditional paradigm is the so-called "hub-and-spoke" or "core and periphery" model. It posits a stable, already-formed, "civilized" core that projected governmental organization, personnel, technology, financial means, religion, metropolitan culture, and all the trappings of civilization out into various peripheral, colonial spaces. In return, the metropole received raw materials that were enfolded in the momentum of metropolitan economic development. For empires created or expanded after 1750, this model sees influence and agency originating in the national hub and being sent out through the spokes to the periphery, thus keeping separate the two categories of "colonizer" and "colonized." The two categories are imagined to be in a straightforward diachronic relationship: colonizer forms, expands outwards, and influences the colonized, not unlike the blue expansionism in the video game example above.[18] In this way of thinking, it follows that those writing the history of a colony need to study metropolitan formations, but those writing the history of the metropole do not need to pay much attention to colonies, as these are of only incidental significance.

This model of modern imperialism has been under attack since at least the late nineteenth century when, among others, economists such as Dadabhai Naoroji and J. A. Hobson began critiquing British imperialism by highlighting the fact that Britain owed much of its economic prosperity to the exploitation

17 V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (*c*. 1916; New York: International Publishers, 1939). As George Orwell famously observed, in the actual functioning of the Soviet Union as opposed to its claims, some were more equal than others. George Orwell, *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story* (*c*. 1945; Los Angeles: Green Light, 2012).

18 Catherine Hall, "Introduction: thinking the postcolonial, thinking the empire," in Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1–33. Here I am collapsing core/periphery and colony/metropole models into one. See Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann, eds., *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1880–1950* (London: Palgrave, 2007), p. 8.

of its empire, particularly in India.[19] Eric Williams extended this point in 1944 with the publication of *Capitalism and Slavery*, in which he showed that British industrial might was largely predicated upon slavery and the imperial cotton trade in the Atlantic world.[20] In French historiography, as early as 1938 C. L. R. James argued that the Haitian and French revolutions needed to be understood as mutually engaged developments.[21] In the context of mid-twentieth-century decolonization, others such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire built upon this insistence on the imperial context of European development. Taken together, this historiography sought to critique European imperialism by, first, bringing European and colonial histories into the same analytical frame, and second, showing how much the imperial/colonial relationship led to the development of Europe – conceptually, economically, culturally, and, of course, politically. As Fanon famously argued in *The Wretched of the Earth* (published in French in 1961), "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World."[22] Likewise, Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (published in French in 1955) reasoned that the devastation wrought in Europe during the World Wars, and Nazi racism in particular, resulted from cultures and technologies of violence that were first created in colonial settings in the name of imperialism and then made their way to Europe.[23] Césaire's argument certainly holds for the history of the concentration camp: camps were developed by imperial powers almost simultaneously within the British and Spanish empires between 1898 and 1902, as Spain dealt with Cuban and Filipino anti-colonial nationalist uprisings (and eventually war with the United States), and Britain attempted to force a Boer surrender in the Second South African War. Hitler, himself, was fascinated with Boer history.[24]

Taking their cue from these mid-twentieth-century works, more scholars emerged in the 1980s and 1990s who questioned the logic of the hub-and-spoke paradigm, particularly its single-minded emphasis on metropole-to-colony influence. Those working within British imperial frameworks took the lead, showing that the national structures and cultural performances of Britain did not develop first and then get exported to the colonial world, but

19 On Dadabhai Naoroji, see Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 36–74. J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism* (1902; Cambridge University Press, 1992).

20 Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

21 C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (London: Penguin, 2001).

22 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1963), p. 58.

23 Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), pp. 36–37.

24 H. L. Wesseling, *The European Colonial Empires, 1815–1919* (London: Pearson, 2004), pp. 138–139.

rather emerged in tandem with British imperialism. Scholars of material culture showed that the *things* of quintessential Georgian and Victorian behavior – tea-drinking, the coffee house, sugary foods, chocolate, mahogany furniture, ivory trinkets, snuff, cotton textiles, diamond jewelry, rice, curry, shawls, paisley designs, opium dens, the list goes on – were all predicated upon imperial interactions.[25] Others revealed the ways in which imperial/colonial elements were inherent in the political, intellectual, social, and economic developments of modern Britain, from consumerism and industrialization, to liberalism, governmentality, and ideas about gender, race, and sexuality.[26] In other words, we can think of the making of Britain and the making of the British Empire as mutually constitutive developments. Moreover, networks *between* colonies were shown to be as much a part of the process as colony–metropole interaction, rendering the hub–spoke model inadequate for explaining how empires actually worked. A vision of a very mobile and multi-directional British Empire emerged, where goods, people, and ideas flowed back, between, and across colonies and metropole in myriad ways and to myriad effects, and in which there was no clear separation between imperial, colonial, national, and metropolitan developments. Historian Mrinalini Sinha has termed this focus one on "imperial social formation," and stressed that the realization of the mutually constitutive condition of Britain and empire has brought on the "imperial turn" in the historiography of Britain itself.[27] This new perspective demands that those interested in understanding the history of Britain must also study imperial and colonial histories.

Focus on networks has led to the second model of imperial formation, that of the web, as discussed above. The web or network model accounts for multi-directional flows and influences within an empire, enabling a more complex understanding of imperial social formation. A web model is able to accommodate multiple centers of power and multiple sites of exploitation as well as the ports, stations, and long stretches between them. One can study a

25 James Walvin, *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire* (New York: Wiley, 2001); Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

26 Kathleen Wilson, *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (University of Chicago Press, 2002).

27 Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 17–26.

web without necessarily privileging, or even including, the study of the metropole.[28]

This concept is not without its own problems, however. Critics have argued that although viewing the British Empire as a web lessens the idea that national development took place in a self-contained hub removed from what was going on in the spokes, it still gives the impression that the British Empire was a separate structure somehow removed from other contexts – continental European and global, in particular.[29] Others have argued that by so carefully de-centering metropolitan power and showing how events in the most peripheral of the peripheries could unsettle the entire system, proponents of the web model have tended to obscure the story of metropolitan exploitation, particularly in terms of political economy.[30] These two critiques speak to the challenges involved in working with the web model. Other analytical directions promise to revise or supplant the web and include the use of an involved "constellation" metaphor, already at play in some conceptualizations of globalization, as a way of incorporating that missing third dimension to study the accumulation of and interplay between networks. Others call for more systematic network analysis, aided by the methodologies of digital history, to reveal unexpected flows and hubs of activity.[31] An increased emphasis on spatial analysis is the way forward according to another body of scholars.[32] Whatever model is in use, it still remains the work of the historian to research and evaluate networks on many different scales in terms of time and space and on many different levels in terms of politics, economy, society, and culture. This is a difficult task for any one scholar and, thus, will likely require historians to do much more collaborative work in the future.

Outside of British history, the imperial turn has also occurred in many other metropolitan-centric historiographies, especially those of the United States, the Netherlands, France, and Germany. One topic of debate in these is the degree to which models and methodologies developed for understanding

28 Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (London: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1–17.
29 Grant, Levine, and Trentmann, eds., *Beyond Sovereignty*, pp. 6–7.
30 Howe, ed., *New Imperial Histories Reader*, pp. 11–12.
31 Stephen Morillo, *Frameworks of World History: Networks, Hierarchies, Culture*, combined volume (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. xxiii–xxxii; Steven Topik, Carlos Marichal, and Zephyr Frank, eds., *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500–2000* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 1–18.
32 Sanna Turoma and Maxim Waldstein, eds., *Empire De/Centered: New Spatial Histories of Russia and the Soviet Union* (New York: Ashgate, 2013).

the British Empire can be used for other empires, European and non-European alike. Does the claim of "mutual constitutiveness" that has proved persuasive for British history hold for the German experience of empire – which came later and unfolded over a shorter period of time? [33] Can we speak of "Western" or European imperialism as a single phenomenon? What is at stake in insisting on the differences between empires and what is gained by thinking past these differences? Burton and Ballantyne, for example, argue that by setting up England as the quintessential modern empire, we get stuck comparing all other histories to the English paradigm, looking for "absolute distinctions," but only succeeding in setting up English – and by extension American – imperialism as the standard.[34] Soviet imperialism, as Adeeb Khalid argues, developed through different priorities and processes than British, French, and Dutch imperialism, and to pathologize Soviet imperial formation vis-à-vis the "West" is to perpetuate Cold War mentalities and occlude the variety of modernities that have developed in the last 200 years around the world.[35]

The web model works well with what has been another important thread in imperial history, studies of colonial encounters that take into account the pre-existence of important political, economic, and cultural formations prior to the arrival of the colonizer. As Burbank and Cooper have shown, since at least the time of the Mongol Empire in the fourteenth century, and certainly through the Spanish, Ottoman, British, French, and even American empires, the standard imperial *modus operandi* was to attempt to appropriate whatever structures and networks already existed in a given area. Examples of this abound: the Spanish did not so much build an empire in the "New World," as take over and connect pre-existing Incan and Mexican imperial webs. The British, Dutch, and Portuguese East India Companies appropriated Mughal formations and tapped into already well-developed Indian Ocean exchange networks. Having been conquered by the Mongols, Russian imperialists built on Asian, Middle Eastern, and European techniques of domination. Tipu Sultan's empire in southern India in the eighteenth century was an ingenious and brutal amalgamation of Ottoman, Mughal, and French practice. Thus, empires in general, and certainly empires after 1750, were built upon

33 Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 1–8.
34 Ballantyne and Burton, *Empires*, p. 14.
35 Adeeb Khalid, "Backwardness and the quest for civilization: early Soviet Central Asia in comparative perspective," *Slavic Review* 65:2 (Summer 2006), 231–233. Wesseling patriotically argues that an over-emphasis on the British Empire trivializes Dutch and Portuguese efforts. Wesseling, *European Colonial Empires*, pp. x–xi.

structures, knowledge, and, in many cases, personnel that had been involved in pre-existing networks of exploitation. The systems of colonialism that resulted, then, were hybridized formations that incorporated all kinds of local development. Therefore, the modern colonial world was not so much built on a "pre-colonial" condition as on a world of slightly different sets of imperial networks. Many of these pre-existing forms were translated, circulated, adapted, and reworked in the crucible of imperial social formation. Colonial strategies learned in one context could be applied in another, just as a successful tactic of resistance could travel around and between empires. To imagine that modern European powers, in particular, created imperial webs out of thin air is to fall prey to the myth of European exceptionalism.

Hybridization – in terms of cultural, economic, and political practice as well as the actual mixing of DNA – has been shown to be common in all imperial contexts.[36] The development of curry dishes in British cuisine is one instance of hybridity, and the use of English by South Asians as a uniquely Indian dialect is another.[37] Language is a particularly good topic through which to study hybridity. We can see how the English language developed across the world in the nineteenth century to incorporate words of many different languages of colonized peoples and vice versa, and the same is true of Spanish, French, and other languages. Studying the condition of hybridity within imperial social formation allows us not only to examine mixture and amalgamation, but also to reveal the constant effort that proprietors of an imperial project had to expend to assert meaningful difference between the "colonizer" and the "colonized," so that networks of exploitation would appear natural, justifiable, and irresistible and thus head off resistance. Hybridity, a fundamental part of imperial/colonial experiences, continually revealed the fictional quality of this division, and thus studying when and how hybridity was deemed inappropriate is crucial for understanding how inequalities were constructed within imperial networks.

How did resistance matter?

In the late 1950s, Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher set out to write about the "official mind of imperialism." They endeavored to reveal an administrative model of British imperialism that explained governance in the empire

36 Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 1–12; Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, p. 110.

37 Shefali Chandra, *The Sexual Life of English: Languages of Caste and Desire in Colonial India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

as a whole but especially in regards to British Africa from the 1870s onwards. What they found was an administration that was much more reactionary, fractured, and less focused than previous scholarship had acknowledged: "The so-called imperialism of the late-Victorians began as little more than a defensive reaction to the Irish, the Egyptian and the Transvaal rebellions . . . The paradoxical conduct of Gladstone's ministry shows that the taking of a new African empire originated in an almost involuntary reaction to African national movements, and not in a stronger will to empire in Britain. The crucial changes which upset the Liberals were taking place in Africa rather than Europe."[38] While subsequent scholarship has taken issue with specific arguments in Robinson and Gallagher's work, the basic point that resistance in colonial spaces shaped how empires operated continues to be one of the most important in imperial studies. It has enabled the study of empires as webs where colonies affect developments in the metropole and other colonies, as discussed in the previous sections. It has also demanded that scholars shift their attention away from the actions of a few famous imperialists and look more closely at the nature and long-term effects of resistance throughout the web.

Moments of mass armed rebellion, such as the Boxer Rebellion in China beginning in 1898, or large-scale anti-colonialist political campaigns like the Hind Swaraj movement in India in the first half of the twentieth century, have been seen as obvious examples of resistance to outside rule. The historical significance of these movements has been taken for granted in their local settings, and now scholars are more engaged in the task of assessing the translocal, intra-imperial, and global implications of this resistance; for instance, working to understand how Boer nationalism in the South African War informed Chinese nationalists at the turn of the twentieth century or how the Haitian Revolution inspired resistance in many different colonial settings.[39]

But these classic moments of resistance are not the only ones that shaped how empires worked. In 1985, political scientist James C. Scott published his ideas about everyday resistance or "weapons of the weak." He argued that resistance to exploitation came in many forms, not simply through armed

38 Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 161.

39 Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 124–148; David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840* (London: Palgrave, 2010); David Omissi and Andrew Thompson, eds., *The Impact of the South African War* (London: Palgrave, 2002).

rebellion or organized political protest.[40] Disgruntled individuals and communities engaged in less spectacular but effective "minor" acts of disobedience, sabotage, evasion, satire, mimicry, and subversion that troubled imperial systems on a daily basis. For example, Mary Prince, an enslaved woman in the Caribbean, described the many ways she troubled the system and sustained her sense of self by running away, establishing family and community connections outside of the purview of her owner, refusing to work because of sickness or maltreatment, feigning ignorance, trying to purchase her own freedom, appealing to other owners and organizations, arguing with her owners, and, ultimately, narrating her life story in support of the abolitionist cause in Britain in the 1820s.[41] She did not take up arms but the ways she negotiated through the system – complying with some tasks, refusing others, pursuing her own agenda – tempered how the imperial networks within which she was entangled operated.

This clues us in to how, for proprietors of empire, the ability to dominate an area or population in physical, military terms was merely one way in which imperial networks were developed and maintained, and perhaps not even the most significant way. Winning a battle and ruling a territory were two different achievements, and conquest was never as complete as the blue or red areas of the map in a video game might indicate. Economic exploitation was at the heart of imperial projects and to deliver the goods – both literally and metaphorically – colonists and colonial administrators had to find ways to gain labor, local knowledge of products and the environment, and access to trade. They also had to avoid armed rebellion. This meant finding ways to maintain imperial projects that did not rely solely on physical brutality and could be effective over the long term. In the face of many different tactics of quotidian resistance, proprietors of empire researched, appropriated, adapted, and created various socio-cultural "technologies of rule" or ways of compelling people into subject positions. These could be subtle or direct, enduring or immediate, deliberate or haphazard, intellectual or emotional. Giordano Nanni has described how observance of the Christian Sabbath in southern Africa in the nineteenth century operated as a technology of rule because it allowed European missionaries to mandate that not only would one day out of seven be reserved for non-work and religious observance but that the other six days would be defined as work days. This,

40 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

41 Moira Ferguson, ed., *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, rev. edn (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), pp. 57–125.

he argues, was a way of compelling Xhosa converts into a Eurocentric time-discipline regime. On the other hand, this logic could be turned against missions and deployed as a tactic of resistance: some Xhosa used the Sabbath as a reason never to aid missionaries on Sundays, even in emergency circumstances, and many refused to hear religious proselytizing on other days of the week. This subtle resistance caused some missionaries to rethink their insistence on Sabbath observance and changed the culture of particular missions in the area.[42] This is one example of how new technologies of rule were met with new tactics of resistance, and through these constant contestations, colonial culture developed. This ever more-elaborate system of power play and resistance meant that imperial webs were always transforming, their proprietors attempting to assert a hegemony that was subverted before it could be fully realized or, as Antonio Gramsci has phrased it, was always an "unfinished business."[43] Local resistance, consciously intended or otherwise, conditioned the development of the system as much as any administrative impetus, and, therefore, was just as historically significant. Therefore, if we want to study how empire worked, we have to study the everyday negotiations that millions and millions of people engaged in for patterns of compliance, subversion, and controversy.

By emphasizing the negotiated quality of encounters within the webs of empire, we also circumvent the intellectual dead-end that comes with the impulse to divide up people and their histories into "resistor" and "collaborator" categories. Imperial social formation was far too complex for that. Mary Prince is but one example of someone who resisted and complied at different times, for different ends; another would be Mahatma Gandhi. As one of the major leaders of the Indian independence movement, Gandhi is popularly seen as a quintessential resistor of empire. But he also wrote that Britain was justified in colonizing southern Africa because Africans needed to be raised to a higher level of civilization.[44] Individuals and their histories were more complicated than dualistic categories like resistor versus collaborator or colonized versus colonizer allow; studying how people adopted different positions at different times and, for their own reasons, selectively engaged with the system, instead of trying to pin them into fixed identities, allows us to write more accurate histories of imperial/colonial operations.

42 Giordano Nanni, *The Colonisation of Time: Ritual, Routine and Resistance in the British Empire* (Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 148–181.
43 Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, pp. 18, 150.
44 Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*, pp. 75–110.

While thinking about "weapons of the weak" has allowed us to broaden our scope of what resistance was in a colonial space, we must also realize that not everything that happened within colonial space happened because of colonialism, though it may have affected it. Many power structures and struggles that animated colonial societies pre-dated modern colonialism, and people involved in them may not have been concerned with the vicissitudes of imperial/colonial authority.[45] Imperial/colonial authorities may not have been particularly concerned with the day-to-day workings of colonial populations either, as, for example, Alice Conklin argues was the case with French colonialism in West Africa in the late nineteenth century. While paying lip service to a civilizing mission, French authorities put little effort into regulating daily life.[46] As people moved throughout Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, following traditional labor migration patterns or developing new ones, they could find themselves subject to several different empires – Spanish, British, German, Portuguese, Belgian, French, Italian, Zulu, Asanti, and so on – and it is a question as to if, when, and how this subjecthood mattered to them. Experiences of colonialism also varied with class, gender, skin color, age, marriage status, and a whole host of other socio-cultural factors, so, again, there was no universal experience of colonialism about which we can generalize.

Some proprietors of imperialism worked to be interventionist, to various levels of effectiveness. As a critical mass of post-colonialist scholarship has shown, the project to label people and, in doing so, fix them into specific subject positions within the imperial web was one of the key technologies of rule through which imperial/colonial administrators created and exercised authority.[47] Socio-cultural categories of difference based on religion, caste, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, community, language group, or even food preference, oftentimes already developed in local societies prior to colonization, became reasons for defining individuals and groups as part of either the "colonized" or "colonizers." For example, in the Spanish and Ottoman empires, religious difference was seen as a justification for enslavement. In the Spanish case, complications arose when enslaved aboriginal and African individuals converted to Christianity, thus negating one of the categories of

45 Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), p. 16.

46 Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford University Press, 1997).

47 Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 3–5.

difference between colonized and colonizer. A few owners freed their slaves when they converted, but the majority of slave-owners, colonial administrators, and church officials justified continued enslavement based upon other categories – ideas about race, gender, and levels of civilization, for example. In the Ottoman case, Christian boys were enslaved by the Ottoman emperor to be brought up as *janissaries*, or elite imperial guards. While technically slaves, janissaries also enjoyed a relatively privileged status within Ottoman society, often receiving much material wealth and having a degree of political agency through their decisions to protect, or not protect, the emperor. Some of them converted to Islam, and this sometimes brought legal freedom, though not always. Some launched coups against the emperor and sometimes these coups were successful.[48] Their privileges even while still slaves blurred the lines between colonizer and colonized, and their situation is an example of the ways in which different categories of difference complicated one another, allowing space for individuals to work with, against, and around the system.

In order to write a truly critical history of the imperial/colonial past, historians must identify how categories of difference and other technologies of rule were asserted and subverted in imperial networks, eschew imperial socio-cultural hierarchies in their own writing, and appreciate how many forms of resistance and negotiation conditioned the system. All of this is far easier said than done. The primary challenge in writing this history is to find sources. Massive rebellions and overt political challenges tended to produce more written commentary than instances of everyday resistance and the intimate workings of cultural imperialism. Moreover, imperialism was often a clash between cultures of different languages, written expressions, oral traditions, and concepts of time and history. In this, the historical archive itself became caught up in power struggles as imperial/colonial authorities sought to further imperialism by collecting information, records, and artifacts that could be useful to their project and destroying that which they deemed useless or subversive.

Perhaps the most famous example of this is the burning of aboriginal texts by European missionaries who, in the logic of the Spanish Inquisition, saw Mesoamerican sources as sacrilegious threats to their power. While this was undeniably a destruction of indigenous "voices" in the colonial archive, some have argued that we still have access to the "colonized" point of view in sources such as the Florentine Codex, a sixteenth-century ethnography undertaken by

48 Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, pp. 132, 138–139.

the Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún. Sahagún relied on Nahua informants to generate over two thousand pages of text and illustrations regarding Aztec society and belief. Sociologist Rebecca Overmyer-Velázquez, however, has shown that the Codex is a deeply problematic source if we wish to gain unfettered access to information about pre-colonial society, and the idea that there was only one colonized (or colonizer) point of view is naive at best. She argues that Sahagún's informants were not disinterested parties eager to tell their stories but people with their own agendas engaging with Sahagún for their own reasons. They were adolescent boys who had learned Spanish, converted to Christianity, and were under the authority of Sahagún. It was in their best interests to convey some bits of information and leave out others, to, as Overmyer-Velásquez suggests, paint Nahua society as patriarchal in ways similar to how they understood European society to be. The Codex does not incorporate any other Nahua points of view other than those of these boys.[49]

Post-colonial scholar Gayatri Spivak finds a similar problem of unequal voice in the colonial archive in her attempt to find information about the Rani of Sirmur, an Indian widow who ruled Sirmur as regent to her son Fateh Parkash and clashed with British authorities in the early nineteenth century. The archive contains very little about the Rani, not even a record of her full name, and nothing of her point of view, but lots of information about her husband, son, and the British men who dealt with her. If this Indian woman of privilege who played a major role in local politics was not even recorded, it is naive to imagine that the vast majority of people and quotidian events of imperial/colonial history are adequately represented.[50] As historians, if we merely reflect the priorities of the colonial archive in our writing and disregard the stark inequalities of representation the archive contains, we run the risk of renewing an imperial project that began with the creation of the colonial archive in the first place.

The question remains: How can we write the history of resistance to and negotiation within imperial networks with only imperial/colonial archives at our disposal? In response, many have sought sources outside of the traditional written archive, including oral histories and testimony, material culture such as pottery and quilts, art work, music, dance, architecture,

49 Rebecca Overmyer-Velázquez, "Christian morality in New Spain: the Nahua women in the Franciscan imaginary," in Ballantyne and Burton, eds., *Bodies in Contact*, pp. 67–82.

50 Gayatri C. Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: an essay in reading the archives," *History and Theory* 24:3 (October 1985), 247–272.

photographs, film, artifacts, and even body tattoos.[51] Just like written sources, these other types of primary sources present their own challenges and limitations in regards to the kinds of information they convey and whose point of view they represent. We have also developed methodologies for "reading against the grain" of traditional sources for imperial history, and in this, cultural scholars, especially those concerned with how people within imperial networks thought about gender, race, and sexuality, have taken the lead. If the cultural project of colonial authorities was to make the difference between colonizers and colonized seem obvious and inarguable, thus justifying imperial rule, it follows that if we study moments when the markers of difference were unclear, controversial, or forgotten, we can gain insight into the everyday workings of empire. In other words, we can find evidence of resistance, compliance, and negotiation by studying how these cultural categories operated within imperial networks.

In the last two decades of research in this vein, scholars have found that discourse about race, class, gender, and sexuality could be made to work in symbiotic ways to mark difference between colonizers and the colonized, but just as easily could be shown to undermine this difference, rendering the cultural constructions of imperialism precarious and in need of constant repair. For example, proprietors of European empires continually produced writing that associated masculinity with strength, enlightenment, adulthood, morality, restraint, and "colonizer" identity. In order to justify colonization, they associated the colonized with the opposite of these traits, deeming the colonized to be weak, feminine, and childlike. In terms of imperial social formation, this process simultaneously promoted patriarchal constructions of gender in Europe while weaving these gendered ideals into imperial projects abroad. Maintaining a "proper" performance of European masculinity – and what exactly constituted a proper performance changed over time – was, thus, a key element of a colonial bureaucrat's duty. If he were seen in a position of weakness, of emasculation, it followed that the colonial edifice was weak. This was the challenge at the heart of George Orwell's essay on "Shooting an elephant," wherein a colonial official in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) in the early twentieth century is compelled to shoot an unruly elephant against his personal wishes in order to maintain the authority of his position and stave off open rebellion.[52]

51 Heidi Gengenbach, "Tattooed secrets: women's history in Magude District, Southern Mozambique," in Ballantyne and Burton, eds., *Bodies in Contact*, pp. 253–273.

52 James H. Warren, "Contesting colonial masculinity/constituting imperial authority: Ceylon in mid-nineteenth-century British public debate," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 6:2 (December 2004), 39–62.

European women who were left in positions of colonial authority when their husbands died or traveled were also caught up in the logic of this gendered and racialized performance and needed to somehow present themselves as proper women and colonizers. If colonial authority rested upon elements of European patriarchy, for example a European man's ability to control and protect the body of "his" wife or daughters, then it followed that moments when those bodies were not under his control, either through women asserting control over what to do with their own bodies or through another's violent intervention, had the potential to disrupt the status quo of colonialism. Thus, the policing of European women's bodies in colonial spaces became very much a part of the imperial project, particularly in the nineteenth century as racism in European imperial webs became more pronounced. Many thinkers have explored how ideas about rape and the imagined need to protect the bodies of white women from seemingly hypersexualized non-white males functioned as fundamental tropes of Western colonialism, weaving together European patriarchy with racial hierarchy and assumptions about sexuality. In the wake of the Indian Rebellion of 1857–1858 and with only imagined evidence of sexual violence, British popular culture was riddled with fictional descriptions of white women being raped and brutalized by Indian rebels, this violence being understood as a powerful attack on British rule. Nancy Paxton and Jenny Sharpe have shown that not only did this predominant characterization of rebellion reveal the gendered and racialized dimensions of British imperialism but actually contributed to the inculcation and hardening of racist ideology in Britain and across the empire.[53]

Consensual and non-consensual sexual activity between white women "colonizers" and non-white males of the "colonized" could be seen to threaten the imperial project by undercutting European patriarchy, on one level, but also by troubling racial hierarchies that placed a premium on the colonizer being associated with "whiteness" and the trappings of white privilege. Consensual and non-consensual sex between white male "colonizers" and non-white female members of the colonized tended to be seen by imperialists as normal and necessary for the maintenance of the imperial order. As ideas about whiteness and white supremacy hardened, children of interracial pairings, also known as members of the *métissage*, could blur the

53 See Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1993) and Nancy Paxton, *Writing Under the Raj: Gender, Race and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination, 1830–1947* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

lines between colonizer and colonized by their very being. They were often seen with suspicion in imperial discourse, cast as children of two worlds, able to move between categories but troubled by conflicting loyalties and ultimately untrustworthy. While hybridity, cultural and biological, was a fact of life in colonial spaces, imperialist energy was spent denying this hybridity or at least finding ways to marginalize or disempower those who troubled the lines between colonizer and colonized.[54]

The nebula of cultural claims alive in imperial social formation was not always straightforward for anyone involved. Contradictions in the system were manifold and when they came to the forefront of colonial society, demanded immediate attention. For example, in the late nineteenth century, mining opportunities compelled tens of thousands of migrants to rush to the gold and diamond fields of southern Africa. Many of these migrants were from Eastern and southern Europe, were poverty-stricken, and had few professional or mining skills. In terms of skin color, many could claim they were "white." In the late 1880s, they entered a racialized colonial space where "unskilled" mine labor was constructed to be the domain of black male Africans and skilled mining work the domain of white males. Unable to get work, these newcomer "poor whites" were the subject of intense debate within colonial society because they challenged the logic of white privilege by being both white *and* impoverished. Commentators, building on debates about racism that were echoing around the globe at the time, began to write diatribes about the racial shortcomings of many migrants. They argued that southern European or Jewish backgrounds meant most newcomers were not quite white, complicating an already complicated racialized matrix of colonial power and allowing us insight into the promulgation of ideas within the imperial web.[55]

In terms of studying resistance, because colonial discourse built upon preexisting ideas, it was not always easy for contemporary actors to identify what was a decidedly imperialist or anti-imperialist position. For example, in 1828 the East India Company, reversing its mandate not to get involved in religious affairs in India, outlawed *sati*. Sati was a ritual observed by only a minority of high caste Hindu families. It demanded that upon the death of her husband, a widow would sacrifice herself on the funeral pyre. Though rare, satis dominated the imaginations of European travelogue writers and

54 Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, pp. 79–80.

55 Joseph Sherman, "Serving the natives: whiteness as the price of hospitality in South African Yiddish literature," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26:3 (2000), 505–521.

readers. In India, many considered the practice to be antiquated and largely irrelevant. Servants of the East India Company, however, thought that by outlawing the practice they could publicize the Company as a protector of Indian women and a modernizing force in India – an important exercise in public relations given that the rise of "free trade" discourse in Britain tended to paint the EIC as itself antiquated. By making the imperial project about sati and vice versa, the EIC created a storm of controversy surrounding the Company's decision to intervene in religious matters in India, the question of what was traditional Hindu practice, who should be responsible for protecting Indian women's bodies, and how, by choosing to engage or not engage in sati, people affiliated themselves with British colonialism. For some Hindu thinkers, sati became a technology of resistance to the Company; for others, the effort to abolish sati was a reason to welcome Company governance. As Lata Mani has pointed out, it does not appear that anyone determinedly sought out the opinions of the widows themselves, while many claimed to be acting on their behalf. The effect of the law was to increase the number of satis performed, although some argue this increase in numbers is more the result of new bureaucratic interest.[56] In any case, the bodies of Hindu widows became a major battleground for the imposition of British colonialism in India.

Ways in which imperial/colonial battles were fought through ideas about gender, race, and sexuality can be generally subsumed under the theme of controlling the body in imperial webs. The philosopher Michel Foucault understood the body to be a fundamental site in claims for power. He termed this "bio-power," and argued, "the body is . . . directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs."[57] If we want to study the development of unequal power relationships we can look at how, for example, proprietors of legal systems or cultural activities such as gossip regulated people's bodies by delineating who could wear what, have sex with whom, work at which job, and live in which space. Through tracing the history of the body we can discover how empires worked in subtle and not-so-subtle ways to deliver a constant supply of labor for industry, bureaucracy, and the military while attempting to minimize resistance. The body is only one theme that cultural historians have

56 Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

57 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Vintage, 1977), pp. 24–25.

applied to the problems of working with the colonial archive and studying how resistance and local agency animated imperial webs. Another productive theme has been mobility – crucial for understanding imperial networks because it was the goal of any empire to facilitate the movement of certain goods, people, and ideas while limiting the movement of others. We can also study how empires regulated space, concepts of time, consumer culture, and communication structures.[58] The goal is always the same: to gain insight into how people caught up in imperial webs negotiated their way through the system and in doing so manifested the complexities of imperialism on a daily basis.

How was modern imperialism different from earlier efforts?

Discussing the differences between imperialism before and after 1750 is tricky for two reasons. The first is the pervasive Eurocentrism embedded in the concepts of modernity and modern imperialism. All too often modernity is ascribed to only Western developments, and modern imperialism is collapsed down into European imperialism. In this mode of thinking, European empires played an exceptional role in history as the deliverers of global modernity, exporting uniquely Western modes of production, politics, and mores to the global "Rest." This story is told by scholars who view this as a progressive transformation bringing industrialization and liberalism, but also by those who see this as a devastating turn, bringing environmental degradation, economic exploitation, and colonial violence.[59] Not only does this emplotment breathe new life into the outmoded hub-and-spoke model of empire, but it also accepts, uncritically, European Enlightenment thinkers at their word. Post-colonial scholars such as Edward Said, author of the highly influential book *Orientalism*, have found that European thinkers and writers in the eighteenth century were obsessed with constructing themselves as enlightened, progressive, modern, and Western. They wrote histories that underlined the virtues of Western modernity in contrast to a host of "Others" stereotyped in their historical imaginations: "Orientals" who were marked by Eastern traditionalism, stagnation, and ahistoricism; Africans who inhabited a

58 See, for example, Ballantyne and Burton, eds., *Bodies in Contact*; Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

59 Ferguson, *Empire*; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

"Dark Continent" and were mired in secret, dangerous, and primitive traditions; indigenous peoples in the Americas and Australasia, who were childlike, diseased, and savage; medieval Europeans, who were irrational and backwards, living in the "Dark Ages" in which religion and superstition predominated. Many Enlightenment thinkers justified European imperialism by arguing that Europe was bringing the light of modernity to these peoples and places of darkness, and their writings came to influence later imperialists. This same Enlightenment thought was instrumental in the creation of today's academic discipline of history, and in the establishment of archives that house the sources from which we gain insight into the past, shaping what was preserved and making it difficult to avoid an over-emphasis on European actions.[60] In fact, Said himself has been criticized for what could be seen as a type of Eurocentrism, in that he concentrated on the negative views European writers expressed about others, and ignored the great admiration shown by many "Orientalists" – as the academic discipline was then known – for India and China. We are still in the process of figuring out how to achieve a better balance in the study of modern imperialism, one that takes all global actors into account.

The second complication in the study of imperialism after 1750 is one that occurs in historical writing in general, but particularly affects the study of anything "modern": what quality and quantity of change is significant enough to necessitate the creation of a new category? Was modern imperialism different than what came before in degree or in kind?

There is much that speaks to the continuity of imperialism over time, particularly when we understand how empires built upon previous formations. Istanbul, Mexico City, and Moscow were made and remade as seats of empire a dozen times between them. What is most significant about imperialism in the last 300 years, however, is the enlarged scale, acceleration, and impact of imperial activities across the world. Historians have typically described this quickened pace of change and global integration as the product of multiple revolutions in agriculture, industry, finance, work, consumer culture, communications, bureaucracy, military organization, belief, and, of course, politics that delivered the world into the modern era. "Revolution" is a somewhat misleading term, here, because all of these developments unfolded slowly over centuries, inhered multiple centers of innovation, and occurred unevenly and differently around the world. There was no singular

60 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1978); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

industrial revolution or a universal definition of modernity that can describe all. Instead, the concept of "multiple modernities" has gained purchase in some fields as a way of appreciating the spectrum of experience we can study under the rubric of modernity.[61]

At any length, empires were integral to these modern transformations and go a long way in explaining difference and unevenness in development across space and time in the history of globalization. The British Empire is an instructive example because the Empire created modern Britain as we know it and modernity transformed the Empire. Industrialization and the development of Western political economy happened, as Burbank and Cooper put it, under imperial skies. Mass production, division of labor, and the decimation of the "moral economy" were elements of so-called proto-industrial societies in India, China, and Mesoamerica in the early modern period. India, in particular, was a textile manufacturing center in terms of the world economy. European empires appropriated these techniques and deployed them in territories they were able to control in the Americas, where disease epidemics created or exacerbated instability within aboriginal societies. Relying at first on enslaved indigenous labor, proprietors of plantations and mining operations in the "New World" turned to importations of slave laborers from Africa to dramatically increase their output of raw materials, silver, gold, copper, tobacco, sugar, cotton, and coffee. At least 12 million men, women, and children were forcibly moved to the Americas from Africa to be used as slave labor, an unprecedented mass migration. In Britain, conditions were amenable to the mass production of cotton textile, given an influx of relatively cheap raw material from the Americas and models for textile production available in India. This, combined with an abundance of coal and some key technological breakthroughs, transformed Britain into an industrialized textile manufacturing center of unprecedented output. As the East India Company gained more power in India, it was able to severely hamper the Indian textile industry to ensure British supremacy in that market. Slave-trading, cotton, and "nabob" interests became major voices in British government just as the effects of industrialization manifested themselves in terms of demands for both factory owner and worker rights. The French, Haitian, and American revolutions, major uprisings in England, Ireland, Canada, and Jamaica, and severe unrest in India ushered in an era of reform in Britain, creating new poor laws and mechanisms for oversight of East

61 C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World: 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

India Company governance, increases in both colonial and "home" bureaucratic structures, and illegalizing British involvement in the slave trade and slavery throughout the formal Empire. While instituting what we might characterize as reforms designed to pre-empt further armed rebellion, these reforms also demanded an increased level of government involvement with populations throughout the imperial web. Postmodern scholars have termed this the rise of governmentality – an increase in government surveillance and regulation of everyday life, in Britain and across the Empire. Further technological innovation aided the growth of this bureaucratic apparatus by expanding communications networks via railroads, steamships, telegraph cables, airplanes, and radio waves. As the government expanded and developed new and better networks to fund its activities, so too did the military, a physical technology of rule that accompanied socio-cultural and technical means of regulating populations. Advancements in military technology rendered warfare ever more brutal and destructive, as the history of the twentieth century readily shows. The scale and pace of these changes, the numbers involved – of displaced people and goods – and the degree to which imperial webs became a part of everyday life in this era speak to how the stakes of imperialism were raised very dramatically in the last 200 years, and the British Empire is just one example. We can speak of countless other revolutions, waylaid revolutions (such as in the case of India, described above), or forced uneven developments that were caught up in other exploitative imperial networks.

The question remains: where does imperialism end and globalization begin? If we define globalization as the ongoing global integration of market economies, communications networks, culture, and political operations, then we can observe globalization happening over millennia of human development, and any one given empire or constellation of imperial networks as merely pieces in that process.[62] Some writers like John Darwin and Niall Ferguson imagine global integration to have been largely created by British power in the nineteenth century and taken over and furthered by American power in the twentieth century. For them, imperialism delivered globalization, and the inequalities alive in twentieth- and twenty-first-century internationalism and global capitalism were and are extensions of this.[63] Post-Marxists such as Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt have added to this vision, arguing that by fostering global connectivity (albeit in piecemeal ways) the

62 A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (New York: Random House, 2002), pp. 1–5.
63 Ferguson, *Empire*; Darwin, *Empire Project*.

nation-state-based empires of the past 300 years have set the stage for the coming of Empire (upper case), a centerless global imperialism that will harness the latest military and digital technology to be post-national, inescapable, and absolute. Inspired by Marx, they see this stage of global Empire giving way to *the* global revolution. For them, globalization will deliver a new and total form of imperialism (and eventual liberation).[64]

A less deterministic approach is necessary. Much cultural, economic, and political innovation took place in the interstices and movement *between* empires and we must be careful not to imagine that all developments within an empire were dictated by its proprietors. As Burton and Ballantyne argue, "empires have not simply been carriers or enablers of global processes, they have in turn spawned new hybrid forms of economic activity, political practice, and cultural performance that take on lives of their own – in part because of the ways colonized peoples and cultures have acted on or resisted imperial political and social forms."[65] To properly study the relationship between globalization and imperialism, and appreciate both the power inequalities alive in globalized networks and the potential for innovation, we must continue to delve into the complexities of imperial formations and study the moments when imperial business was unfinished, incomplete, resisted, circumvented, and made irrelevant. It remains the work of historians to find new ways of engaging with imperial/colonial archives to give us insight into these moments, and to continually remind us how unscripted were past as well as present and future engagements with imperialism.

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65 Burton and Ballantyne, eds., *Bodies in Contact*, p. 4.

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