

In all, there is a systematic attempt here to take the concept of social action forward and to add a social understanding to notions of struggle and class consciousness. It is a pity that Marxist and Weberian sociology have not been added to the mix and that the theories of Thompson and Hobsbawm are addressed only in an oblique manner. But there is substantial comparative primary work here, and the differences between the contributors make the collection develop our ideas about class and social action in interesting ways, even if, ultimately, the structural account remains unsatisfying as an explanation of political difference.

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**Thomas Bender (ed.), *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (2002), 436 (University of California Press, Berkeley, \$55.00, paperback \$22.50).**

During the 1990s social scientists, journalists and policy-makers collaborated in the assembly of the powerful organizing concept of 'globalization'. While theorizing on a global scale was hardly new, 'globalization' was represented as both a revolutionary process and the name for a novel historical moment, one in which dense, fluid and instantaneous movements of capital, information and commodities were challenging the power of nation-states and producing, for the first time, an authentically unitary world.

Like other scholars, historians of the United States cautiously circled around the concept, drawn to its possibilities, wary of its vagaries and occlusions. One of the most striking instances of the encounter between US historians and 'globalization' was a series of ambitious and highly unusual gatherings at the Villa La Pietra in Florence, between 1997 and 2000. The conferences, which brought together a formidable array of scholars based inside and outside the United States, set out to deliberate on, and debate, the meaning of US history in a 'global age'. As the project's architect, Thomas Bender, sets out in an introductory essay, its goal was assertively presentist: to re-evaluate US history in light of the changing 'geography of our national life'. As 'extraterritorial aspects' of contemporary US society become more evident, he writes, historiography must 'inevitably' become 'inflected by new awareness of subnational, transnational, and global political, economic, social, and cultural processes' (3).

Eighteen of the diverse works presented at the La Pietra conferences are collected together in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, an anthology that boldly sets out new and wide-ranging critiques, reconsiderations and agendas for historians of the United States. If there is one organizing frame for the volume as a whole, it is a suspicion and critique of strictly national frames of historical analysis. Many of its authors point to the deep mutual imbrication of nation-building projects and modern historiographic ones. Nationalists' eagerness to root diverse and sometimes unruly political communities in common historical ground, and historians' enthusiasm for profession-building through nation-building, together cropped – and continue to crop – historical understanding to fit national-territorial boundaries and projects of state. Modern historiography, as Prasenjit Duara puts it, partly enabled the nation-state 'to define the framework of its self-understanding' (6). In the case of US historiography, the result was a set of powerful, interlocking, national-exceptionalist narratives that homogenized the 'insides' of US history, while locating their flattened 'outsides' apart and, usually, below.

The essays collected here approach the task of redrawing the history of the United States in ways that cross – and subvert – national boundaries in highly divergent ways. Indeed, the collection reveals, without self-consciously thematizing, the very different ways that the mandates of ‘nation’ have been felt in different historical subdisciplines and methodologies. With the nation coiled so differently inside social history, cultural history, intellectual history, diplomatic history, migration history and environmental history, among others, they suggest that it will require diverse – and perhaps incompatible – approaches to write a history beyond it. In the book’s first three sections, ‘Historicizing the nation’, ‘New historical geographies and temporalities’ and ‘Opening the frame’, the authors approach the nation’s proper status in history from a wide range of perspectives. Some choose alternative subjects that cut hard against the national grain. Robin Kelley, for example, calls for a ‘world history from below’ (136) in the form of a history of a global black diaspora shaped by enslavement and emancipation, labour migration, anti-colonialism, and cultural expression and creolization. Where ‘internationalization’ often suggests new spatial scales of history, Walter Johnson calls our attention to cultures and politics of time and to the histories of multiple, overlapping temporalities in transatlantic African-American history, time-scales that organized labour, ‘identification’ and resistance.

Other authors explore specific points of encounter and exchange across traditional national boundaries. Karen Kupperman points to early North American history as paradigmatic ‘international’ history: before the ‘nation’, she writes, there were only colliding, ‘international’ contacts between indigenous peoples and the fringes of rival colonial empires in North America. She urges historians to ‘catch up with the early modern understandings’ (105) and describes polities in the Old and New worlds that resembled each other more than they would the ‘nations’ that would emerge from them. Arguing against strict metropolitan-colonial lines of analysis – which in effect read the ‘nation’ backward – she shows how North American colonial societies overlapped and interacted, dependent on each other for commerce, technology and knowledge.

Daniel Rodgers identifies distinct stages of US–European political and ‘social-intellectual’ (260) interaction, focusing on what he calls the ‘age of social politics’, when industrial capitalism and its social dislocations wrought a novel, transatlantic dialogue on reform. Breaking the confines of national-exceptionalist accounts of Progressivism as a distinctly ‘American’ reform movement, he finds US Progressives scouring Europe, and particularly Germany and Great Britain, for inspiration and policy models available for use at home. This was a highly complex, multidirectional set of transnational exchanges, characterized by ‘[p]erception, misperception, translation, transformation, co-optation, pre-emption, and contestation’ (260). Opening up this world, he argues, both necessitates and makes possible a new vision of political history, one in which ideas mattered as much as interests and institutional configurations; the new social politics, he writes, ‘augment[ed] the agendas to which legislation had to respond’ and ‘publicize[d] a world of imaginable solutions to otherwise muted and fatalism-inspired need’ (263). Criticizing what he considers a strong Atlanticism in ‘international’ history, Ian Tyrrell calls for a reorientation towards new geographies that include the Pacific. Specifically, he connects the US West to British settler colonies such as Australia along axes of political economy – especially the category of ‘settler colonialism’ these regions shared – and environmental history, especially projects of staple-crop production and wilderness conservation. Employing both comparative and transnational

perspectives, he states, historians can undermine the national-exceptionalist premises that continue to shape US environmental history by demonstrating, for example, how environmental ideas and policies crossed back and forth between settings.

For some of the volume's authors, the 'nation' is best historicized by tracking the United States's shifting location on a canvas that is truly global. Akira Iriye, for example, critiques traditional diplomatic history for what he calls its 'uninational' emphasis on state actors and high-political decision-making; even more recent culturalist approaches to the field, he observes, often remain centred on US actors. Choosing the example of the striking growth of non-governmental organizations operating on a global scale in the twentieth century, and particularly post-World War II, he calls for a dramatic re-periodization of world history that de-emphasizes the inter-state Cold War and focuses instead on a confrontation between competitive geo-politics as a whole and an emerging, co-operative global civil society.

In an ambitious synthesis, Charles Bright and Michael Geyer explore the task of mutually implicating histories of the United States and of 'globalization' without reducing either to the other. The challenge, they note, is to write a history 'that imbricates the nation and the particular in processes that at once make the world one *and* account for its particulars in historical time' (64). They then boldly identify and densely describe distinct periods in the complex, historical interpenetrations of the 'world' and the United States as both 'a sovereign and a global nation' (73). The first involved the 'production of territory' (74) as capitalist property and republican geography. The second involved 'the consolidation of territories of production' (74) for industrial mobilization and international competition. A third involved a 'crisis of American sovereignty' (85) at the end of the twentieth century, as Cold War anchors between the nation and the world came unmoored and a global civil society, constructed fundamentally by transnational corporations and their networks of information, commodities and culture, undermined the existing boundaries of national sovereignty and self-rule.

It is to the volume's credit that it closes with four essays that are, in diverse ways, sceptical of the 'internationalizing' project. Ron Robin, for example, charges 'internationalists' with constructions of the 'nation' that are too monolithic and hegemonic. Both what he calls 'post-nationalists' and 'transnationalists' fight against straw men, ignoring accounts of the nation as a 'slippery, mutant concept that incorporates, reacts to, and acknowledges communal loyalties and multiple identities' (374). Furthermore, he argues, scholars working on US 'international' history within the United States have tended to confine their engagements with their counterparts working outside the country to comparisons and connections that speak to their own agendas, relegating the latter to 'sanctioning the sometimes narrow topical agenda of US scholarship' (377–8) and allowing the former to view the world 'as an extension of American concerns' (377). David Hollinger suggestively cautions that other, non-national solidarities can 'use' historians just as the nation can, and confronts the volume's explicit presentism: even if the nation's hold on present-day actors is weakening, he observes, historians should not project this fact backward in retrospectively 'globalizing' the past. Not every nation-centred historian is an 'ideological nationalist' (385), he notes, warning that if professional historians disengage from the nation, they may leave crucial public-historical tasks of 'solidarity building and critical revision' (384) to less accountable non-professionals.

Given the ambitious scope of each essay, and their diversities in time, method and thematics, it is a mark of the volume's success that it nevertheless raises many questions beyond its

immediate scope. The essays do not, for example, situate the project of internationalizing US history within a context – comparative, interactional, or both – of what could be seen as other national historiographies’ ‘internationalizing’ projects. Where historiography of Europe’s modern empires – in contrast to the historiography of early modern colonial societies – has been traditionally confined to ‘uninational’, Eurocentric dynamics, for example, growing attention to the mutual formation of ‘metropolitan’ and ‘colonial’ societies, and to the connections between empires, is little in evidence here, where such histories could be seen as both inspiration and challenge. What of the historiography of Latin America, which pays close attention to the many ways the region’s history has been ‘internationalized’ from without? (Along these lines, can ‘internationalizing’ historians afford to continue to seize the continental term ‘American’ for the United States alone, as is done in the volume’s title?) This absence of other ‘internationalizing’ historiographies raises a crucial question: when US histories open out, onto what do they open out? Do they encounter other opening histories or only closed ones? And if two internationalizing histories coincide, whose rules, categories and preoccupations should prevail? In the artificial vacuum created here, potential space opens for a kind of national exceptionalism once removed: only the United States can reconsider its own history in a bracing, ‘global’ light.

At the same time, the volume inevitably raises the crucial question of how historians ought to narrate the ‘internationalizing’ move itself. One is struck, for example, by the repeated use of emancipationist language, in which history’s ‘rescue’ or ‘liberation’ from the ‘tyranny’ of the nation is intimately tied to the starting premise that nation-states ‘weakened’ by globalization are less able to ‘capture’ and contain the fluid, world-seeking forces of history. This narrative is congruent in some ways with earlier historians’ insistence on ‘liberating’ the voices of those silenced by the gaps and condescensions of the prior historical record. But what if the ‘internationalization’ of scholarship was not what happened in a context of universally weakened states, but occurred among those that remained uniquely strong? What if, in the present case, it was not a completely novel departure but the latest stage in the academic self-consciousness of a nation-state whose power extends far beyond its territorial claims, and often represents itself as ‘liberating’? Marilyn Young’s essay points insightfully in this direction, cautioning that an internationalized US history can still be written ‘as if it were a monologue’ (277), occupying a global terrain but mimicking policy-makers by ignoring both the impact of US power abroad and the voices of its victims. It is in this light that it might be worth asking about the territorialization of the conference project from which these essays are drawn. In place of Florence, what would the ‘internationalization’ of American history look like from Mexico City, Manila or Saigon? At the risk of another kind of presentism, what does it look like from Kabul or Baghdad?

If the essays in this volume do not ‘rescue’ history from the nation, they do rescue its readers from any naïve sense of the nation as a single, neutral or natural category in the writing of US history. They have provided in its place a rich and provocative set of alternative charts, cautions and critiques from which to set out. In this, the anthology is indispensable reading for any historian setting out to explore the many worlds within United States history and the vast and increasing number of worlds the United States occupies.

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