THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO WORLD LITERATURE AND WORLD HISTORY

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MOVING INSTITUTIONS

World history and its beginnings in theory

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World literature got its start as a field of scholarly discourse in the years after the Napoleonic wars. The discourse persisted thereafter, though it became marginal with the relentless growth of nationalistic outlooks, and some of its debates were taken up within the study of comparative literature. The 1950s marked renewed interest in world literature, with the real resurgence happening in the 1990s. Meanwhile world history, with antecedents going back over 2,000 years, inched forward through the appearance of occasional compendia and narratives by venerable scholars, followed by the rise of pedagogical texts in the nineteenth century and culminating with explicit scholarly discourse in the mid-twentieth century. Are there obstacles that have made debate more difficult to launch for world history than world literature? For history, surmounting the frameworks of nation, empire and civilisation with conceptualisation at the global level has come slowly; clarifying temporal and topical scales as well as scales of aggregation has come even more slowly. The continuing analytical reliance on diffusionism in historical thinking slows the effort to understand the complexity of historical interactions. In its current form, world literature appears more fully developed as a field of theory and criticism than world history. The point of this essay is to explore the possibility that contemporary world history may expand its strength in theory, relying on inspiration from world literature.

This volume's conversation between world history and world literature is surely not the first such discussion, but it is doubtless the most fully structured. The objective of this comparison, presumably, is to enable us to compare the high-level, conceptual and interpretive accomplishments of each body of scholarship and perhaps to link them in a still higher-order synthesis of humanistic thought. Yet as soon as one begins to consider a comparison of world history and world literature, a panoply of categories and levels arises, adding complexities and details that prevent one from going straight to the core of the discussion. For instance, neither world history nor world literature is properly a discipline, in that each is a subgroup within the larger disciplines of history and literature.

In my commentary on what world history brings to the discussion – and what world historians want to get out of the discussion – I begin with a simple framework addressing the shape and direction of each discipline, focusing on the resources, works and theory of each field. To start with the level of resources, one may say that both history and literature draw on the experience of humanity. Historians have long seen their craft as drawing more specifically on the *historical record* – the accumulation of available written records plus other documents on the human past.[1]

Historians and librarians, by preserving archives and libraries, are the stewards of the historical record. More recently, historians have come to understand explicitly that they also draw upon *memory* – the imagined past, as recalled, debated and updated by every generation. For literature, the resources are drawn from a wider and more eclectic range of sources, including the historical record and social memory but also, and especially, social experience.

At a second level of elements in history and literature, authors write works – creative, analytical and pedagogical.[2] For literary writers, creative works include poetry, plays, stories, novels and epics; pedagogical works include anthologies of works and narratives of changes in literature. For historians, the creative (and perhaps analytical) works are narratives and syntheses of past issues, along with biographies; pedagogical works include narratives and document collections. Historical works, while often written with close attention to the style of composition, focus especially on staying close to the factual elements of the historical record and on ordering them either into coherent narrative or a logical interpretation. The historical monograph – a book-length work of narrative, analysis or interpretation, based on primary and secondary documents – has become the standard of professional value. Literary works, while often inspired by the historical record and memory, aim especially at achieving emotional responses in the reader, though these may range across the spectrum from joy to fear and anger. Historical works and literary works may be written at scales from the intimate and individual to spanning great times and spaces; works written recently or written thousands of years ago both qualify as valuable contributions to the canon. Publication of pedagogical works expanded in each field in the nineteenth century; pedagogy gained further importance for secondary and university education in the twentieth century. Courses and narratives arose in History of Western Civilisation, to be succeeded by History of World Civilisation and then by a less-regionally segmented World History; alongside them arose collections of documents in Western Civilisation and documents in World History. In literature, collections and anthologies in World Literature developed great importance in pedagogy, proposing competing versions of the canon of great works. The key pedagogical instruments in the two fields are the narrative textbooks in world history and the anthologies in world literature.[3]

The third level of elements in history and literature is that of large-scale interpretation and critique. The term "theory", while common in literature, is rarely used in history. Instead, historians speak of "historiography", though the term is fundamentally ambiguous. It refers at once to the methods, the resources and the interpretations: it is the sum of historical works, but also the overall methodology and interpretation of the past. That is, the term applies both to what I have called "works" (results of the practice of historical scholarship) and to what I call "theory and criticism" – in fact, it applies more to the works than to theory. For literature, the term "literature" can refer to the corpus of literary works and also to "literary criticism" or "theory". "World history" is monographic works on a large scale plus textbooks, but it is also world-historical theory and analysis. "World literature" includes world-literature anthologies – but it refers especially to "world literature" as a province of literary criticism.

World history – its evolution and its character today

The antecedents of world history go as far back as the *Histories* of Herodotus and the *Records of the Grand Historian* of Sima Qian, well over 2,000 years ago. Of the succeeding efforts to compile wide-ranging histories, perhaps the most outstanding were those of Rashid al-Din Tabib (completed in Iran in roughly 1307) and Voltaire's two world-historical compendia.[4] Before the nineteenth century, it appears that most of the resources consulted in works of world history were earlier works of history, rather than original documents. In the nineteenth century, an expansion of interest in history led to the publication of multi-volume narratives of world

history and one-volume interpretations of the world in several European countries and also in the United States and Japan: they opened the pedagogical dimension of world history for students and the general public.

History was a form of writing but not a professional discipline until the late nineteenth century. For instance, European debates on the Renaissance and the Enlightenment generated studies of the past, as did later development and application of the concept of civilisation and the philosophical debates of positivism and materialism. Moments of great conflict stimulated attention to world history – thus Hegel's reflections on world history can be seen as responding to the Napoleonic wars. Historical inquiries reached – along with empire and world trade – to all the regions of the world, including Karl Marx's interpretation of Asia and Max Weber's major studies of China and India.[5]

During the nineteenth century, the gradual professionalisation of history in universities brought a search for the appropriate scales of research and writing. Histories were cast at geographic scales from local to subnational, national, imperial, civilisational, continental and global, though without clear discussions of relations among them. Late in the century, national political history established itself as the principal scale and theme for study of the past, and all other scales were subordinated to the nation for another century. Social history, which also lost ground in the era of national political history, reappeared in the mid-twentieth century, now focusing especially at the level of family and community.

The end of World War I brought another of those moments propelling scholars into world-historical reflection and analysis. H. G. Wells and Oswald Spengler wrote two very different but highly influential interpretations of the evolution of human society; Arnold J. Toynbee followed up with a massive, multi-volume synthesis of civilisational history that achieved its completion only after another great war.[6] Euro-American writers in numerous other fields offered their efforts at global syntheses in the interwar years: Sigmund Freud in psychology, V. Gordon Childe in archaeology, V. I. Lenin on capitalism, Lewis Mumford on cities, Karl Polanyi on markets, Owen Lattimore on pastoralists, Alfred Kroeber on anthropology.

World history gained its formal baptism in 1963 with the publication of William H. McNeill's *The Rise of the West*, an extensive volume surveying transformations in the human community from the time of ancient civilisation to the postwar era. McNeill assembled the preceding contributions as a narrative of interacting civilisations, written in a fashion that fit convincingly into a professional historical format.[7] From this point, world history gained a modest space within the historical academy, a space that slowly expanded until the field achieved formal recognition as a historical subfield at the turn of the century.

As professional studies of world history came into existence, they were able to draw on a range of new, postwar enterprises in scholarship: in area studies, systems analysis, ecology and digital analysis. Philip Curtin, a historian of Africa, led in comparing area-studies histories, especially to yield histories of colonialism in the Atlantic world. Immanuel Wallerstein, trained as a sociologist of Africa, drew on systems theory to develop the modern world-system as a historical-sociological approach early modern Europe and the Atlantic. Alfred Crosby drew insights from emerging studies in ecology to portray the Columbian Exchange of biota between the Old World and the New World after 1492.[8]

The World History Association formed in North America in 1982: it facilitated scholarship and especially the expansion of world history teaching in secondary schools and universities.[9] By 1990 this process led to the appearance of the *Journal of World History*. Debate opened up, at the beginning of the 1990s, as world historians were emboldened to join in the attacks on "Eurocentrism" in the historical literature. Soon thereafter, internecine struggles broke out between proponents of world history (mostly in the US) and global history (mostly in Europe and elsewhere),

showing the formation of what might have become warring camps. Courses in world history, global history and global studies spread dramatically in high schools in the United States and at a more leisurely pace elsewhere. Continental organisations of world and global historians formed in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, and then into a worldwide federation.[10]

The International Committee of Historical Sciences, at its quinquennial 2015 meeting in Jinan, China, made world history a principal theme, along with gender and social history. By this time, the number of surveys and reviews of world history had expanded impressively. World history is now reaching maturity, as argued in my recent overview, and must face the challenges that come with maturity. Facing those challenges, monographic studies in world history have become comprehensive in their approach to their subject matter, deploy disciplinary specialisation to dig expertly into selected dimensions of their topic and emphasise coherence in their overall argument.[11] Yet the tensions within this paradigm remain evident. The effort to be comprehensive – paying empirical attention to further implications of a question under study – makes it difficult to explore any one issue in depth. The attention to disciplinary specialisation brings the logic of a relevant field to key elements of the argument, so that at least some of the claims in the analysis can be said to be verified. The focus on coherence highlights attention to social and historical theory, to ensure that the various parts of an argument fit with each other.

The problem of audience confronts world history with parallel challenges. Writers in the first half of the twentieth century – Wells, Toynbee, Oswald Spengler, the Durants and others – had gained wide audiences for civilisational interpretations of the past, but professional historians declined to accept them as part of historical studies.[12] World historians of the late twentieth century, seeking to link national and global histories to each other and to analyses in other disciplines, began a search for audiences ready to explore the past at such breadth, and the creation of rhetorical practices to convey the authors' messages.[13] Authors and audiences in world history will have to find each other and recognise each other gradually – there are doubtless many cases in which they miss each other and others in which they misunderstand each other. One useful rhetorical device is that of "the world stage", in which the author portrays a stage and a set of actors as representative of global drama without claiming that they are the whole story. These questions of audience will gain further attention as world historians seek to contrast their work with the expanding popularity of "transnational" history.[14]

World literature and world history compared

David Damrosch and Theo D'haen each emphasise Goethe's centrality in crystallising world literature as a field of study.[15] D'haen shows how world literature emerged in the mind of Goethe and his compatriots as an expression of an Enlightenment-era humanist ideal; Damrosch traces the interactions of Goethe and Eckermann, whose devoted recording of Goethe's thoughts preserved his insights for the benefit of others.[16] World history too had its key figures and competing frames. As Goethe (1749–1832) announced while in his late 70s that the time for world literature had arrived, a young Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) achieved his professorship at the University of Berlin in 1825.[17] For almost half a century, Ranke led in building a system of historical studies that drew on original diplomatic documents to trace national histories, with students presenting their research in seminars. Only after his retirement in 1871 did Ranke turn to world history: he completed six volumes of narrative (from ancient Egypt to the twelfth century, using secondary sources) before his death. Ranke's legacy in national history inspired historians for a century; his work in world history had little impact.

For both history and literature, scholars grasped at various frames, perhaps seeking an essential standpoint: world, comparative, universal, national and others. In literature, centres of various

framings moved over time: studies of world literature appeared in Germany but soon encountered contending visions of comparative literature, first in a French formulation that maintained itself for roughly a century, then in an English version that developed in the late nineteenth century and an American version in the early twentieth century. The debates ranged beyond the limits of literature and incorporated metaphors from other fields, so that there was a discussion of the "free trade" of literature in the mid-nineteenth century.[18]

History and literature at the global level appear to have had little interaction with each other. (At the national level, in contrast, history and literature have commonly been linked intimately, as in the case of American Studies.) An important exception to this pattern of distance appeared in the aftermath of the Great War: especially in the United States, scholars at elite educational institutions sought to instil a sense of European heritage and liberal values in their students by assembling great writings from across the centuries. Thus, in the 1920s, the Comparative Civilization and Western Civilization courses at Columbia, Chicago and Stanford focused on great books. As this curriculum spread to a wider range of collegiate institutions, readings assigned to students eventually diverged: narrative texts of civilisational change for the History of Western Civilization course, in contrast to anthologies of great writings for the world literature courses. In the space between these two genres developed another textual form: collections of historical documents preaching the gospel of history according to primary sources by giving brief clips of widely ranging primary documents rather than full texts of great books.

The dramatic changes in scholarly life during the second half of the twentieth century brought innovations into history and literature from other fields. For world history, I have emphasised its gradual incorporation of insights from area studies, systems theory, ecology, digitisation, natural sciences, Marxian and postmodern philosophy and more.[19] These new forms of knowledge, interacting with the existing differences between political and social historians, arguably opened possibilities for innovative work in world history. For world literature, translation studies arose as a discipline with international support, especially in the 1950s: it brought an organised approach to a type of work that had gone on as long as literature had existed. Translation studies took, as its keystone text, an insightful 1923 essay by Walter Benjamin. The expanding geographical and linguistic scope of world literature necessarily brought forth the question of how world literature could address a steadily wider world. One effect was encouragement of readers to learn more languages; the other was to expand the scale and the skill of translation.[20]

From the 1990s and especially from the twenty-first century, world history and world literature each bounded ahead, partly in response to the contemporary fascination with globalisation, partly in response to the evolving resources and corpus of works within each field and partly in response to innovations in adjoining fields. History experienced a great expansion in the quantity and range of monographic works, but not much growth in theory. Literature expanded somewhat in the number of works created and certainly in the range of works encompassed by theorists – so that theoretical work in world literature grew at a more rapid rate than in world history.

Returning to my simple framework of resources, works and theory, here are parallels and contrasts of world history and world literature in the twenty-first century. In resources, the field of history is mostly restricted to the historical record (including the secondary record of previous works in history), but the volume of the historical record is expanding as new sources and new types of sources become available. For literature, these historical resources are also available, along with the temporally expanding range of human experience. As for the works constructed out of these resources within each field, the works of world literature are those, at whatever scale, that have been deemed worthy of inclusion in anthologies and in the debates within the analytical field of world literature. The works of world history, in turn, consist mostly of monographs

and syntheses that propose large-scale interpretations of the past. In pedagogy, world history relies mainly on narrative textbooks (but also collections of documents) while world literature relies on anthologies and publication series.[21]

World history and world literature are fields of worldly scale, but within each are to be found many choices and variations in scale. Thus, one may compare the fields of world literature and world history in the dimensions of their scope – temporal, spatial, topical and scales of aggregation. In *time frame*, both world history and world literature give primary emphasis to the most recent two centuries and secondary emphasis to the three preceding centuries. World literature focuses mostly on novels, the most popular literary form worldwide at present, and therefore gives most attention to works from the eighteenth century forward – yet some works in world literature reach back as far as early large civilisations. Some world historians (the present author included) like to extend historical analysis back to the expansion of our branch of Homo sapiens some 70,000 years ago. In *space*, world history tends to analyse by continent, with growing effort to include all the continents; world literary criticism is more free to make planetary statements while analysing works addressing localised spaces. The principal *topics* in world history have been political and economic structures, though with a growing interest in cultural and social topics; world literature starts with social issues and works out in many directions. In *aggregative scale*, world literature works mostly at the scale of families and communities. World history works especially at the level of whole societies though, in recent work, there is emphasis on exploring interaction among scales from the individual to the global.

World historians may find themselves surprised by the breadth of generality of the propositions debated in world literature. Pascale Casanova activated the discourse in world literature with her notion of the "world republic of letters", in which many worlds of literature met through translation, mediated through a clearing house in Paris. Franco Moretti expanded earlier traditions of modelling by advancing a call for rational and quantitative study of literature, as with annual publications of novels, then implementing it with a two-volume edited work applying digital techniques of "distant reading" to analyse literary trends and techniques.[22] Emily Apter proposed, in 2006, a "translation zone" as a space of critical engagement linking minds and texts across boundaries, drawing on the immediate, post-9/11 demand for translation. She returned to the issue in 2011, challenging world literature because it gave too little recognition to the "untranslatable" of local specificities.[23] This concern that world-level analysis might give insufficient attention to the local showed up as well in world history, for instance in collections aimed at teasing out links between the global and the local.[24]

David Damrosch's 2003 overview of world literature immerses the reader in successive works and in their circulation, translation and production. He offers basic definitions that are reconsiderations after nearly two centuries of debate: "I take world literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (1). The wide range of choices remains: world literature can be seen as comprised of classics, masterpieces or windows on the world.[25] Scholars in world literature and associated fields have pursued many of these choices. Alexander Beecroft's *Ecology of World Literature* begins with typology to distinguish six levels of literary production, from village level to the global, analysing the characteristics of each.[26] Homi Bhabha has argued that postcolonial literature is the new world literature. Muhsin al-Musawi has applied the notion of the republic of letters to medieval Islamic discourse; the work of Sanskrit scholar Sheldon Pollock, especially his characterisation of the Sanskrit literary community as a "cosmopolis", has been adopted by scholars in world literature (notably Beecroft) and also in world history.[27] Wai Chee Dimock, in *Through Other Continents*, explores works across "deep time" to link them to American literature and associates her effort with "the transnational turn". Thus in literature – at much the same time as in

history – the apparently established project of a comprehensive world-level discipline encounters a rapidly expanding transnational project aimed perhaps at defining an intermediate zone between the global and the national.[28]

I conclude this section with an appreciation of Bruce Robbins's exploration (in this volume) of violence as a key issue within modernity, as seen both in history and literature.[29] His basic questions, as I understand them, are whether "modernity" represents a break in the patterns of human life and history at some point in time and whether levels and types of violence have changed at some time, presumably as part of a transition to the modern. Robbins then critiques various literary and historical scholars according to the degree to which they have highlighted violence or hidden it in their characterisations of the past, ending with a brief and arresting discussion of Thoreau's response to the debate of Arjuna and Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (in the 1785 translation by Charles Wilkins), which underscores the argument that modernity has brought new value systems. The issue is not resolved but, in my opinion, Robbins has shown the possibility for creative collaboration of historical and literary scholars in unravelling basic questions of interest to both disciplines.

Elements of theory in world history

Preparation of this essay has led me to conclude that it would be best for world historians to organise a formal analytical discourse, parallel to that in world literary criticism, and label it as "theory" or "world-historical theory". The objective of this exercise would be to pull historical analyses into closer contact with one another, with attention to their conceptualisation and analytical priorities.

But world historians do not generally use the term "theory" in their interpretive debates, nor the term "criticism". The encompassing term that historians use instead, "historiography", is understood more as a narrative of historical works and their conclusions than as an analysis of the assumptions and dynamics employed by historians.[30] Historians' scepticism about theory arises, first, from the empiricist foundation of the field: the priority on maintaining close contact with the historical record means that the empirical will probably always govern the theoretical in historical studies, and this is as it should be. Second, historians can reasonably fear that theory will be reductionist, by neglecting important factors. Third, historians are generally trained in study of a specific region and time frame, so that their theoretical gambits, debates and terminology are generally posed within what I will call "civilisational" limits. While they try to master the detail within their chosen realm, both their knowledge and their terminology end up being local, so that is it difficult to know, in linking their analyses, whether they are parallel or divergent in their logic.[31]

Nevertheless, scholars in several historical subfields have involved themselves in theory to deepen their specialisation. Social-scientific historians rely on economic, political and sociological theory; environmental historians rely on geological and biological theory; and cultural historians draw on the expanding range of cultural theory. World historians, however, face different needs in theory. Overall conceptualisation of the field needs to be sharpened, but it is improbable that any unified "world-historical theory" would be able to encompass the range of issues that a world historian must interpret. As a result, world-historical theory is likely to be eclectic and partial rather than general, in a pattern reflecting that of literary theory.

Elements of world-historical theory began to appear in the 1990s, beginning with the debate over Eurocentrism in world history – debate that, while sometimes rancorous, opened up a space for world-historical studies to thrive.[32] Jerry Bentley's 1996 periodisation of pre-1500 world history, based on "cross-cultural interaction", can be seen as a statement in theory rather than simply framework.[33]

Then appeared labels identifying competing scopes for the analyst's framework – world, global, comparative, civilisational, world-system and transnational – and claims by proponents for the benefits of each.[34] Another category of evolving terminology addressed various dynamics for the interaction of communities: diffusion, connection, circulation, entanglement and others.[35] Still, there has been little discussion of the relative benefits of "circulation" and "connection" in identifying and tracing world-historical dynamics, or the possibility that historical connections might be best described through multiple dynamics rather than through an all-purpose metaphor.[36]

A momentary step towards theory came with a 2006 Boston Conference, intended to propose a research agenda for world history. It included thirty-six participants from thirteen countries: after three days of short presentations on research projects, participants were expected to identify the highest priorities for current research. In fact, at the concluding session, participants declined to make such choices, preferring to encourage each group to work with its own priorities. A report on the meeting was circulated and published, but the report is rarely cited and the proposed next conference on research agenda never took place.[37]

Nevertheless, conference discussion raised many useful points. Debate on the nature of research agenda identified several key elements: stock-taking on the current state of the literature, formation of clusters among scholars working on related issues, time frames of research, datasets, formation of regional scholarly organisations and programmes of training in world-historical research.[38] Themes or topics for which participants advocated priority included religion, art, violence, peace, cities, ecology, disease, maritime life, state formation, exchange of ideas, technology and communication and economic history. Themes for which it was argued that there had been insufficient attention included gender, the balance of public and private or political and personal, and the Anthropocene.[39]

Monographs in world history continued to appear in the new century, but the theoretical and analytical discussion did not grow beyond the circulation of labels for fields of study and dynamics of interaction. Perhaps it will help if we turn again to world-literary theory, in search of examples that show what theoretical discussion looks like. The debates addressed earlier in this essay included Pascale Casanova's argument that a "republic of letters" in literature developed a global clearing house in Paris, Franco Moretti's quantitative system of modelling the study of literature, Emily Apter's focus on a translation zone as a method for study of literature, David Damrosch's recognition and critique of the "shaping force of local contexts" as works of world literature arrive, Alexander Beecroft's typology of literatures over time and Sheldon Pollock's notion of the cosmopolis. These arguments are clearly theoretical, but the theory is partial rather than comprehensive. Half of these insights address the theory of analytical categories in literature, half address the social construction of literary works.

Taking a cue from the examples of these debates in world literature, I propose six general issues in historical studies that might be appropriate for theoretical debate. Following what I have seen in literary theory, I offer the first three points as theory on analytical categories and the second three as historical theory of social change. I offer arguments, based on previous analyses, as to why these six issues are useful topics for theoretical exposition and debate.

1 – The notion of civilisation in history

Distinctive civilisations reflect differences in language, culture, political tradition – and perhaps also in the fundamental logic of existence. The question is whether the unity of civilisational character exceeds the variation within civilisations; to the degree that this is so, it is appropriate to analyse history in civilisational blocs. In genetics, for instance, it has been confirmed that

differences within communities greatly exceed those between communities, so that to speak of coherent national or racial categories has little validity in genetics. The debate on Eurocentrism centred on challenging the notion that European society had exceptional qualities which gave it inherent agency and leadership in generating global transformation. Continuing debates on modernity and its nature are commonly expressed in civilisational terms, suggesting that each civilisation has its own approach and implicitly rejecting the possibility that there could be a shared, global experience of modernity.

Kenneth Pomeranz faced models contrasting endogenous European growth with a European-centred world system expanding through primitive accumulation in outlying regions; he sought to escape civilisational models with a mix of comparative and integrative approaches. In the end he centred on empirical economic comparison of regions, arguing that China long matched European growth, and elicited a world-historical debate that focused primarily on the comparison and competition of those two key regions. John Darwin sought to escape civilisational analysis by constructing an encompassing "global history of empire" tracing Eurasian political interactions from the time of Tamerlane. Dipesh Chakrabarty chose to confront civilisational logic directly, contesting notions that Europe was the homeland of a modernity that gradually brought capitalist transition to other regions.[40] For Africa, the largest and most populous region outside Eurasia, the debate on its place in world history remained limited to its regional specialists. Yet Maghan Keita's wide-ranging review of Africa in the world, especially for the medieval era, suggests that elements for a comprehensive debate on world-historical theory may already be in place.[41]

2 – The breadth of time and topic in historical analysis

Most historical studies focus on the past few centuries, as these are best documented and closest to our own experience. Further, most studies are topically specific – thus political analyses may point briefly to economic and cultural factors, but as background more than the core of analysis. Yet studies of twenty-first-century politics cannot be comprehensive without close attention to family and gender, while long-term studies are made relevant by questions of basic human biology, psychology and adaptation to our environment. Thus, Marcel van der Linden shows how the narrative of labour history, long focused on European and North American wage labour, looks entirely different when it includes other regions, longer time periods and other dimensions of work. John R. McNeill, in an environmental history, argues that, "the modern ecological history of the planet and the socioeconomic history of humanity make sense only if seen together".[42] The critique of "methodological nationalism" challenges the tendency to set research projects at the national level when key factors in the analysis spill over national boundaries.[43] So there is reason, in studies of a given topic, for debate as to the appropriate time frame and the topical breadth for researching it.

3 – The range of disciplines and theories on which historians call

History, with its focus on change over time, is only one of the many disciplines in social sciences, humanities, natural sciences and now information science. Under what circumstances should historians draw explicitly on knowledge and collaborations with other disciplines?

A key work in the modelling of early modern world history was historical sociologist Jack Goldstone's 1991 analysis, proposing a broad interpretation of Eurasian social revolutions that focused on the material levels of existence of various social strata. Goldstone's analysis, while supported by many scholars, met a challenge from Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who contested the

emphasis on material sources of change and proposed an analysis based on cultural disciplines to explain the Eurasian social change presented in his vision of connected histories.[44]

4 – The place of specialised knowledge in society

In the last two centuries, an immense infrastructure of scientific and technical knowledge has arisen, along with an equally immense system of education to sustain it. What is the relationship of this expanded system to the much simpler systems of knowledge in earlier times? Does today's knowledge elite perform social functions that were simply not performed before? What is the social composition and social significance of this scientific and educational sector? What is the relationship of this knowledge elite to those who hold political power and to the general population? Are those with religious knowledge, who were earlier central, still part of the knowledge elite?

Kapil Raj has addressed these questions by relying on the notion of circulation of knowledge to show that transformations in knowledge within South Asia were far more complex than the simple diffusion of European knowledge proposed by Basalla. Dominic Sachsenmaier moves far beyond combating diffusionism, drawing on his experience in Germany, China and the United States, to make the case that these distinctive national traditions in historiography, built deeply into the outlook of scholars in each of these systems of knowledge, are not soon to be overcome by a comprehensive global approach.[45]

5 – The development of hierarchy and network in society

Historians broadly accept the notion that hierarchy enables material and intellectual advance of humanity, though they assume that one can go too far in hierarchical differentiation. More recently, historians have expressed considerable interest in networks, which can be treated as horizontal differentiation in society in contrast to the vertical differentiation of hierarchy. What is lacking is deeper analysis of networks in society and, especially, analysis of the balance and interplay of network and hierarchy in society.

Michael Gomez, in an analysis of Muslims in the Americas that relied more on network than on hierarchy, used network thinking to trace the settlement and persistence of Muslims in the Caribbean and South America, but also their isolation, persecution and eventual disappearance. The smaller numbers of Muslims in the US, surviving through quiescence, expanded in the era of nationalism as unorthodox communities grew in strength and eventually formed the basis for a broader community of orthodox Muslims.[46] John and William McNeill proposed the image of "the human web" to identify a long-term process of expansion in ties within the human community, creating tighter ties within regions and more numerous ties among regions. While the image was taken up in titles of succeeding works in world history, there was little discussion of the characteristics of the "web". In effect, the web was adopted as a term linking the civilisational units in the established interpretation of world history.[47] One could imagine another vision of a human web that distinguishes hierarchy from network, tracing the relative growth and significance of horizontal and vertical differentiation.

6 – Gender in history

The implications of gender relations range from the most intimate levels of family and reproduction to the institution of marriage, the distinctions in male and female life cycles, the gendered division of labour, the cultural distinctions in the gendered social order and the notion of

patriarchy as an organising principle for society. The relative neglect of the study of women in world history means that gendered distinctions have been neglected as well. In her study of gender in history, Merry Wiesner-Hanks organises her review of these issues in chapters addressing, successively, family, economy, ideas, religion, politics, education and culture and sexuality.[48] As she notes, exploration of the gendered dimensions of politics and economics not uncommonly disrupts the established explanations of processes.

These are my examples of topics for potential theoretical debate in world history. The debate would reveal commonalities and divergences in the way authors handle these questions and thus contribute to a sense of whether historical discourse is in process of cohering or diverging. Other topics, ripe for such debates, are the dynamics of world-historical interaction (in categories of analysis) and violence (in patterns of social change). Of the issues that are worthy of theoretical debate in world history, some are old issues that spark renewed interest – politics, war, commerce and perhaps elite culture. Others are issues that are new, perhaps because they are new phenomena but more likely because we have new information with which to debate them – gender, genetics, disease and popular culture.

Where is this theoretical discussion to be carried out? The major journals and conferences of historical associations address such a wide range of issues that there may remain little space for conducting discussion in world-historical theory. Some scholars, however, have penned direct critiques of Eurocentric scholarship that managed to gain a space in the discussion of European and American scholarship – Edward Said, Immanuel Wallerstein and Dipesh Chakrabarty stand out. More dependably, the debates should take place in venues more focused on world history and more open to critical thinking.

World-historical theory, if it does develop as an energetic body of critique, will not likely match the field-specific strengths of economics, sociology or even literary theory. But precisely because world historians deal not simply with chronology but with assembling stories of interactions from various levels and arenas of human existence, they may develop strength in theory at a larger scale, linking the existing theories in social sciences and humanities, even working out their inconsistencies or locating new insights. At the very least, world historians should broaden their experience by adding studies in world literature to their long lists of reading to do. While we are surely generations away from a synthesis of the humanities, we should remain open to heading in that direction.

Notes

1 In many cases, the historical record was the writing of earlier historians. The distinction between primary and secondary works in history developed in the nineteenth century.
2 Works of theory are considered separately, below.
3 Narratives of world literature, while composed beginning in the nineteenth century, did not gain the importance of anthologies. Theo D'haen, *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature* (London: Routledge, 2012).
4 Rashid al-Din al-Hamadani, *Jāmiʿ al-Tavārīkh*, 4 vols. (Tehran, 2015 [c. 1307]); Voltaire, *La Philosophie de l'histoire*, ed. J. H. Brumfitt (Toronto, 1969 [1753–1754]); Voltaire, *The General History (Essai sur les Moeurs et l'Esprit des Nations)*, trans. William Fleming (Akron, 1901–1904 [1754–1757]).
5 G.W.F. Hegel, ed. and trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011); Lawrence Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Sources, Development and Critique in the Writings of Karl Marx* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975); Max Weber, *The Religion of China* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1968); Weber, *The Religion of India* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958).
6 H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History*; Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*; Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 vols.
7 McNeill had been a research assistant with Toynbee; as with Toynbee, his magnum opus appeared some two decades after a world war. In later years, McNeill extended his writing from politics and civilisation

to disease, dance and drill and to the encompassing metaphor of a web to interpret global social change. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1963); Patrick Manning, "William H. McNeill: Lucretius and Moses in World History", *History and Theory* 46.3 (2007): 428–45.

8 Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1984); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System, vol. 1, Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic P, 1984); Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport: Greenwood, 1978).

9 I remember the stage in the 1980s where my historian colleagues, in hearing the term "world history", could only understand it as "comparative history". (This phase was overcome, it seemed, but "transnational history" later arose and washed over world history).

10 The Network of Global and World Historical Organizations (NOGWHISTO) formed in 2008 and held its founding conference in Amsterdam in 2010.

11 Patrick Manning, "Locating Africans on the World Stage: A Problem in World History", *Journal of World History* 26.3 (September 2015): 605–37.

12 Wells, *Outline of History*; Spengler, *Decline of the West*; Toynbee, *A Study of History*; Will and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, 11 vols. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1935–1975).

13 One great popular success was Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: Norton, 1997). Diamond, trained as a physiologist, focused on physiological issues in his long-term history and set his analysis in civilisational or racial rather than national terms. More recently, Jürgen Osterhammel published in 2009 a world history of the nineteenth century that became a top seller in Germany. The English translation is *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2014).

14 The *American Historical Review*, publishing more book reviews than any other historical journal, publishes most reviews in regional sections; it also publishes a "general" section and a section labelled "comparative, transnational, and global" – thus making it difficult for readers to know which works have been classified in which category, or whether all fall in fact into a single category. See Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

15 D'haen, *History of World Literature*; David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003).

16 In addition, as Jonathan Arac puts it, "no political entity existed that could be called *Germany* and we may imagine this to be a significant reason for the appeal of the "world" to Goethe, as over against the national state cultures of England and France" (qtd. in Apter 196). See Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013).

17 At the 1828 Congress of National Scientists in Berlin, Goethe ventured "to announce a European, in fact a universal, world literature", a topic he had been developing in essays and in discussion with Eckermann (D'haen, *History of World Literature*, 6–7; see also Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* 1–14).

18 D'haen, *History of World Literature*.

19 Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

20 Goethe found ways to translate many languages, including those he did not know (D'haen, *World Literature*, 121); Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1913–1926*, vol. 1, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 2002).

21 For instance, the *Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*; the Penguin Classics series, founded in 1946; and the Heinemann African Writers Series, founded in 1962.

22 Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des lettres* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1999); Franco Moretti, ed., *The Novel*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006); Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005).

23 Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006); Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013).

24 A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Global History: Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Patrick Manning, ed., *World History: Global and Local Interactions* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2006).

25 Further, it is "a mode of circulation and of reading, a mode that is as applicable to individual works as to bodies of material" (5). David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003).

26 Alexander Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (London: Verson, 2015).

27 Muhsin al-Musawi's *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters* (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 2015); Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2006).

28 Perhaps the difference between "world" and "transnational" lies more in the audience than in the object of study: that is, one audience seeking a global interpretation of history and literature, the other seeking a less-bounded vision of the national. Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006); Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2010).

29 On this subject, see also Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011).

30 Daniel Woolf, *A Global History of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011); Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang with Supriya Mukherjee, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2008).

31 Anthropologists, also focusing on both local and global knowledge, have historically shown greater interest in theory than historians.

32 J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographic Diffusionism and Eurocentric* History (New York: The Guildford P, 1993); Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past*, 101–2.

33 The response by Patrick Manning, questioning possible meanings of "cultural" and "interactions", can be seen as a theoretical counter-argument. See Jerry H. Bentley, "Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History", *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 749–70; and Patrick Manning, "The Problem of Interactions in World History", *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 771–82. Bentley's periodisation scheme provided the civilisational organisation of his world history textbook which, despite theoretical questions, led the field for 20 years.

34 Bruce Mazlish, "Comparing Global History to World History", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (1998): 385–95.

35 On diffusion: Blaut, *Colonizer's Model*. On connections: Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia", *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997): 735–62; Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past*, 3–7, 280–82 and 316–18; Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986).

36 On circulation: Claude Markovits, *et al.*, eds., *Society and Circulation: Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia 1750–1950* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003); Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900* (Ranikhet, India: Permanent Black, 2006). See also Jean Deloche, *La Circulation en Inde avant la révolution des transports*, 2 vols. (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1980).

37 David Christian, *et al.*, "Mapping World History: Report on the World History Research Agenda Symposium", in Patrick Manning, ed., *Global Practice in World History: Advances Worldwide* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2008), 1–22. Peter Gran noted, at this meeting, the choice between a unified vision of world history (perhaps Marxian or Weberian) and a diverse vision (in the spirit of liberalism) and concluded that the structure of the conference implied commitment to a pluralist vision – see page 4 of the report. The conference, organised by Patrick Manning, was sponsored by the World History Network, Inc.

38 Of these elements in research design, there were subsequent advances in some. A "Global Historiography Cluster", announced at the end of the conference, collaborated for a time. Regional organisations expanded with the formation of associations for Asia, Africa and Latin America and the encompassing NOGWHISTO. Programs of advanced training grew, though at a slow pace.

39 Christian, *et al.*, "Mapping World History", 9–15.

40 Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000); John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405* (London: Penguin, 2007); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000).

41 Maghan Keita, "Africans and Asians: Historiography and the Long View of Global Interaction", *Journal of World History* 16 (2005): 1–30. For a parallel view on more recent centuries, see Manning, "Locating Africans".

42 J. R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: Norton, 2001), XXII.

43 Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Andrew Shryock and Daniel Lord Smail with Timothy Earle, *et. al.*, *Deep History: The Architecture of Past and Present* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2011); J. R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: Norton, 2001); Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology", *The International Migration Review* 37.3 (Fall 2003): 576–610.

44 Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia", *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997) 735–62.

45 Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*; George Bassalla, "The Spread of Western Science", *Science* 156 (1967): 611–22; Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History: Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011).

46 Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2005).

47 John R. McNeill and William H. McNeill, *The Human Web: A Bird's Eye View of Human History* (New York: Norton, 2003).

48 Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).