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Perspectivas en Diálogo

Presentación

En su nueva edición de 2021, *Perspectivas en Diálogo* ofrece a sus lectores un nuevo debate enfocado en la Historia Global como perspectiva de análisis histórico. En este caso, Juan Pablo Scarfi y Eduardo Zimmermann dialogan con Sebastian Conrad sobre su libro *What Is Global History?*

La propuesta se inspiró en un reciente debate ocurrido en el marco del Taller de Historia Global de la Universidad de San Andrés (Buenos Aires, Argentina). Con un cronograma de reuniones sostenido desde hace ya varios años, este taller ha avanzado en una estimulante agenda de problemas en torno a la Historia Global, cuyos ejes articulan inquietudes y colaboraciones de sus integrantes, producciones de invitados externos, e intervenciones permanentes de renombrados especialistas nacionales e internacionales. La pregunta por el lugar de América Latina en los estudios histórico-globales dio lugar a una serie de conferencias que se desarrollaron con gran esfuerzo y de modo virtual durante el crítico año 2020. La experiencia conectó a un conjunto de académicos muy diverso cuyas discusiones han contribuido con la estilización de los ejes analíticos que hasta el momento habían guiado al Taller y con la formulación de otros nuevos.

Nuestra publicación retoma la pregunta que vertebra la obra de Conrad, “*What Is Global History?*”, y las rigurosas -y nada cerradas- respuestas que el libro ofrece. En ese marco, Scarfi, Zimmermann y el autor se introducen en una discusión potente e innovadora cruzada por tres ejes centrales:

- La Historia Global como enfoque y metodología analítica, con especial referencia a los escenarios, sus conexiones y sus actores;
- América Latina como coordenada espacial que pone a prueba –o de manifiesto– sus potencialidades y limitaciones;
- el diálogo entre sus críticas y las recientes narraciones globales sobre América Latina

Ofrecemos, de este modo, un diálogo pujante, de alto impacto historiográfico y que interpela a otras disciplinas. Conrad, Scarfi y Zimmermann discuten el eurocentrismo, el nacionalismo metodológico, las lenguas dominantes y la tensión centro-periferia en la concepción y experimentación de la Historia Global pero, sobre todo, avanzan en una nueva agenda de problemas en la que América Latina parece disputar un lugar de referencia.

Debate sobre What Is Global History? Sebastian Conrad, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2016, 2017, 312 pp.

Latin America as a Laboratory: A Regional Case for Assessing the Potentialities and Limitations of Global History

In the last twenty years, global history has emerged as one of the most innovative and influential approaches among a wide range of historians across the globe, to the extent that even those who do not engage with it felt compelled to respond to its new research agenda. Only very recently historians have devoted more attention to assess the broader historiographical implications of this renovation, at a time when paradoxically skepticism towards globalization became a dominant feature, following Brexit and the rise of various forms of nationalism worldwide. *What Is Global History?* (2016) by Sebastian Conrad was published timely in this conjuncture and it certainly provides the most ambitious and encompassing attempt to assess the potentialities (and also the limitations) of global history as such. At the same time, the challenges posed by global history, in particular its attempt to move beyond Eurocentric approaches and methodological nationalism, have begun to be examined in relation to regional historiographical traditions across the Global North and South. In particular, global history has been recently identified as disconnected from Latin American history and historiography in particular, as if it were a new field that could not reach with its full agenda and methodological implications the remote location of Latin America (Brown, 2015). In order to better contribute to exploring the connections between global history and Latin American history, it is imperative to debate further what is global history and what are its aims, potentialities and also its limitations. The starting point for such a discussion should be Conrad's exemplary book, for it offers the most rigorous examination and response to the question of *What Is Global History?* This essay thus offers a discussion of Conrad's approach, situating it in connection to Latin American history. It focuses on two dimensions illuminated by Conrad's book and a third one connected to some of its core insights: the attempt of approaches to global history to move beyond both Eurocentrism and methodological nationalism; the question of power and empire; and the rise of global disciplinary histories attentive to power asymmetries and empire.

As a starting point, Conrad has stressed in the first chapter that global history has offered an opportunity to correct two birth defects of the modern genesis of academic disciplines in the social sciences. Firstly, these disciplines were founded presenting Europe -and European categories- as a driving force and model and thus were framed and institutionalized with a Eurocentric perspective. Secondly, they emerged tied to the nation-state and national historical narratives. Global history as a historical approach could thus contribute to overcoming Eurocentrism and methodological nationalism, as

well as disciplinary fragmentation, by placing an emphasis instead on entanglements, connections, networks, mobility and inclusiveness. Therefore, if it provides a framework to question the Eurocentric foundations of modern disciplines and methodological nationalism, it could potentially shed new critical light into these two latter dimensions, generating interdisciplinary effects and resonances. However, global historians have tended to assume that practicing global history entailed essentially moving away from methodological nationalism and Eurocentrism, rather than advancing a robust historical and critical understanding of them through global historical lens. This has prompted most of them to shift their focus with a great deal of confidence and enthusiasm from these old questions into global historiographical perspectives. If global history is, according to Conrad, above all an approach, there should be scope to discuss and examine these old questions as part of a new global critical history and historiography. In fact, ironically the emergence of global history as such and global historical approaches in particular has contributed indirectly to the rise of an emerging critical historiography of Eurocentrism and the Eurocentric and imperial foundations of modern disciplines, including a wide range of critical disciplinary histories of international law, international relations and the inception of the field of Latin American Studies in the United States. For instance, the recent contributions of scholars such as Martti Koskenniemi, Antony Anghie, Arnulf Becker Lorca, Nicolas Guilhot, and Ricardo Salvatore are exemplary of global disciplinary histories written with a historical framework particularly attentive to questions of Eurocentrism and European and US imperialism and international asymmetries in the inception of these mentioned disciplines (Koskenniemi, 2001; Anghie, 2005; Becker Lorca, 2015; Guilhot, 2011; Salvatore, 2016). Similarly, disciplinary quests have been advanced to globalize and historicize international law, international relations and even political theory through global historical and comparative approaches. One might wonder if Conrad would regard these transformations simply as undesirable outcomes of the broader impact of global history or as more direct effects of the renovation that such an approach incepted into historical research. In any case, these renovations have certainly opened a window of opportunities not only for the emergence of refreshing contributions to disciplinary histories, but also the rise of global historical and comparative turns in other disciplines, including international law, international relations and even political theory with the rise of comparative political theory (Von Vacano, 2015).

Conrad has noted insightfully that there are interesting potential connections to be made between global history and national histories, in particular the intersections between “global processes” and “their local manifestations” (p. 12). In a recent forum devoted to discuss his book, Conrad went on to affirm that “it is, ultimately, not a matter of displacing ‘courses based on nation-states and empires’ with planetary overviews, and thus not a zero-sum game between the national and the global. The global and the

national are thus co-constitutive, and bound up with each other” (Conrad, 2019). This entails considering methodological nationalism as a valuable and complementary approach, which could also help to bring human agency, a central concern for national narratives, back into global and big histories of entanglements. In fact, Conrad has identified the exclusion of human agency as an important drawback of global history. In this regard, Latin America could offer a fertile soil for examining critically what is at the core of Conrad’s book, namely both the potentialities and limits of global history, bringing the nation and human agency back into global connections. For Latin American historiography, especially as practiced in Latin America, is strongly rooted in national histories and traditions and even methodological nationalism. Most historians located in each and most of the countries of the region tend to be primarily focused above all in their own national traditions and historiographies. Therefore, Latin American countries and their national historiographical traditions have been long disconnected, fragmented and isolated from one another. Latin America is thus a region where global history could be deployed to map it in its intersections with national histories. In other words, Latin America offers an exemplary regional case for taking the most of the potentialities of global history, but also discussing critically and providing correctives for the shortcomings identified by Conrad.

When exploring the politics of global history in chapter 10, Conrad has also acknowledged that as an approach global history has tended to neglect power asymmetries and hierarchies, for it could potentially become conciliatory and condescending with inequalities of power in the international arena and even questions of empire and imperial domination. Global history could thus depoliticize the past and contribute in turn to replace traditional histories of informal empire and Western imperialism by broader global understandings of connections, mobility and borderless. It is possible to identify a paradox here. While classical histories of informal empire were more concerned with power structures to the extent that they could be even apologetic, global history has emerged, according to Conrad, as a corrective to the Eurocentric and imperial bias of modern disciplines, but at the same time has tended to overlook questions of power and empire. In other words, global history could potentially correct empire and Eurocentrism, but would tend to neglect and move away from them. Latin America could be tested as a potential site to think critically through this paradox, that is, a case for exploring old imperial concerns and power asymmetries in a new globalist light. To what extent Latin America could fit into the framework of informal empire or instead be part of a broader web of global connections? One could argue that it could fit both frameworks, as long as it has been a region subjected to European and US imperial domination and power asymmetries, as well as one closely connected and embedded of global transformations and networks. In short, if Latin America could be a valuable location for understanding the connections between the national and the global, it could be also one where imperial

domination and power asymmetries could be studied in their connections with global networks and entanglements.

Thanks to his lucid awareness regarding the drawbacks of global history, Conrad has insisted on the importance of looking at the margins of the global, that is, to local spaces fragmented and disconnected from global networks. He affirms: “We must not lose sight of those historical actors who are not integrated into extensive networks, lest they fall victim to the obsession with mobility” (p. 16). In a similar but more skeptical spirit, Jeremy Adelman has pushed further on some specific dimensions overlooked by global history. Given its Anglo-centric focus, and the prevalence of English as the dominant language in the field, global history tends to gloss over, so Adelman observes, fragile regions and spaces disconnected and disintegrated (Adelman, 2017). Latin America, in particular some of the most tiny countries of the region, might fall into this category. More recently, Matthew Brown has pointed out that Latin America was at odds with global historical frameworks and thus it was imperative to integrate Latin America into this latter framework (Brown, 2015). One might wonder if Latin America would fit within the paradigm of global integration or instead disconnection and fragmentation. It would fit in better perhaps with both depending on the context and the countries and sub-regions involved.

Finally, with such a flexible understanding of *What Is Global History?*, particularly attentive to its potentialities and limitations, I suppose Conrad would possibly consider the rise of global disciplinary histories especially concerned with power asymmetries and empire as a concrete effect of global history. One might also wonder if he would regard the specific set of global disciplinary histories devoted to explore Latin America as a direct product of the global history approach and framework. Not surprisingly, quite a few of these disciplinary hemispheric histories of Latin America have mixed together concepts and approaches that Conrad has associated with both the potentialities and limitations of global history, such as “close encounters” and “networks” on the one hand, and power asymmetries, “empire” and “disciplinary conquest” on the other (Joseph et al, 1998; Salvatore, 2016; Scarfi, 2017). Latin America emerges thus as a location where the global could meet with the nation, global entanglements intersect with questions of empire and power asymmetry, and global connections could be combined with isolation and fragmentation. If Latin American approaches to global history take seriously some of the fundamental warnings advanced by Conrad about the potentialities and limitations of the field, they could provide a regional corrective to repair some of the drawbacks of global history as such.

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A Swing of the Pendulum? Global history and Latin America

One of the major merits of Sebastian Conrad's book (2016) has been that, in the midst of rather fervent enthusiasm over the possibilities of global history, it prudently marks out not only the limits of this novel focus, but also problems that have arisen as the field has made its impact across various lines of historiography. Rather than repeat the perceptive warnings that Professor Conrad's book lays out for its readers, I will focus on how his reflections might shed light on the place of Latin America and its historiography within these new global narratives. In particular, I will note some specific contributions that have emerged out of Latin America in response to this emergent subfield. I suggest that, after what was at first a relatively critical, and at times even skeptical, questioning of the inclusion of Latin America in these new global stories (as well as about what the historiographies of the region could contribute) there has emerged a new movement toward more constructive proposals for the integration of the region in the new narratives of global history. In particular, there are productive ideas with respect to the kind of contributions that can emerge from local historiographies.

Initial analyses that examined the connection between Latin America and the new global history were rather pessimistic; they explored the reasons why the field did not seem to include Latin America in its scope, or why historians working in the region did not take into account the subfield's contributions. Early on, Matthew Brown (2015) pointed out how the poles of attraction of the new global history seemed to be based in Eurasia, leaving little room for interest in Latin America. It had been the East-West connections that generated the most initial interest. Latin America, Brown noted, complicated this binary gaze with its "problematic identification with the West." Although the history of the "Atlantic World" offered some opportunity for remedy, early observers noted two other factors that conditioned Latin America's minor role in the literature.

The first is the almost absolute dominance of the English language in the production of the different variants of global history. As Jeremy Adelman astutely pointed out, "English became Globish" (2017). Conrad himself (2016: 220) recognizes this in his book, and takes note that the predominance of English generates an ambiguous situation: on the one hand, it seems to be a factor in the exclusion of non-English-speaking scholarship, but on the other, it seems to be true that it is precisely the language's globalization that has facilitated the construction of this new field. Taking this observation to another level of complexity, the issue of language intersects with what Chakrabarty very intelligently called "the inequality of ignorance": while historiographies of the "center" tend to ignore Latin American scholarship, historians of that region are not permitted the luxury of working in their field without exercising some fluency with scholarship produced in the United States, Great Britain, France or Germany (Conrad, 2016: 214-215). The "digital turn" that has accompanied the explosive growth of global history has

allowed for remote access to previously unreachable sources. However, the prices of access to databases and of the technology required to navigate online sources has also widened the divide between regions (Putnam 2016). Observing these combined characteristic features of global history, Adelman articulated a critical sentiment perhaps shared by many historians in Latin America: "Global history is another Anglospheric invention to integrate the Other into a cosmopolitan narrative on our terms, in our tongues."

The second factor noted in these initial attempts to historicize the early relationship between global history and the region is that Latin American historiographies exhibit a strong tradition of being rooted in the "national." A combination of cultural traits and institutional designs explain why the region maintains an attachment to this way of writing history even while it has increasingly done away with in other parts of the world (Brown, 2015: 13). As Conrad rightly points out in his book (2016: 207), the effort to move away from the national narrative also touches squarely on a utopian dimension of globalization and global history: the suggestion that we all become "global citizens" This was an ideal that, at the end of the twentieth century, inspired arguments that transcended history as a discipline and were embedded in larger discussions about the future of higher education in the United States. Within this framework, some hoped that the new approaches to global and transnational history would contribute to the formation of a more inclusive "global citizenry" with greater capacity for empathy, better information, and the tools to acquire "cosmopolitan" knowledge and perspective regarding the world and the place of our societies within it. (cf. Nussbaum, 1997; Wyatt, 2012). However, Conrad rightly points out that experiences of "global citizenship" have actually been quite faint in most parts of the globe. Moreover, in the last few years it has become abundantly clear that Latin America is not alone in exhibiting a strong preoccupation with national particularism, both in terms of its politics and its historiography. To this point Jeremy Adelman rightly concludes: "if we are going to come to terms with the deep histories of global transformations, we need to remind ourselves of one of the historian's crafts, and listen to the other half of the globe, the tribalists out there and right here, talking back." One alternative has been to focus on producing not "a post-national history, but a richer and historically grounded narrative of the nation," an illustrative example of which can be found in the work of Thomas Bender (2002, 2006), which aims to reinforce a cosmopolitan and pluralistic perspective of the early United States. Too, it has been noted that there exists the danger that these historiographic projects, far from attenuating nationalist prejudices, end up strengthening an expansive national identity once the "international" elements of their origins have been rescued (Pérez, 2002).

While nonetheless concurring with some of these observations, other Latin American historians have pointed out that, in the region, historiographic approaches that attempt to transcend national borders and insert historical processes into broader frameworks are not new. Rafael Marquese and Joao

Páulo Pimenta have recalled examples of Latin American and Caribbean historiographical traditions “that are no less global because they have not been written in English, that have been formulated before, and independent of the historiographical trends of the English-speaking academic world,” among them the literature on Caribbean slavery derived from the pioneering work of C.L.R. James and Eric Williams; the corpus of Latin American scholarship related to the Annales School; and the economic literature launched by the debates about dependency and regional development (Marquese & Pimenta, 2018). Sergio Serulnikov, writing in a similar frame, contributes this vital observation: “when thinking in a speculative relationship with developed countries, our countries also tended to think in relation to each other, that is, as a region. Latin America cannot be conceived without the world: it never was, it never will be.” (Serulnikov, 2020: 159). Here, Serulnikov agrees with a point made by Adelman: recognizing the centrality of world history in the development of Latin American historiography means highlighting everything that is full of tension, and by extension all that is fruitful, in the region's past. These are the histories that at the very center of their conflict: the colonial roots of modernity in Latin America and, thus, the imperial dimensions of the origins of modernity in Europe (Adelman, 2004: 400)

In focusing on these themes, Marquese and Pimenta, Serulnikov, and Adelman, each remind us that Latin America's global ties are rather inescapable. Just like Monsieur Jourdain, the *bourgeois gentilhomme* of Molière, who had lived all his life speaking prose without knowing it, Latin American historiography has been forced almost from its beginnings to consider and reflect on global historical processes. This, before the waves of the ‘new global history’ ever came to its shores.

Without denying the validity of this type of approach, it is worth noting that we can also find studies less associated with the post-colonial dimension that are suggestive of how the Latin American historical experience might project itself into the narratives of global historical processes. My colleagues Lisa Ubelaker and Juan Pablo Scarfi (2020) clearly defined the contours of a possible new program of Latin American contributions to global history: “rather than simply include Latin America into existing paradigms or ‘apply’ an existing global framework to Latin America (terms that mimic rather closely how globalization itself is narrated in the region), a deliberately peripheral, Latin American viewpoint can intervene in global history, shifting its premises and reframing its narratives.” In other words, promoting the type of interventions that shed light on new forms of connections between Latin America and the world, “repositioning Latin America in the world” (Benton, 2004), and renewing our perspectives on the development of global processes. In this light, it is worth highlighting some recent examples of “deliberately peripheral” studies that are not necessarily declared as part of a global history project or do so in a particularly “Latin American” way. Work by Ori Preuss (2016) on the links between Brazilian and Rio de la Plata jurists and statesmen,

or by Edward Blumenthal (2019) on the experience of exile in the process of state formation in Argentina and Chile in the 19th century, come to mind; Martín Albornoz and Diego Galeano (2017)'s study on anarchist networks and police procedures in the South American Atlantic clearly constitutes an example of "a transnational history on a regional South American scale." The same can be said of the work of Mercedes García Ferrari (2013) on regional and international projections of Argentine fingerprints, or Lila Caimari (2016)'s examination of local news agencies and submarine cable companies.

Scholarship at the intersection of legal studies and political history has also been energized by these novel approaches, conjuring new ways of viewing the place of Latin America in the world. On the one hand, contributions in the history of international law shed light on attempts to establish a "*criollo* international law," with numerous specific contributions that are not necessarily derived from the proposals of the established field located "central" countries, but can nonetheless illuminate aspects of the discipline in general (Becker Lorca, 2006; Obregón, 2006; Scarfi, 2017; Davis, 2020). On the other hand, studies on what has become known as "the republican constitutional laboratory of the nineteenth century" have illustrated its impact on the theory of republicanism. José Antonio Aguilar Rivera (2000, 2012) has insisted on the importance of inserting Latin American constitutional ideas and nineteenth century experiences, and in particular, adaptations of the principles of the division of powers, or the omission of powers of broad emergence in constitutional texts and their consequences, as contributions to a better understanding of Western political theory. In turn, Hilda Sabato (2018) and James Sanders (2014) have each analyzed, from different points of view, how the practices of early Latin American republicanism represented important illustrations of political modernity. These studies seem to revive an ambition typical of the actors of that first Latin American republicanism. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Argentine statesman Domingo Sarmiento claimed that after having experienced decades of frustration, South American nations could finally offer important lessons for the improvement of republican institutions in general: "Could not the problem of European Spain be resolved by closely examining American Spain, just as through the upbringing and habits of their children the ideas and morals of parents may be traced? So! Does not this eternal struggle of the peoples of Spanish America signify something for history and philosophy?" (Sarmiento, 1845: 33-34). This is precisely what many of these contributions try to rescue. There is no doubt that Professor Conrad's detailed analysis of the different paths that global history has traveled provides a very useful road map of this project.

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Response to Juan Pablo Scarfi and Eduardo Zimmermann

It is a pleasure, and an honor, when brilliant colleagues read and engage with someone else's work, and I am grateful for the generous, sophisticated, and constructive comments by Juan Pablo Scarfi and Eduardo Zimmermann on issues raised in my book *What is Global History?* In a way, their comments are a continuation of a conversation that started in April 2020 when I presented (online and virtually, that is) at the Universidad de San Andrés. The main point on the agenda, then and again now in these two interventions, was: How to bring Latin America and global history together. As Zimmermann points out, there are three competing, but ultimately, complementary positions on this issue: 1) Latin American history from its inception incorporated imperial, trans-Atlantic perspectives; it can safely do without a global turn, because it has always been global in outlook anyway; 2) On the contrary, the global turn is badly needed, as the nation, and nation-state history, still reigns supreme, and a stubborn resistance to global approaches is pervasive in most Latin American countries; 3) Global history, for its part, has tended to exclude Latin America – and has suffered from it.

Let's take up these three positions in turn. To begin with the first point: It is surely true that Latin American historiography can look back to a long tradition of writing history in an imperial and trans-Atlantic framework. As Eduardo Zimmermann reminds us, "Latin American historiography has been forced almost from its beginnings to consider and reflect on global historical processes." This may help explain a certain reluctance, at least at first, to enthusiastically embrace global history as a new perspective; too closely did it resemble an emphasis on Latin America-Europe connections that a more recent historiography tried to overcome (this also helps explain the thorny path of postcolonial studies in the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking world). This is, by the way, not peculiar to Latin America. A similar reluctance can be observed, for example, in India where colonial history has long dominated, and global history is therefore seen as an attempt to press South Asia back into the British-Empire mould; sometimes, the reluctance to "go global" is very pronounced (Lal 2003).

And in fact, global history is not unprecedented, not novel in every respect. Not only in Latin America, it builds on long-established trends in the discipline that transcend nation-state borders, such as the history of migration, long-distance trade, empires, and so on. In fundamental ways, global history is indebted to these existing fields of research. That said, much of recent global history does look different – not least because it makes a real effort to go beyond the bilateral perspectives (Portugal and Brazil, Spain and New Spain, Britain and Kenya, and so forth) that characterized much of this earlier scholarship. This shift in framework is also the reason, it seems to me, that in recent years, historians in (and of) Latin America have begun to warm to global history as an approach, and to actively embrace it.

The second point relates to the way in which in Latin American historiography, the category of the nation still reigns supreme. “Most historians located in each and most of the countries of the region,” writes Juan Pablo Scarfi, “tend to be primarily focused above all in their own national traditions and historiographies.” Eduardo Zimmermann chimes in: “Latin American historiographies exhibit a strong tradition of being rooted in the ‘national’.” The first point to remember here is that global and national scales do not need to contradict each other. On the one hand, global historians have analyzed the emergence of the nation, and of the nation-state, as a response to global conjunctures (Karl, 2002; Goswami, 2004; Hill, 2008; Conrad, 2010; Breuilly, 2011). The prominent role that migration played for nation-building processes in many Latin American countries is a case in point. On the other hand, pragmatically speaking, rethinking national histories in global contexts can be a powerful way to introduce global perspectives, and to undermine the naturalness of the nation: a soft and palatable invitation to open up to the world (even while still clinging, conceptionally, to the nation). In recent years, there has even emerged a popularized version of such “global” national histories, directed at a broad readership (Boucheron, 2017; Giardina, 2017; Huygens Instituut..., 2018; Núñez Seixas, 2018; Barone, 2018; Beyen, Boone, Wever, 2018; Franco and Fiolhais, 2020; Fahrmeir, 2020).

The second point to consider is the agendas that are linked to each scale – the local, the nation, the global. From place to place, the intellectual and political stakes – of remaining national, of going global – are bound to differ. In many Western European countries, challenging the grip of the national imaginary has proven liberating; it has facilitated the emergence of narratives critical of hegemonic nationalism, and has opened the door, intellectually, to new forms of cross-border solidarity. In other places, national frameworks and national institutions are seen as valuable barriers against the forces of regionalist fragmentation on the one hand, and of transnational capital on the other; historians, therefore, may not want to give them up too soon. Conversely, global history, while emancipatory in some places, and for some groups, may also serve as an instrument and ideological prop for a regime of globalization in search of a usable past. In each instance, and in each country, thus, the stakes of clinging to the nation, and of going global, will be different, and will have to be assessed (Dirlik, 2006; Sachsenmaier, 2011; Beckert and Sachsenmaier, 2018).

From a scholarly perspective, the third aspect noted by both Scarfi and Zimmermann is the most urgent, and also the most promising. In what ways can the specificity of the Latin American experience serve as a point of departure for alternative perspectives on the emergence of the modern world? In part, this is a response to the relative neglect of the continent’s past in many global history discussions, and in some of the major synthesis works. It is a moot question where to locate the causes for this neglect. The fact that Latin America had jettisoned colonialism early on, thus making it less receptive to postcolonial studies, may have factored in; in addition, European and North

American scholars may have treated Latin America as part of the “West,” as not sufficiently “other,” thus making it a less obvious starting point for anti-Eurocentric narratives (similar to Australia or New Zealand).

Whatever the reasons for the relative neglect, the task ahead should be to further conversations between these two fields. Here, I am in full accord with both commentators. Zimmermann urges scholars to explore “how the Latin American historical experience might project itself into the narratives of global historical processes”, while Scarfi, together with Lisa Ubelaker, insists that “a deliberately peripheral, Latin American viewpoint can intervene in global history, shifting its premises and reframing its narratives.” They also offer examples of scholarship that practices what they preach. It includes recent critical histories of the emergence of the modern disciplines, not least Juan Pablo Scarfi’s own work, demonstrating the ways in which Eurocentric concepts, categories, and narratives have an imperial genealogy, some of them dating back to the centuries of Iberian globalization. Eduardo Zimmermann cites an impressive list of recent studies that substantially contribute to our understanding of “the development of global processes,” even though not explicitly framed, nor self-identifying, as contributions to global history.

Given these impressive achievements, one wonders how useful notions like “peripheral”, “fringes”, and “margins” continue to be when thinking about Latin America’s role in global narratives. To be sure, there is a rich, and still growing, stream of works contemplating the role of specific areas in global history; but the majority of publications in this genre are programmatic articles, and overview books (Bender, 2006; Kasianov and Ther, 2008; Drapac, 2010; Whelehan, 2014; Stovall, 2015; Brown, 2015: 365-386; Lueng and Dalmau, 2018: 425-455; Lederer, 2018) The major trend, as I see it, is to value empirical studies for their place-based specificity, but not credit their appeal to their geography. When I was a student in a German university in the 1990s, it was unheard of to read books set in Ceylon, Colombia, or Korea. Today, scholars working on the history of nationalism, for instance, will be inspired by the work of Andrew Sartori or Thongchai Winnichakul, without indexing their studies as inherently “Indian” or “Siamese” (and thus limiting their impact). When working on time, On Barak’s research may serve as a model; when studying masculinity and the body, Wilson Jacob’s book will be a go-to place, also for those not working on Egypt themselves (Sartori, 2008; Winichakul, 1994; Barak, 2013; Jacob, 2011). Examples like these abound.

The global turn has made this kind of scholarship more broadly available, and has facilitated academic exchange across regions – without individual studies necessarily having to be global in scope, method, and aspiration. I admit that my own preference – but this is a preference more than a claim to methodological superiority – is for actively exploring the connection between concrete events and large-scale processes, and for an explicit engagement with questions of global integration (Conrad, 2016 and 2020). But this is not a necessary condition for participation in today’s global history conversations.

My impression is that I am in agreement with both commentators when saying, that the appeal of the global turn, in the years to come, is that historians will increasingly move away from what can be seen as a classical area studies approach: As a historian of Japan, you had to know everything Japanese; as a specialist in Brazil, everything Brazilian. Moving beyond such holistic notions of culture and society, historians today seek to explore overarching questions – and how they play out empirically in different locations. What draws us to these works, and what makes them relevant to us, is that they address the specific, but related processes that have made the modern world; what draws us to these works is not that they are Indian, Chinese, or Latin American, but their contribution to general themes, such as changing global labor regimes, slavery, patriarchy, law, kinship, religion, knowledge, inequality, and so forth.

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