Early Modern Empires: An Introduction to the Recent Literature
by Tom Tölle

Zusammenfassung

The essay discusses recent German and English literature to offer readers an introduction to current research on early modern empires. At times, the essay cuts across the set timeframe (c. 1500-1800) to better contextualise the specific features of empires before the nineteenth century. The essay argues that „empire" as an analytical tool has lost its edge as a result of a positive trend: discussions that increasingly transcend national historiographies. 'Empire' retains its value as an analytical category for a specific form of political rule in the early modern period whenever it can also be reconstructed from the language of the sources. Combining comparative and connected approaches to empires through a focus on historical agents can serve this purpose and make up for the weaknesses of comparative and connected history individually. A comparative history of empire needs to retain tensions between structural limitations and individual limitations to decision-making. To that end it should compare imperial rule not just with alike forms, but also with other comparable early modern power relations in 'dynastic agglomerates' and 'composite monarchies'. A connected history, by contrast, needs to pay close attention to the power relations that limited room for decisions and hampered imperial connections. Only if historians explicitly consider the personal connections between early modern subjects, research about empires can transcend narratives of modernisation and differentiation. According to the recent literature, those who made empire were not driven by power, prospects of financial gain, and ideas of cultural superiority alone: Ties of patronage, family, friendship, dynasty and religion crucially shaped early modern empires.

Abstract

Dieser Forschungsbericht diskutiert als Einführung in die Erforschung frühneuzeitlicher Imperien jüngere deutsch- und englischsprachige Literatur. Zur Kontextualisierung der Spezifika von Imperien vor dem 19. Jahrhundert weist er aber teils über den gewählten Zeitrahmen (c. 1500-1800) hinaus. Ich argumentiere, dass die Definition von ‚Imperium' aufgrund von Diskussionen, die zunehmend über die Grenzen nationaler Historiographien hinweg verlaufen, an Schärfe verloren hat. ‚Imperium' bietet sich als analytische Kategorie für eine Form von Herrschaft in der Vormoderne lediglich dann an, wenn sie sich aus der Quellensprache rekonstruieren lässt. Dazu kann eine Kombination von vergleichenden und verbindenden Zugängen zu Imperien in akteurszentrierter Perspektive dienen, so dass die Schwachstellen beider Ansätze gemildert werden: Eine vergleichende Imperiengeschichte kann dadurch die Spannung zwischen Strukturen und persönlichen Entscheidungsspielräumen aufrechterhalten. Dazu sollte sie imperiale Herrschaft nicht nur mit ihresgleichen vergleichen, sondern auch mit anderen Formen frühneuzeitlicher Machtbeziehungen in ‚dynastischen Ansammlungen' und ‚zusammengesetzten Monarchien'. Eine connected history hingegen muss sehr genau diejenigen Machtbeziehungen untersuchen, die individuellem Entscheiden und imperialem Austausch Grenzen setzten. Nur wenn Historiker/innen die Verflechtungen von frühneuzeitlichen Akteuren ernst nehmen, ist Imperienforschung über Modernisierung und Differenzierung hinaus möglich. Diejenigen, die Imperien machten, so legt der Bericht nahe, trieb nicht allein der Wunsch nach Macht, die Hoffnung auf finanzielle Vorteile oder Ideen kultureller Überlegenheit: Patronage, Familie und Verflechtung, Dynastie und Religion formten frühneuzeitliche Imperien.

1. Introduction

Empires manage difference.[1] Most definitions include the plurality of its subjects' ethnic, religious, and regional identities as one of empire's constitutive features.[2] Empires that once engulfed vast territories and resounded with a polyphony of voices seemingly resonate with our contemporary problems.[3] At the same time – due to the violence they inflicted and the lasting inequalities they constituted – empires rarely allow for positive identification.[4] Many academics studying empire today live in democracies that once harboured imperial ambitions or that carefully belittle the fact that they might still do. Indeed, the phenomenon of hiding the nation state's ugly imperial twin has itself been studied as a feature of liberal empires in particular.[5] Many historians studying empire also live in societies that grapple with their own heterogeneity as well as challenges to their states' sovereignty – be they real or imagined – on a daily basis.[6] This literature review distils

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[1]This essay has benefited from discussions with fellow students and colleagues in Cambridge, Freiburg im Breisgau, New Haven, and Princeton.

[2]Jane Burbank / Frederick Cooper, Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference, Princeton, NJ 2010, p. 8; Karen Barkey, Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective, Cambridge 2008; Frederick Cooper, Africa in the World. Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State, Cambridge, MA 2014, pp. 40f., argues that through „governing different people differently" they „preserve and reproduce differences".

[3]Stephan Wendehorst, Altes Reich, „Alte Reiche" und der *imperial turn* in der Geschichtswissenschaft, in: id. (ed.), Die Anatomie frühneuzeitlicher Imperien. Herrschaftsmanagement jenseits von Staat und Nation: Institutionen, Personal und Techniken, Berlin 2015, pp. 17–58, here pp. 25, 47.

[4]John Darwin, After Tamerlane. The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400–2000, London 2008.

[5]Jennifer Pitts, Republicanism, Liberalism, and Empire in Postrevolutionary France, in: Sankar Muthu (ed.), Empire and Modern Political Thought, Cambridge 2012, pp. 261–291, shows that figures like Tocqueville – while attacking British imperial expansion – similarly argued that their own colonial realm was morally unambiguous. Benedikt Stuchtey, Ein liberales Weltreich? Westeuropäische Diskurse im 19. Jahrhundert, in: Herfried Münkler / Eva Marlene Hausteiner (eds.), Die Legitimation von Imperien. Strategien und Motive im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt am Main 2012, pp. 94–109; David Cannadine, „Big Tent" Historiography. Transatlantic Obstacles and Opportunities in Writing the History of Empire, in: Common Knowledge 11,3 (2005), pp. 375–392.

[6]Jörn Leonhard / Ulrike von Hirschhausen, Beyond Rise, Decline and Fall. Comparing Multi-Ethnic Empires in the Long Nineteenth Century, in: id. (eds.), Comparing

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major historiographical trends from a number of recent publications. It is a brief introduction to empire by way of a critical journey through some works recently published in the German, Austrian, British, and American academic traditions.

Research on early modern empires has become a vast and growing field of academic enquiry, but historiographies of empire differ.[7] The criticism that empire is now everywhere (implying that it is really nowhere) tends to brush over the fact that these vastly different historiographies now speak to one another more frequently. For reasons that I will discuss later, a particularly vibrant Anglophone strand, for instance, stresses connections between politics, commerce, and imperial expansion, which defined the British Empire in particular. But not even imperial officials woke up every day with political economy on their mind. And yet, with many of their day-to-day practices they also *did* empire.[8] A variety of imperial practices – dynastic, economic, familial, religious, cultural, and racial – need to be considered in definitions of empire.[9]

Overall, I argue that for the early modern period, empire as an analytical category seems to be useful *only* where it is constructed from the sources up. Where historians take the varied entanglements of those who did empire, foremost their status-driven, familial or dynastic agendas, into consideration, speaking of *early modern* empires eschews narratives of inevitable modernisation and growing differentiation. A *comparative approach* to empire needs to keep alive the tension between imperial structures and the individual leeway that agents struggled to maintain. A *connected history* of empire, by con-

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Empires. Encounters and Transfers in the Long Nineteenth Century, 2nd ed., Göttingen 2012, pp. 9–36, here pp. 10f., focus on ethnic cleansings in the 1990s.

[7]Stephen Howe, When – If Ever – Did Empire End? Recent Studies of Imperialism and Decolonization, in: Journal of Contemporary History 40,3 (2005), pp. 585–599.

[8]„Doing empire" echoes a seminal article by Candace West / Don Zimmerman, Doing Gender, in: Gender and Society 1,2 (1987), pp. 125–151.

[9]Ann Laura Stoler / Carole McGranahan, Introduction. Refiguring Imperial Terrains, in: id. / Peter C. Perdue (eds.), Imperial Formations, Santa Fe 2007, pp. 3–42, advertise this turn to practice.

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trast, needs to pay close attention to power structures limiting imperial agents from crossing over from one polity into another.

This review essay starts with thoughts on historiographies of empire that shaped the recent literature under consideration here. Admittedly, these thoughts are limited, most importantly, because I pay special attention to empires in the long eighteenth century. I focus on this period in particular to emphasise the differences between early modern empires and their nineteenth- and twentieth-century counterparts, while, of course, empires can also fruitfully be studied beyond this timeframe.[10] They are also limited because due to my own research interests the imperial historiographies of, say, Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals or the Russian, Chinese, and Japanese empires appear less frequently than readers may wish. The essay then moves on to the definitions of empire that these historiographies brought forth: definitions that mostly stress commerce or conquest as driving forces of empire. From the problems of definitions, it transitions into a discussion of agents of empire; to those who did or un-did empire. A picture emerges in which personal enrichment and power struggles matter far less than personal obligations. In my conclusion, I return to the management of difference discussed at the onset. I argue that while historians of empire, of course, write histories for our own time (of global capitalism), it is worthwhile to consider other imperial rationales: Adhering to deeply gendered familial, dynastic, and religious obligations constituted the distinctive feature of early modern empires.

2. Imperial Historiographies: Why 'Empire' is not Everywhere
Researching empire remains fashionable, but do scholars of empire in different parts of the world speak the same language? Scholarly exchange, English as a new *lingua franca*, and approaches that push beyond the nation-state as the natural unit of investigation have brought into conversation and continue to connect distinctive histories of empire. These increasing connections between former national histori-

ographies have produced and continue to produce productive misunderstandings. While these misunderstandings have the potential to raise new questions especially in comparative and connected histories of empire, they also blur definitions in national historiographies. Before discussing definitions in section three, this essay disentangles five examples of prominent imperial historiographies to explain how they have shaped some of the current field.

(1) In Britain, writing about empire long retained its connection to people's everyday lives. Successive waves of British imperial history took shape as the empire itself haphazardly aggregated, subsequently partially disaggregated and fractured due to processes of 'decolonisation'.[11] Recent political debates show that while empire is no longer in the limelight, it has never left the stage of popular imagination: The British European Union referendum campaign brimmed with references to Britain's imperial past. Many invoked the country's present ties to the Commonwealth. Irish and Scottish critics symbolically embraced a larger European project to reimagine their own unions with England.[12] An early generation in British imperial history coincided,

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[10]Wolfgang Reinhard, Die Unterwerfung der Welt. Globalgeschichte der europäischen Expansion 1415–2015, München 2016, pp. 21ff.

[11]Durba Ghosh, Another Set of Imperial Turns?, in: American Historical Review 117,3 (2012), pp. 772–793; Cannadine, Big Tent, for recent summaries. Stephen Howe, Introduction. New Imperial Histories, in: id. (ed.), The New Imperial Histories Reader, London 2009, pp. 1–20; Duncan Bell, The Idea of Greater Britain. Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900, Princeton 2007; Richard Price, One Big Thing. Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture, in: Journal of British Studies 45,3 (2006), pp. 602–627; Kathleen Wilson, Introduction. Histories, Empires, Modernities, in: id. (ed.), A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660–1840, Cambridge 2004, pp. 1–26; Stephen Howe, The Slow Death and Strange Rebirths of Imperial History, in: Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 29,2 (2001), pp. 131–141; Antony G. Hopkins, Back to the Future. From National History to Imperial History, in: Past and Present 164,1 (1999), pp. 198–243; Ann Laura Stoler / Frederick Cooper, Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda, in: id. (eds.), Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World, Berkeley 1997, pp. 1–56; Shula Marks, History, the Nation and Empire. Sniping from the Periphery, in: History Workshop Journal 29 (1990), pp. 111–119; David K. Fieldhouse, Can Humpty-Dumpty Be Put Together Again? Imperial History in the 1980s, in: Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 12,2 (1984), pp. 9–23.

[12]Linda Colley, Acts of Union and Disunion, London 2014.

for instance, with the so-called 'scramble for Africa'.[13] John R. Seeley's seminal „The Expansion of England" (1882) is one good example. But empire was only one of Seeley's many interests at the time.[14] In fact, imperial history then still lacked institutional recognition as an academic subject in its own right because teaching the history of 'Greater Britain' was not predominantly considered an academic matter. Oxford pioneered institutionalisation with a chair in 1905. In the interwar-period, Cambridge initiated several projects with imperial implications, but these dwarf in comparison to the research done in London. A. P. Newton's imperial history research group, for instance, with its book series „Imperial Studies" published 19 volumes between 1927 and 1942 alone.

With the return of former servicemen and well-seasoned critics of empire began a formalisation in the curriculum at Cambridge. Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, and others now criticised Seeley's generation for their near exclusive focus on white settler colonies. It is telling that this historiography turned a European male face to the public, but many non-European and female voices were at work in the background. Durba Ghosh, for instance, mentions some of the 'matriarchs' of imperial history, but does not discuss them in greater detail. Intriguing connections also existed with some later historian of empire at work outside of Britain such as Eric Eustace Williams.[15] The young scholar from Trinidad won a first-class honours in modern history and continued to write a thesis that formed the basis of one of the most influential works on the slave trade.

Williams' Oxford years and his previous training with the eminent Trinidadian historian C. L. R. James constituted but one intersection of a new imperial turn and an emerging field shaped by scholars actively involved in the unravelling of empire. In the wake of decolonisation, schools of researchers with new agendas emerged. Members of the *Subaltern Studies Collective*, for instance, responded to tendencies in South East Asian history to see societies after empire solely through the lens of Western agents and solely in their contribution to the European imperial system. Instead, they proposed to study empire as those subject to imperial rule experienced it. This, they assumed, would uncover the intellectual predicaments and the violence and exploitation of empire-building alongside the roots of resistance that ultimately led to the demise of empires. Ghosh sets apart an early and a later phase in subaltern studies that transitioned „from the study of Indian peasants, workers, and non-elites to the construction of colonial forms of knowledge, particularly archival knowledge".[16]

These scholars often shared common ground with cultural history and history 'from below' that had already existed in British academe. When a group of younger historians of Britain voiced critique about the self-declared establishment of an imperial history of politics and commerce and declared a 'new imperial history'[17], they had often undergone quite similar transitions from first having written histories 'from below'.[18] Empire, some of its proponents argued, had a profound impact on the entire life of both Britons and imperial subjects. This included the British domestic sphere, consumption, and relations of class, race, and gender: an increasing interest in how the language of empire shaped hierarchies of power coincided with a string of subfields 'going imperial'.

Subsequent works of synthesis have responded to the upswing in

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[13]John Darwin, The Empire Project. The Rise and Fall of the British World System 1830–1970, Cambridge 2009, pp. 129ff., 178ff.

[14]Ronald Hyam, Understanding the British Empire, Cambridge 2010, esp. chs. 17 and 18.

[15]Eric E. Williams, Capitalism & Slavery, 2nd ed., Chapel Hill 1994 with an introduction by Colin Palmer; Barbara Solow / Stanley Engerman (eds.), British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery. The Legacy of Eric Williams, Cambridge 2004.

[16]Ghosh, Imperial Turns, p. 787.

[17]Wilson, Introduction; Howe, Introduction; Kathleen Wilson, The Island Race. Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century, London 2003; id., Rethinking the Colonial State. Family, Gender, and Governmentality in Eighteenth-Century British Frontiers, in: American Historical Review 116 (2011), pp. 1295–1322; Catherine Hall (ed.), Cultures of Empire. Colonisers in Britain and the Empire of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. A Reader, Manchester 2000.

[18]E.g. Kathleen Wilson, The Sense of the People. Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785, Cambridge 1998.

global and world histories. These works have not just further undermined the idea of Europe as a driving force in world history. Some established that European agents played a decidedly marginal role.[19] Some British historians came to challenge that ordinary nineteenth-century Britons had the empire on their mind at all.[20] For the most part, histories of empire still either defined their interventions against a European historiography or pointed to the intersection and shared features of their subjects with older strands of imperial history. One can contrast a set of recent sweeping comparative approaches on empire and its techniques such as the late Christopher Bayly, John Darwin or Jane Burbank/Frederick Cooper with works that approach empire from a more 'microhistorical' angle.[21] While both share a commitment „to destabilise Europe as the source of historical change", Ghosh sees the major difference between them in an attempt to re-centre empire. While I do not agree that they „reinstate British colonialism as *the dominant* force in shaping individual subjectivities", the author is right to suggest that they „gesture to the costs of disaggregating" histories of global and colonial encounters.[22]

(2) North America always held a special place in the historiography of the British Empire. A large American scholar- and readership certainly also accounts for some of the imbalance in the research interest

that these parts of Europe's colonial enterprise have attracted. In the 1900s, early American history developed its own so called *Imperial School* that took shape around Richard M. Andrews, Herbert Osgood, and George Louis Beer. They approached their opponents' scholarship, foremost George Bancroft's disregard of institutional history, with a relentless mining of original sources in the Public Record Office and bolstered their arguments with the „full force of German 'scientific' history".[23] Taking the perspective of London politicians and colonial officials into consideration, they sought to reconstruct the smooth working of the colonial system. They proposed that the British Empire was mercantilist aiming „to create a self-sufficient commercial empire of mutually complementary economic parts".[24]

As a consequence, these historians struggled with explaining why this once stable colonial machine ultimately collapsed. The generation that followed them paid more attention to two foundational themes of early American history much closer to home: the role of colonial assemblies and the uneven emergence of slavery as a major labour regime. But it is important to understand both the impact of the *Imperial School* as well as the focus on the American Revolution. Taking them together, it becomes apparent why historiographical cycles on both sides of the Atlantic were (and are) not always in sync. The emphasis on the rebellion against an empire as a foundational moment of national history slowed down a critical enquiry into the many unbroken techniques of empire that people carried over into the new American polity. Despite a shared language and often shared fore-

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[19]Dominic Sachsenmaier, Global Perspectives on Global History. Theories and Approaches in a Connected World, Cambridge 2011; Bruce Mazlish, Global History to World History, in: Journal of Interdisciplinary History 28,3 (1998), pp. 385–395.

[20]The actual importance of empire in certain societies has been subject of debate. See e.g. Bernard Porter, The Absent-Minded Imperialist. Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain, Oxford 2004; id., Further Thoughts about Imperial Absent-Mindedness, in: Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 36,1 (2008), pp. 101–117; John Mackenzie, „Comfort" and Conviction. A Response to Bernard Porter, in: Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 36,4 (2008), pp. 659–668. The same is true for the question which aspects of empire mattered: David Cannadine, Ornamentalism. How the British Saw Their Empire, Oxford 2001.

[21]Emma Rothschild, The Inner Life of Empires. An Eighteenth-Century History, Princeton 2011; Thomas R. Metcalf, Imperial Connections. India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860–1920, Berkeley 2008; Linda Colley, The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh. A Woman in World History, New York 2007; Purnima Bose, Organizing Empire. Individualism, Collective Agency, and India, Durham 2003.

[22]Ghosh, Imperial Turns, p. 782 (my emphasis).

[23]Stephen Foster, British North America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, in: Robin Winks (ed.), The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. 5: Historiography, Oxford 1999, pp. 73–93, here p. 75.

[24]Abigail Swingen, Labor. Employment, Colonial Servitude, and Slavery in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic, in: Philip J. Stern / Carl Wennerlind (eds.), Mercantilism Reimagined. Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire, Oxford 2013, pp. 46–73; George Louis Beer, The Old Colonial System, 1660–1754, 2 vols., New York 1912, vol. 1: The Establishment of the System, 1660–1688, p. vii; Charles McLean Andrews, The Colonial Period of American History, 4 vols., New Haven 1934–1938, vol. 4: England's Commercial and Colonial Policy, pp. 2f.

bears, new imperial history of British making, thus, does not always fit easily with its North American counterpart.

Due to the sheer diversity of early American history today a few recent examples will have to suffice. They offer major revisions of how we should think of categories such as slavery, information, and labour. They also complicate the role of Native Americans, enslaved Africans, and Britain's imperial rivals in shaping (North) American history.[25] Brett Rushforth's work on the contact between indigenous and Atlantic slaving practices around the Great Lakes, for instance, treats in detail how French traders and their powerful Native allies developed shared languages of slavery and political authority. Beyond a careful investigation of how people negotiated power in North America, Rushforth also convincingly suggests that slaving, thus, created a „broad barrier to French expansion [. . .] from Green Bay [. . .] to Missouri" and even became an ironically „anticolonial power".[26] Alejandra Dubcovsky's work on knowledge and power in the early modern American South shows how news could travel in a colonial world without modern mass media. It suggests that the diverse set of agents that carried information had to adapt to a region in which war unsettled established political structures.[27] Christopher Hodson's revisionist account of the Acadian diaspora considers the constant links that migration and (mis)information forged between different parts of the Atlantic world[28]: They tied Paris to North America and the Slave Coast, Florida and the wider Spanish empire to the Carolinas, and the Caribbean to Nova Scotia and France. This early America was made and unmade by Mi'kmaq, Sioux, and Yamasee, by slaves shipped

from West-central Africa, from the Gold Coast, the Bights of Benin and Biafra, and by French and Spanish makeshift-imperialists. Recent work, thus, points to a long-lasting trend towards a historiography that is growing less and less Anglo-Dutch and Protestant.[29]

(3) Austro-German historiography signals the challenge of remembering the Holy Roman Empire as an empire after 1806. The decades after the Emperor offered his crown strengthened divisions that ran between a school of history oriented towards the emerging Habsburg-centred composite state and the new self-declared Empire that grew out of its Brandenburg-Prussian fringes. It intersected with vibrant national movements in Central and Eastern Europe that helped unpick and reform empire.[30] As Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger outlined, Prussia-minded historians in the emerging German nation struggled with finding positive identification with the early modern empire.[31] Instead, they drew a line from the medieval emperors through the

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[25] An overview in Paul Grant-Costa / Elizabeth Mancke, Anglo-Amerindian Commercial Relations, in: Huw V. Bowen / Elizabeth Mancke / John G. Reid (eds.), Britain's Oceanic Empire. Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550–1850, Cambridge 2012, pp. 370–406.

[26] Brett Rushforth, Bonds of Alliance. Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France, Chapel Hill 2012 .

[27] Alejandra Dubcovsky, Informed Power. Communication in the Early American South, Cambridge 2016.

[28] Christopher Hodson, The Acadian Diaspora. An Eighteenth-Century History, Oxford 2012.

[29] Consider for historiographical shifts acknowledging the central role of Spain, the importance of Catholicism, and the impact of Amerindians and widening the geographic purview respectively Eliga H. Gould, Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds. The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery, in: American Historical Review 12,3 (2007), pp. 764–786; Allan Greer / Kenneth Mills, A Catholic Atlantic, in: Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra / Erik R. Seeman (eds.), The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000, Upper Saddle River 2007, pp. 3–19; Paul Cohen, Was There an Amerindian Atlantic? Reflections on the Limits of a Historiographical Concept, in: History of European Ideas 34,4 (2008), pp. 388–410; Trevor Burnard, Placing British Settlement in the Americas in Comparative Perspective, in: Bowen / Mancke / Reid (eds.), Oceanic Empire, pp. 407–432; Eric Hinderaker, Diplomacy between Britons and Native Americans, c. 1600–1830, in: ibid., pp. 218–248; David Andrew Nichols, Indian Slavery and the Fictions of Empire, in: Reviews in American History 41,4 (2013), pp. 600–606.

[30] Daniel Unowsky, Dynastic Symbolism and Popular Patriotism. Monarchy and Dynasty in Late Imperial Austria, in: Leonhard / von Hirschhausen (eds.), Comparing Empires, pp. 237–265; Martin Schulze Wessel, Religion, Politics and the Limits of Imperial Integration. Comparing the Habsburg Monarchy and the Russian Empire, in: ibid., pp. 337–358; Alice Freifeld, Conflict and De-escalation. The Hungarian People and Imperial Politics from 1848–1849 to the *Ausgleich* of 1867, in: ibid., pp. 409–429.

[31] Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, Das Heilige Römische Reich deutscher Nation. Vom Ende des Mittelalters bis 1806, München 2006, pp. 7–13; Arno Strohmeyer, Die Habsburgermonarchie in der Frühen Neuzeit – ein Imperium? Ein Problemaufriss, in: Michael Gehler / Robert Rollinger (eds.), Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte. Epochenübergreifende und globalhistorische Vergleiche, vol. 1, Wiesbaden 2014, pp. 1027–1055.

rise of Prussia to the Prussian (*kleindeutsch*) Empire of Bismarck.[32] When nation turned into a powerful tool in the 'imperial repertoire' in the nineteenth century, the redrawing of German territorial boundaries went hand in hand with a rewriting of its imperial past. After the Second World War, the old early modern empire returned, but it looked strikingly non-imperial. Only where historians downplayed its imperial edge, the Holy Roman Empire could be reimagined as a positive alternative to Prussia. Without painting with too broad a brush, historians contrasted an empire that had teeth and claws and was tied to the rise of National Socialism with an empire of proto-parliaments and religious diversity. This empire ultimately fell victim to centrifugal forces emerging within its large boundaries and due to its outside enemies.

(4) These German traditions intersected with their Austrian counterpart, but Austrian historiography laid claim to more positive continuities with its imperial past. Different political groups could pick and choose from a political history that ran from the Catholic Habsburg Emperors, through liberalism and the multi-ethnic *k und k*-monarchy into a post-war federal state. The Austrian version of enlightened absolutism, so called Joseph(in)ism, for instance, has just come under critical reinvestigation. Thomas Wallnig's and Franz Leander Fillafer's volume places two major authors on Joseph(in)ism, Eduard Winter and Fritz Valjavec, in their intellectual context.[33] Both continued their work in National Socialist academe and both transitioned into academic careers after the Second World War. Winter targeted Catholicism, but benefited crucially from attaching his research to wider work on Germany's influence in „the East" that came to be considered relevant to the war effort.[34] Valjavec, who promoted his cultural history as *Volks-*

geschichte[35], himself partook in acts of violence by the *Einsatzgruppe D* in Bukovina. After the war, he continued to find allies among critics of the history of ideas and his research on Southeastern Europe was put to new uses during the Cold War. Wallnig's and Fillafer's collection suggests that another period of empire between 1933/38 and 1945 shaped the ways in which German and Austrian scholars thought of their role in Europe. But in Germany's public discourse – unlike in Austria – the imperial past only plays a minor role.

(5) Research on empire was by no means limited to history either. Empire also took on a crucial role in the formation of the social sciences in Europe and the United States to give just one example. George Steinmetz' instructive recent work identifies major shifts in sociologists' interest in empire from a rise in imperial thought (1830-90), through new imperialism coinciding with the disciplinary formation of sociology (1890-1918) and the rise of anticolonialism (1918-45) to a diversified analysis of empires.[36] He explores how sociologists analysed as well as advised and piggybacked imperial projects. Steinmetz seeks to trace their career beyond publications and conferences *at home* and treats them instead as mobile knowledge brokers.[37] Norbert Elias, fleeing Nazi Germany for France and then Britain, for example, became a professor in Ghana in 1962. Travelling sociologists actively connected both European networks of knowledge to colonies as well as colonial areas to one another. Ongoing work suggests that sociology's interest in questions of empire did not necessarily correlate with peaks in colonial involvement. Such upsurges – for instance in 1950/60s France or in 'Weimar' Germany (1918-33) – could also be quite counterintuitive.

[32]Burbank / Cooper, Empires in World History, ch. 11.

[33]Franz Leander Fillafer / Thomas Wallnig, Einleitung, in: id. (eds.), Josephinismus zwischen den Regimen. Eduard Winter, Fritz Valjavec und die zentraleuropäischen Historiographien im 20. Jahrhundert, Wien 2016, pp. 7–50.

[34]See Jiri Nemec, War die Josephinismus-Interpretation von Eduard Winter aus dem Jahre 1943 eine nationalsozialistische Interpretation?, in: Fillafer / Wallnig (eds.), Josephinismus, pp. 102–140.

[35]Petra Svatek, Fritz Valjavec – Aufklärungsbegriff und Südostforschung, in: Fillafer / Wallnig (eds.), Josephinismus, pp. 156–170.

[36]George Steinmetz (ed.), Sociology and Empire. The Imperial Entanglements of a Discipline, Durham 2013.

[37]George Steinmetz, The Imperial Entanglements of Sociology and the Problem of Scientific Autonomy in Germany, France, and the United States, in: Hans-Georg Soeffner (ed.), Transnationale Vergesellschaftungen. Verhandlungen des 35. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Frankfurt am Main 2010, Berlin 2012, pp. 857–871.

In history as in sociology, the mobility of agents and ideas, discussing and often wildly disagreeing with one another, furthered the process by which different schools intersected. Historians and sociologists, then, also actively did and un-did empire. Whenever they did, this, in turn, necessitated a renewed interest in definitions of empire and formed (ir)reconcilable approaches for studying it.

3. Defining Empire: The Problem and Chance of Intersecting Historiographies

Definitions work through comparisons. Empire has proven chronically hard to define because the definitions of other models of statecraft are in flux as well. For empires in early modern Europe, definitions often hinge on the one hand on absent structural features to emerge in later periods such as mass communication[38], industrialisation[39], participatory government[40], and the great *isms* (racism, colonialism, imperialism, etc.).[41] The 'early modern' in early modern empires, thus, often amounts to something transitional in comparison to what came before or after. Definitions of empire also often use different contemporary forms of political organisation such as monarchies or republics.[42] Only to confront the problem that those often formed 'composite states' as well[43]: Setting a „composite monarchy" (Elliott) apart from a „dynastic agglomerate" (Morrill) or from the „polycentric states" (Grafe)

that a „cis-Atlantic" history (Armitage) often deals with can be difficult in practice.[44] Especially if monarchies acquired some of their composite parts dynastically, while the bits glued together by dynastic marriage or inheritance intersected with those acquired by conquest, treaty or election, as they often did.[45] All the while the British Empire consisted of royal as well as proprietary colonies while other empires imagined spheres of influence under the reign but rarely the rule of a distant monarch.[46] This is not to say that this was a messy world with particularly messy pre-modern people, but rather that historians have created definitions to answer specific questions.[47] Definitions, thus, need to change precisely where different historiographies meet to answer new questions. The impression, voiced very succinctly by Stephan Wendehorst and others, that definitions of empire have lost their edge is, thus, an indication of something positive and challenging: the increasing connections between a set of scholarly endeavours formerly confined to one academic tradition, language, or region.[48] To trace that phenomenon, many volumes under consideration seek to disentangle them again by pointing to the national traditions outlined above that brought them about.

The teleology of empire from formation, over peak to decompo-

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[38]E.g. Christopher Bayly, Empire and Information. Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870, Cambridge 1996.

[39]Eric J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire. From 1750 to the Present Day, New York 1969.

[40]Jack P. Greene (ed.), Exclusionary Empire. English Liberty Overseas, 1600–1900, Cambridge 2010.

[41]Damon Salesa, Race, in: Philippa Levine / John Marriott (eds.), The Ashgate Research Companion to Modern Imperial Histories, Farnham 2012, pp. 429–448, here p. 431, argues that „a defining feature of 'modern' empires was that they were racial".

[42]Natalie Rothman, Brokering Empire. Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul, Ithaca 2012.

[43]Jon E. Wilson, Governance, in: Levine / Marriott (eds.), Imperial Histories, pp. 303–322, here pp. 306ff.; Helmut G. Koenigsberger, Dominium regale or Dominium politicum et regale. Monarchies and Parliaments in Early Modern Europe, in: id. (ed.), Politicians and Virtuosi. Essays in Early Modern History, London 1986, pp. 1–25, here pp. 12f.

[44]John H. Elliott, A Europe of Composite Monarchies, in: Past and Present 137 (1992), pp. 48–71; John Morrill, „Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown". Dynastic Crises in Tudor and Stewart Britain, 1504–1746, Reading 2005; Regina Grafe, Polycentric States. The Spanish Reigns and the „Failures" of Mercantilism, in: Stern / Wennerlind (eds.), Mercantilism Reimagined, pp. 241–262; David Armitage, Three Concepts of Atlantic History, in: id. / Michael J. Braddick (eds.), The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800, New York 2009, pp. 13–29.

[45]Jeremy Black, The Limits of Empire. The Case of Britain, in: Tonio Andrade / William Reger (eds.), The Limits of Empire. European Imperial Formations in Early Modern World History. Essays in Honor of Geoffrey Parker, Farnham 2012, pp. 175–181.

[46]John H. Elliott, Empires of the Atlantic World. Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830, New Haven 2006.

[47]Wendehorst, Altes Reich, p. 26; Kathleen D. Morrison, Sources, Approaches, Definitions, in: Susan E. Alcock (ed.), Empires. Perspectives from Archaeology and History, Cambridge 2001, pp. 1–9, here p. 3.

[48]E.g. Immanuel Wallerstein, What Are We Bounding, and Whom, When We Bound Social Research, in: Social Research 62,4 (1995), pp. 839–856. Leonhard / von Hirschhausen, Beyond Rise, p. 11.

sition and successor states that once set empires in the nineteenth century apart from their early modern counterparts is also wearing thin: Definitions seemed easier when, for instance, an ideal type of the nation-state was available to define empire against.[49] Jeremy Adelman and others have shown that seeing nation-states as the natural sequels to empire perpetuates a simplistic view of regime change.[50] In the Age of Revolutions a polity with clear territories, a citizenry, and democratic institutions was only one contested model on a wider spectrum of political options. Frederick Cooper argued that nineteenth-century Britain and France were not „nation-states engaged in colonial conquest". They were states with empires in which the „space of empire" was a significant political framework in its own right.[51] From an early modern perspective, it seems important to eschew identifying the nation-state with an alleged imperial centre and empire with an imagined periphery.[52] If one looks to the economic centrality of Mexico for much of the Spanish empire's existence, for instance, the material centre of empire would lie firmly in the Americas.

It follows that the close connection between European capitalism and empire also merits a word of warning. The material connections between centres of silver mining such as Potosí in Peru or the Bajío in Mexico and markets in China make the European arena appear to be marginal to this phase of early capitalism.[53] In a recent intellectual history of imperial thinking, Gabriel Paquette argues that intellectual contexts determined how big a role empire played for stylites of European political economy.[54] Marx argued that Europe's historical change

was galvanised by its contact with non-European markets. Admirers turned his lessons into a full-fledged theory of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. These major theorists like Hobson and Lenin, however, always answered to very contemporary problems.[55] Most recent authors of empire are, thus, deeply sceptical of blending empire and imperialism, seeing „only a partial identity between the functions of empire and imperialism" even between 1870-1900.[56] To put it succinctly: The close connection between capitalism and empire proves more complex in theory and in practice.

Formulating a baseline definition of empire these authors also show how sensitive the imperial rule will always be to the exceptions of day-to-day imperial practice. Following Ulrike von Hirschhausen/Jörn Leonhard, Jane Burbank/Frederick Cooper, Stephan Wendehorst, and Philippa Levine/John Marriot, nine criteria recurrently feature in definitions of empire: (1) expansion and the idea of a large population and/or territory, (2) distinction between centre and periphery, metropolis and fringes, (3) highly selective, vertical integration of certain people or groups of people, (4) the phenomenon of building strong loyalties between elites and marginalised groups, (5) the integration through charismatic figures, especially monarchs, (6) the lack of participatory institutions, (7) a unified confessional outlook, (8) a sense of imperial mission and historical purpose, and (9) tolerance for a high degree of ethnic and linguistic plurality. I will go through these categories one by one contrasting them with early modern case material.[57] This approach may then help arrive at a definition centred

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[49]Leonhard / von Hirschhausen, Beyond Rise, p. 15f.

[50]Jeremy Adelman, An Age of Imperial Revolutions, in: The American Historical Review 113,2 (2008), pp. 319–340; Wendehorst, Altes Reich, p. 51.

[51]Frederick Cooper, Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History, Berkeley 2005, pp. 287f.

[52]Wendehorst, Altes Reich, p. 39.

[53]John Tutino, Making a New World. Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America, Durham 2011.

[54]Gabriel Paquette, Colonies and Empire in the Political Thought of Hegel and Marx, in: Muthu, Sankar (ed.), Enlightenment against Empire, Princeton 2003, pp. 292- 323, here p. 307. See also Susan Buck-Morss, Hegel and Haiti, in: Critical Inquiry 26,4 (2000),

pp. 821–865.

[55]Dieter Flach, Der sogenannte Römische Imperialismus. Sein Verständnis im Wandel der neuzeitlichen Erfahrungswelt, in: Historische Zeitschrift 222,1 (1976), pp. 1–42. For a firm contextualisation in the downbreak of the Second International (Lenin) and the Boer War (Hobson) Arthur M. Eckstein, Is There a „Hobson-Lenin Thesis" on Late Nineteenth-Century Colonial Expansion?, in: Economic History Review 44,2 (1991), pp. 297–318; Herfried Münkler, Translation, Filiation und Analogiebildung. Politische Legitimation und strategische Reflexion im Spiegel vergangener Imperien, in: id. / Hausteiner (eds.), Legitimation von Imperien, pp. 34–69, esp. pp. 59ff.

[56]Wendehorst, Altes Reich, p. 35.

[57]Stephan Wendehorst (ed.), Die Anatomie frühneuzeitlicher Imperien. Herrschafts-

on practices.

(1) Empires invoked large spaces on nineteenth-century maps conveniently colour-coded which vast parts of the globe 'belonged' to which empire. This tradition of envisioning empire reaches back, for instance, to claims to what British and French considered North American hinterlands.[58] Both sides published maps claiming lands that few of them had ever seen, let alone controlled. Territorialised ideas of early modern polities, in fact, sit oddly with many theorists of empire in the world and Europe. More often, they thought of empire in terms of rights in labour, privileges, and people. To be sure, political thinkers formulated legal claims to land that Europeans considered unused and ritualistically took possession of that land.[59] But quite often – due to scarcity of personnel and funds – Europeans behaved like nomads of the sea. Even if they settled overseas, these settlements remained confined to small, if exploitative pockets until well into the eighteenth century.[60] In colonial Mexico much of the conquest was (also) done by herds of sheep that profoundly transformed the land or by germs that decimated the indigenous population.[61] Many societies that imperial officials encountered held radically different notions of land rights and property regimes (as did some of their European subjects), and some of the world's most successful empires were nomadic.[62] Territorialis-

ing empire, thus, seems less useful than carefully assessing both the material power base of an empire and the language in which some colonial thinkers guised this material condition.[63]

(2) Later empires and nation-states work with such a deeply ingrained spatial hierarchy that the metropolis often becomes a political agent in its own right.[64] In some cases, later projections tamper with the actual hierarchies between parts of the empire as the case of Spain suggests. In the viceroyalties Peru and Mexico abroad, the reach of the Spanish Crown also dwindled in comparison to the interests of merchants, miners, *hacienderos*, and – most importantly – the indigenous population: The „overwhelming share of American treasure" was not shipped to Europe, but spent „in the Indies".[65] Unsurprisingly, it remains a lasting myth of conquest that the King's soldiers instead of men with regional and familial interests undertook it.[66] An even wider lens – as I have already stated – complicates matters further considering that the demand in Asia for silver put European powers in the position of intermediaries between the 'New World' and China.[67] Regina Grafe has recently suggested that historians should consider the Spanish empire as 'polycentric', meaning that different parts could take on leading roles for particular aspects of imperial practice.[68]

(3) Empires, Jürgen Osterhammel and others argue, integrated vertically by coopting political elites without further social integration.[69] Fikret Adanir's work on negotiated authority, for instance, showcases vertical integration in the Ottoman Empire. Regions in the early mod-

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[58]Stephen J. Hornsby, Geographies of the British Atlantic World, in: Bowen / Mancke / Reid (eds.), Oceanic Empire, pp. 15–44; Paul W. Mapp, The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713–1763, Chapel Hill 2011, esp. part 1.

[59]Lauren Benton, Possessing Empire. Iberian Claims and Interpolity Law, in: Saliha Belmessous (ed.), Native Claims. Indigenous Law against Empire, 1500–1920, Oxford, 2012, pp. 19–40; Patricia Seed, Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, Cambridge 1995; David Armitage, John Locke: Theorist of Empire?, in: Muthu (ed.), Empire, pp. 84–111.

[60]Burbank / Cooper, Empires in World History, p. 151.

[61]Adas / Cagle, Age of Settlement; see also Noble David Cook, Born to Die. Disease and New World Conquest, 1492–1650, Cambridge 1998; Elinor G. K. Melville, A Plague of Sheep. Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico, Cambridge 1994; John R. McNeill, Mosquito Empires. Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620–1914, Cambridge 2010.

[62]Peter C. Perdue, China Marches West. The Qing Conquest of Central Asia, Harvard

management jenseits von Staat und Nation: Institutionen, Personal und Techniken, Berlin 2015.

2005; Pekka Hämäläinen, The Comanche Empire, New Haven 2008.

[63]Benton, Possessing Empire.

[64]Stoler / Cooper, Metropole and Colony.

[65]Alejandra Irigoin / Regina Grafe, Bargaining for Absolutism. A Spanish Path to Nation-State and Empire-Building, in: Hispanic American Historical Review 88,2 (2008), pp. 173–209.

[66]Matthew Restall, Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest, Oxford 2003, pp. 27–43.

[67]Dennis O. Flynn / Arturo Giráldez, Born with a „Silver Spoon". The Origin of World Trade in 1571, in: Journal of World History 10 (1995), pp. 201–221.

[68]Grafe, Polycentric States.

[69]Wendehorst, Altes Reich, p. 43; Jürgen Osterhammel, Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts, München 2009, pp. 565–672.

ern Ottoman Balkans came into the empire with different rights, and throughout the seventeenth century local elites, Muslim *ayan* as well as non-Muslim *archontes* and *koçabasis* used positions of prominence in the province to forge wider imperial connections.[70] Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg makes the case that Poland-Lithuania also acquired imperial qualities. Focusing on noble magnates, especially the Dönhoff-Denhoff family, he shows how landed noble families consolidated the empire through their networks and replaced the „non-existing vertical communication between periphery and centre".[71] Taking these examples together shows how harnessing local elites allowed empires to cohere. But to say that this was 'empire on the cheap' would be to neglect the fact that social integration was often a multi-layered process.

(4) Empires also won legitimacy from below that bypassed intermediary powers. Groups that were systematically marginalised in the many smaller and larger polities they constituted found access to imperial institutions or the emperor very attractive. Recently, Wendehorst has coined the term *Guiccardini-paradigm*, after the Renaissance historian who first systematically discussed it, for this phenomenon. He argues that such bonds of obligation from below help explain why, for example, the Jewish community in the Imperial City of Frankfurt celebrated the end of the *Fettmilch*-pogrom, a civic unrest culminating in attacks on Frankfurt's Jewish lane in 1614, with a war song on Charles V or why Czechs in 1848 did not trust the liberal parliament in Frankfurt, but rather the Habsburg monarchy. Jürgen Heyde's article on the position of sixteenth-century Jewish elites in Poland-Lithuania between the king and the nobility suggest that this phenomenon drew the position of the ruler as an arbiter of justice in sharp relief.[72] Re-

occurring events like the ruler's intercession on behalf of minorities that may seem unchanging come to appear as results of processes of permanent negotiation.

(5) Many empires fostered cohesion and legitimacy through 'symbolic representation' centred on charismatic ruling figures such as sultans, empresses and emperors, and queens and kings.[73] Linda Colley, for instance, has shown how the Hanoverian monarchs in the late eighteenth century reinvented themselves as symbols for the reconciliation of the nation's many and growing contradictions. George III was celebrated by diverse British and, perhaps, imperial 'subjects' precisely because he was attainable to all classes: „unique and typical, splendid and prosaic, glorious and *gemütlich*".[74] As Christina Brauner, Brett Rushforth, and others have shown for a variety of examples, Europeans also applied their concepts of legitimate rule in general and kingship in particular elsewhere to justify why they could fight legitimate wars, enslave people, or challenge their local sovereignty.[75] Empires like composite monarchies, then, allowed people to imagine authority to reside in bodies: be they composites like corporations or individual bodies. The ruler could take on a central role in embodying that authority, while those inhabiting empire imagined themselves as subjects.[76] As Volker Sellin (among others) has argued, though, the task shifted decisively with the Age of Revolutions in Europe when

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[70]Fikret Adanir, Ayan. Zur Formierung quasi-autonomer Kräfte in den osmanischen Balkanprovinzen der Frühen Neuzeit, in: Wendehorst (ed.), Anatomie, pp. 167–194.

[71]Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Die polnisch-litauischen Magnaten als imperiales Personal und übergreifende Herrschaftselite, in: Wendehorst (ed.), Anatomie, pp. 195–209, here p. 209.

[72]Jürgen Heyde, Oberherrschaft als multipolarer Aushandlungsprozess. König, Adel und jüdische Eliten in Polen-Litauen im 16. Jahrhundert, in: Wendehorst (ed.), Anatomie,

pp. 227–244.

[73]Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, The Emperor's Old Clothes. Constitutional History and the Symbolic Language of the Holy Roman Empire, Oxford 2015.

[74]Linda Colley, Britons. Forging the Nation 1707–1837, New Haven 1992, p. 232; Hannah Smith, Georgian Monarchy. Politics and Culture, 1714–1760, Cambridge 2006; for the emotional attachment to the monarchy in North America Brendan McConville, The King's Three Faces. The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688–1776, Chapel Hill 2006; Eric M. Nelson, The Royalist Revolution. Monarchy and the American Founding, Cambridge 2014.

[75]Rushforth, Bonds of Alliance, pp. 73–134; Christina Brauner, Kompanien, Könige und *caboceers*. Interkulturelle Diplomatie an Gold- und Sklavenküste im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert, Köln 2015, pp. 83–146; Wolfram Drews et al., Monarchische Herrschaftsformen der Vormoderne in transkultureller Perspektive, Berlin 2015.

[76]Hannah Weiss Muller, Bonds of Belonging. Subjecthood and the British Empire, in: The Journal of British Studies 53,1 (2014), pp. 29–58.

the burden of proof for their usefulness shifted to the monarchs.[77]

(6) Modern empires also have a reputation for not allowing those they rule to participate in political decision-making. In early modern Europe, political representation in empires came in different forms such as subjects' rights to appeal, to form estate assemblies, or utilise more informal channels of communication. Let us consider some examples from the Holy Roman Empire to explore that aspect further. Karl Härter shows in an excellent overview of the „heterogeneous, polycentric and diverse" legal system in the Holy Roman Empire how intersecting and competing legal arrangements could facilitate as well as hamper claim-making. The Empire's layered legal system granted Imperial estates legal autonomy within their territories, but it also preserved many customs and older legal forums. Subjects still had access to the highest courts, the Imperial Chamber Court (*Reichskammergericht*) and the Imperial Aulic Council (*Reichshofrat*). Depending on the circumstances these courts offered subjects chances to circumvent and challenge intermediary (princely) powers.[78] Astrid von Schlachta's case study of territorial estates in eighteenth-century East Frisia and Tyrol offers two examples for a phenomenon at work in different parts of the early modern world: the role of intermediary powers.[79] She shows how local assemblies resorted to 'privileges' that they considered of constitutional quality once they were confronted with centralising tendencies. In the eighteenth century, 'privileges' and 'liberties' could, however, acquire the form of liberties for the entire country and estates attempted to reach consensus rather than seek conflict. In early modern empires, participation also crucially depended

on having the ruler's ear. In the Holy Roman Empire, the Emperor, for instance, had agents at local princely courts to negotiate diplomatic relations, a subject Thomas Lau has recently studied.[80] But political representation also depended largely on pressures and circumstance. The disproportionately large number of seats that Scotland won in British Parliament in 1707, for instance, stands out – especially if we consider how North American colonists failed to achieve a comparable representation in London.[81]

(7) While a unified confessional outlook surely remained a desirable goal for many ruling elites, early modern reality was most often one of multiple faiths under some working relationship. It visibly chafed against the Western European „marriage of monotheism to empire".[82] Michael Bregnsbo, for example, discusses one extreme case of Lutheran religious homogeneity. Subjects in the Danish empire shared one faith from the imperial fiefdoms Schleswig and Holstein over Denmark and Norway to Iceland and the Faroe islands.[83] Divided by linguistic, historical, and administrative boundaries the close links between monarch and state church provided imperial cohesion.[84] In other cases, confessional rifts, such as the ones permanently dividing the Holy Roman Empire after the Thirty Years War, could lead to conflicts. Regime change could also introduce a ruler with a different

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[77]Volker Sellin, Gewalt und Legitimität. Die Europäische Monarchie im Zeitalter der Revolutionen, München 2011; Peter Haslinger, Commentary. Failing Empires? Strategies and Impacts of Imperial Representation during the Nineteenth Century, in: Leonhard / von Hirschhausen (eds.), Comparing Empires, pp. 302–310.

[78]Karl Härter, Das Heilige Römische Reich deutscher Nation als mehrschichtiges Rechtssystem, 1495–1806, in: Wendehorst (ed.), Anatomie, pp. 327–347.

[79]Astrid von Schlachta, Konfrontation oder Konsens? Landständische Argumentationen gegenüber territorialen Obrigkeiten – Ostfriesland und Tirol im 18. Jahrhundert, in: Wendehorst (ed.), Anatomie, pp. 143–166.

[80]Thomas Lau, Reich der Diplomaten – Diplomaten des Reichs. Das Netz der habsburgischen Gesandten und Residenten im Heiligen Römischen Reich, in: Wendehorst (ed.), Anatomie, pp. 265–280.

[81]E.g. John Robertson (ed.), A Union for Empire. Political Thought and the British Union of 1707, Cambridge 1995; Craig Yirush, Settlers, Liberty, and Empire. The Roots of Early American Political Theory, 1675–1775, Cambridge 2011.

[82]E.g. Andrew Mitchell, „Por Dios, Por Patria". The Sacral Limits of Empire as Seen in Catalan Political Sermons, 1630–1641, in: Andrade / Reger (eds.), Limits of Empire, pp. 11–31; Andrea J. Smidt, Enlightened Absolutism and New Frontiers for Political Authority. Building Towards a State Religion in Eighteenth-Century Spain, in: ibid., pp. 33–57.

[83]Michael Bregnsbo, Die lutherische Staatskirche als Integrationsfaktor des multilingualen, multikulturellen und multiterritorialen dänischen Imperiums, in: Wendehorst (ed.), Anatomie, pp. 61–72.

[84]Thomas Max Safley (ed.), A Companion to Multiconfessionalism in the Early Modern World, Leiden 2011.

confessional outlook as was the case in struggles between Protestant Riga and the Polish-Lithuanian king Sigismund II August.[85] In Riga, the regime change went hand in hand with a change in chrono-politics – the introduction of the Gregorian calendar – that led to widespread year-long civic unrest stressing the civic and religious liberties of the city. Connections between religion and empire, thus, empowered subjects, but they also bolstered an early modern sense of imperial mission and historical purpose (8) that was later often interlaced with concepts of civilisation, progress, and race.[86]

(9) The formula that empires 'governed different people differently', lastly, merits critical appreciation. Let us investigate one caesura around 1780, traditionally associated with imperial crisis.[87] In British history, it was long seen to separate a *first* commercial Empire (including the settlements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, reaching its apex in 1763, and faltering in 1783) that was Atlantic, mercantilist, and, by and large, non-coercive from a *second* Empire that was interventionist, territorial, and oriented towards the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.[88] This view has since given way to positions that stress change alongside many continuities. Maya Jasanoff, for instance, uncovers the fates of roughly 60,000 who sided with Britain and were displaced during the American Revolutionary War. She argues that the „spirit of 1781" meant a commitment to preserving the British Empire. This entailed demands for imperial reform which closely resembled the demands of American revolutionaries themselves.[89] Peter Marshall has argued that while coercion failed in North America, East India Company officials successfully hijacked Bengal's existing state structures, which saved the imperial bridgehead in India.[90] Christopher Bayly has added a much-needed global context to this perspective from London outward. He explained how magnates in the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal empires came to rival their imperial overlords.[91] To him, the rise of the „Regency empire" (1783-1830) in its European and Asian context was not a mere interlude to a later empire of free trade. Refined agrarian and aristocratic ideas dominated this empire's agenda, because, as he aptly puts it, the focus on land and improvement were believed to be able to „reveal a natural hierarchy".[92]

Burbank/Cooper's compromise formula suggests both that the nineteenth century inherited imperial techniques and that it also grappled with apparent discontinuities.[93] I believe that this position will ultimately prove more compelling to those writing comparative or connected histories of empire than a concept of colonial modernity will. This is for three main reasons: First, it does not disallow anyone from integrating a pluralised notion of modernity as Partha Chatterjee and others have proposed.[94] Second, it enables historians to incorporate that allegedly *pre-modern* agents of empire could dwell at length on information, propose rigid racial boundaries or make the case for economic exploitation and garrison government well before 1780. And, third, it helps frame why those who spoke of empire in the nineteenth century could still invoke family, friends, and kings before speaking of industry, telegraph, or steamship. Indeed, this is also the outcome that John Marriott envisions: „if [...] that [colonial] experience is recognised from the start to be constitutive of modernity, the term [...]

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[85]Anna Ziemlewska, „Die Kalenderunruhen" in Riga (1584–89), in: Wendehorst (ed.), Anatomie, pp. 365–386.

[86]Stuchtey, Liberales Weltreich.

[87]Burbank / Cooper, Empires in World History, ch. 10, thus, contrasts with Philippa Levine / John Marriott, Introduction, in: id. (eds.), Imperial Histories, pp. 1–11, who stress that, and Philippa Levine, Age of Imperial Crisis, in: ibid., pp. 75–98.

[88]Peter J. Marshall, The First British Empire, in: Winks (ed.), Historiography, pp. 43–53.

[89]Maya Jasanoff, Liberty's Exiles. American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World, New York 2011.

[90]Peter J. Marshall, The Making and Unmaking of Empires. Britain, India, and America c.1750–1783, Oxford 2005.

[91]Christopher Bayly, Imperial Meridian. The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830, London 1989; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, A Tale of Three Empires: Mughals, Ottomans, and Habsburgs in a Comparative Context, in: Common Knowledge 12,1 (2006), pp. 66–92.

[92]Bayly, Imperial Meridian, p. 160.

[93]Burbank / Cooper, Empires in World History.

[94]Partha Chatterjee, Our Modernity, in: The Present History of West Bengal, Delhi 1997, pp. 193–210; John Marriott, Modernity, in: Levine / Marriott (eds.), Imperial Histories, pp. 581–600, here pp. 583f.

will hopefully become tautological and obsolete".[95] Definitions then cannot force historians to explain why certain people allegedly did not fit their time.

Much of the debate about definitions also amounts to conflicts between inductive and deductive approaches. But even inductive approaches need to justify why they consider a certain set of practices as imperial. The group of German-speaking historians discussed above who study early modern empires that are usually neglected by imperial history have proposed to focus on techniques, personnel, and institutions within a set definition.[96] Burbank and Cooper investigate a similar triad, but they do not start out with a definition that fits the methodology they use thereafter.[97] In both cases one may wonder why certain polities deserve to be deemed and compared as empires while others do not. It seems crucially important that even inductive approaches that treat empire – like I will in the next part – as a set of practices relate them to a common denominator. Burbank and Cooper start their volume that otherwise avoids bundle categories with the suggestion that empires were a „type of state". This merely replaces one problem with another as the rich literature on statecraft has already shown.[98]

Instead, this essay sees empire as a type of *Herrschaft* which uneasily translates into authority. As the Roman term *imperium* suggests, empire was meant to enable people to do something.[99] It was the clout in a power relation that kept subjects from even testing its coercive

potential. Chatterjee, thus, uses a variant of Carl Schmitt's famous definition of sovereignty stating that „the most reliable definition of an imperial practice remains that of the privilege to declare the exception to the norm".[100] Unlike definitions that treat power as a substance[101], Chatterjee highlights that both the mutual observation of those in the power relation as well as the audience matter. To be sure, coercion played a central role and violence occurred in early modern power relations, but (in most cases) it was not the desirable outcome. In addition to downright force, power relations, of course, crucially hinged on language and mutual perception. These mutual perceptions transformed power into *Herrschaft*. And they help historians shift the focus from structure to process: from empires as state-like entities to empire as a practice that could help some to create and help others to unpick existing institutions.[102]

4. Doing Empire: Forces of Cohesion and Corruption in Early Modern Empires

Who, then, made and unmade empires in the early modern world? Depending on the empire under consideration, successive historiographical waves have presented a string of contenders. The basic parameters governing how empires could take shape – from above, from below, from between empires or from in-between and across empires and other polities – reflect the historiographical trends outlined in the first part of this essay. Some suggested that metropolitan politicians, merchants, missionaries, and soldiers made empire. Only to be challenged by approaches that dissolved these agents' ability to claim authority on the ground.[103] To complicate matters further, the disobedi-

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[95]Marriott, Modernity, p. 599.

[96]Stephan Wendehorst, Reich, in: Friedrich Jaeger (ed.), Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit, vol. 10, Stuttgart 2009, col. 873–888.

[97]Burbank / Cooper, Empires in World History, p. 8.

[98]E.g. Michael J. Braddick, State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1700, Cambridge 2000. The connection of state formation and imperial expansion as a tandem process is still debated, e.g. Sara Melzer, Colonizer or Colonized. The Hidden Stories of Early Modern French Culture, Philadelphia 2012; David A. Bell, Questioning the Global Turn. The Case of the French Revolution, in: French Historical Studies 37,1 (2014), pp. 1–24.

[99]Anthony Pagden, Lords of All the World. Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France, c. 1500-c. 1800, New Haven, 1995, ch. 1, p. 17.

[100]Partha Chatterjee, The Black Hole of Empire. History of a Global Practice of Power, Princeton 2012, p. 337; Julian Go, Patterns of Empire. The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present, Cambridge 2011.

[101]Charles S. Maier, Among Empires. American Ascendancy and its Predecessors, Cambridge, MA 2006, p. 7; Michael Doyle, Empires, Ithaca 1986, p. 19.

[102]Sanjay Subrahmanyam, The Mughal State – Structure or Process? Reflections on Recent Western Historiography, in: Indian Economic and Social History Review 29,3 (1992), pp. 291–321.

[103]Marks, Sniping.

ent subjects appealed to higher authorities or argued that they indeed obeyed, but would not comply. In the background, rivalries between empires also continued to exert a crucial influence. These competing claims that rivalling groups haphazardly made empire from above and others instantly unmade it from below also inspired an increasing focus on intermediaries who moved in-between alleged centres and peripheries and between empires.[104] The interest in empires learning or not learning from their peripheries or from one another has also triggered a renewed emphasis on exile communities: groups that had to uproot due to threat of brute force or positive incentives.[105]

It is, of course, something of a truism that local agents could undercut imperial agendas and that, quite often, they used the very tools of empire to do so.[106] The same applied to processes of early modern state formation.[107] To get things done locally, cooperation often proved more suitable than force. But while this inversion of power dynamics sits well with a historiography sceptical of top-down histories of states and empires, it also upsets the very subject under consideration. If means of coercion were so limited, those who practiced empire either had to share some ideological common ground with distant rulers, or they had to fear coercion enough to comply regardless. To soften the dichotomy, local agents needed to manufacture obedience with their allies. This manufacturing process involved many hands whose personal obligations ranged from friendship, marriage, kinship, fiefdom, vassalage, and servitude to bonds of money and ideology. This held true in Spain and the Holy Roman Empire as it did among the

Ottomans, Mughals and Safavids.[108]

If coercion became necessary, imperial elites sometimes put boots on the ground; or rather, cannons on deck.[109] Traditionally, British historiography has treated the Royal Navy's role as a special subject. Geo-strategical approaches concluded that empire was not the Navy's major concern. To the contrary, protecting the British Isles and interrupting trade patterns dominated naval strategising.[110] When sailors and soldiers sought imperial involvement, they often suffered from adverse terrain and climate.[111] The Navy now attracts a renewed interest. Scholars have reinvestigated, for instance, the role of the Navy as a forum for critique in the period leading up to the British Civil War and identified the Navy as a source of discontent in the American crisis.[112] Others focus on the Navy's role in projecting soft power or study its impact on crucial links in the Atlantic system, such as the sourcing of labour in West Africa.[113] Julia Angster proposes that after the 1780s the Navy took on the role of major knowledge broker that both projected and produced Britain's view of the world.[114]

Early modern empires shared significant common ground with monarchy, dynasty, and (noble) family. In fact, thinking in terms of

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[104]Rothman, Brokering Empire; John-Paul Ghobrial, The Whispers of Cities. Information Flows in Istanbul, London, and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull, Oxford 2013.

[105]Hodson, Acadian Diaspora; ongoing Liesbeth Corens, Dislocation and Record-Keeping. The Counter Archives of the Catholic Diaspora, in: id. / Kate Peters / Alexandra Walsham (eds.), The Social History of the Archive. Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe, Oxford 2016, pp. 269–287.

[106]Leonhard / von Hirschhausen, Beyond Rise.

[107]E.g. Jürgen Schlumbohm, Gesetze, die nicht durchgesetzt werden – ein Strukturmerkmal des frühneuzeitlichen Staates?, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 23 (1997), pp. 647–663.

[108]Munis D. Faruqui, The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719, Cambridge 2012, p. 7; Farhat Hasan, State and Locality in Mughal India. Power Relations in Western India, 1572–1730, Cambridge 2004.

[109]Wayne E. Lee, Subjects, Clients, Allies, or Mercenaries? The British Use of Irish and Amerindian Military Power, 1500–1800, in: Bowen / Mancke / Reid (eds.), Oceanic Empire, pp. 179–217.

[110]N. A. M. Rodger, Sea-Power and Empire, 1688–1793, in: Peter J. Marshall / Alaine Low (eds.), The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. 2: The Eighteenth Century, Oxford 1998, pp. 169–183.

[111]McNeill, Mosquito Empires.

[112]Richard J. Blakemore, Thinking outside the Gundeck. Maritime History, the Royal Navy and the Outbreak of British Civil War, 1625–42, in: Historical Research 87 (2014), pp. 1–24; Sarah Kinkel, The King's Pirates? Naval Enforcement of Imperial Authority, 1740–76, in: The William and Mary Quarterly 71,1 (2014), pp. 3–34 respectively.

[113]Joshua D. Newton, Slavery, Sea Power and the State. The Royal Navy and the British West African Settlement, 1748–1756, in: Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 41,2 (2013), pp. 171–193.

[114]Julia Angster, Erdbeeren und Piraten. Die Royal Navy und die Ordnung der Welt 1770–1860, Göttingen 2012.

families and personal obligation permeated other areas as well. Paying attention to how people 'did empire' with friends, patrons, and clients forces intersections of imperial history with the history of the nobility, new diplomatic history, and new economic history. Historians of early modern Spain and its empire have already gone far in advancing this notion.[115] Historians of the British Empire also emphasise the importance of ties of family and patronage.[116] Post-colonial and new imperial historians, by contrast, rightly feel in troubled waters in this respect: Defining empire through personal obligations seemingly reinstates colonial assumptions that these empires were lacking aspects traditionally associated with 'modern' statecraft such as role differentiation, organisations, and a disentanglement of family and politics.[117] More recently, authors embrace what Partha Chatterjee has proposed to be specifically *early modern* about these empires. The remainder of this section looks at some of these practices of empire in more detail.

(1) Authority can only temporarily reside in people and political structures because power exists solely in (malleable) social relations. Empires used political voids, hijacked existing institutions, and often recruited personnel of the realms they incorporated. Imperial stability, thus, crucially depended on a degree of flexibility that an instructive comparison of Qing China and Imperial Rome delineates.[118] The Islamic and Christian polities that inherited the imperial repertoire through Byzantium and Charlemagne took the links between imperial power and universalising monotheism in different directions. While the Ottomans had Byzantine precedents for taxation available to them,

the strong role of intermediaries in Charlemagne's empire furthered a more circumscribed role for the Emperor. In the light of Burbank and Cooper's comparative work that points to intersections between world empires[119], contemporary claims that these empires represented completely different worldviews become less marked. As, for instance, the comparison between the Ottoman Empire under Suleyman the Magnificent – long studied under the label „Oriental despotism"[120] – and the Holy Roman Empire under Charles V shows, both were heirs to the Roman Empire.[121] But while the Habsburgs forged noble magnates into a „contractual relation" fostered by religious monotheism, Ottomans integrated subalterns more closely through the imperial household, but allowed for a higher degree of religious pluralism.

(2) Empires were made and unmade by words as well as deeds. When and how depended on the social clout of those who uttered these words. In 1999, Antony G. Hopkins lamented that „modes of production have been replaced by modes of discourse" responding to the extremes of the linguistic turn.[122] While modes of production have since returned, research on empire raises the awareness for the importance of story-tellers and producers of knowledge. Power lies not just in conquest, but in claiming the authority to forge the story of empire and define what preceded it[123]: Imperial narratives even inverted the relationality of colonial violence, turning the colonised into perpetrators. Chatterjee, for instance, shows how Thomas Bab-

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[115]Christoph Rosenmüller, „Corrupted by Ambition". Justice and Patronage in Imperial New Spain and Spain, 1650–1755, in: Hispanic American Historical Review 96,1 (2016), pp. 1–37.

[116]E.g. Elizabeth Buettner, Empire Families. Britons and Late Imperial India, Oxford 2004.

[117]Subrahmanyam, Mughal State, pp. 308ff; Leslie Peirce, The Imperial Harem. Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire, Oxford 1993; Tijana Krstić. Contested Conversions to Islam. Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire, Stanford 2011.

[118]Burbank / Cooper, Empires in World History, ch. 2.

[119]Ibid., ch. 4; Peter C. Perdue, Late Imperial China (c. 1500–1911), in: Levine / Marriott (eds.), Imperial Histories, pp. 99–126.

[120]Burbank / Cooper, Empires in World History, p. 169; Thomas Kaiser, The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture, in: Journal of Modern History 72 (2000), pp. 6–34; Suraiya N. Faroqhi, Political Initiatives „from the Bottom up" in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire, in: Hans Georg Majer (ed.), Osmanistische Studien zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte. In Memoriam Vančo Boškov, Wiesbaden 1986, pp. 24–33.

[121]An overview in Baki Tezcan, The Second Ottoman Empire. Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World, Cambridge 2010.

[122]Hopkins, Back to the Future, p. 199.

[123]Philip Gourevitch, We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families. Stories from Rwanda, New York 1992; Edward Said, Orientalism, London 1978.

bington Macaulay utilised a version of an almost forgotten event in Mughal India, the death of a group of imprisoned British soldiers in Calcutta, to present the British as a civilising force in a disorderly and despotic India.[124] Insights from comparative history also suggest that narratives about the decline and fall of great empires provided some degree of truth, however. Many of these stories were so strikingly similar in different regions not just because they were remade by Western historiography, but because empires responded to the comparable challenge of maintaining loyalty among vast networks of interdependent followers.

(3) Universalising monotheism became a defining feature of Europe's Christian empires. Religious agents occupied a major role as critics and promoters of empire. Quite often they played both roles at the same time. Religion was neither on the way out during the early modern period, nor should it be put in too stark a contrast with *Enlightened* arguments to legitimise empire.[125] In Central Europe, for instance, the Reformation(s) had a decidedly imperial context insofar as theological debates on papal and princely authority coincided with debates about the authority of a Catholic Emperor with regard to his imperial subjects.[126] The Confessional Age turned imperial in another respect if we consider how theorists of the Spanish overseas empire did not just see continuities with the *Reconquista* of Muslim Iberia[127], but also drew a global balance sheet that listed the souls they saved on

either side of the Atlantic. Imperial religious fervour no longer pertains to Catholics or a small group of radical Protestants in New England either. British historians have argued that the first post-Reformation empire was born out of militant Protestantism, and grappled from the start with its inbuilt heterodoxy.[128] Gabriel Glickman shows how New England Company agents sought to connect their mission to a larger Protestant interest and explores how conflicts within the Restoration church became formative for distinct imperial ideas.[129] Others further develop this argument for a later period.[130] Among the authoritative languages, the law often claimed ties to the divine as well. It helped agents to reshape empires.

(4) Legal pluralism allowed those who lived in empires with the education and means to do so to 'shop' legal forums that most suited their needs.[131] Lauren Benton and others have suggested to shift the focus from norm to process and study legal conflicts to follow both continuity and change.[132] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper's collection pays close attention to succession laws – as a major mechanism that moulded empires – throughout.[133] Questions of succession do not feature in many histories of empire, but they should perhaps be

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[124]Chatterjee, Black Hole of Empire, ch. 6; Rolena Adorno, Court and Chronicle. A Native Andean's Engagement with Spanish Colonial Law, in: Belmessous (ed.), Native Claims, pp. 63–84. Nicholas B. Dirks, Castes of Mind. Colonialism and the Making of Modern India, Princeton 2001; Thomas R. Metcalf, Ideologies of the Raj, Cambridge 1994.

[125]E.g. Alexandra Walsham, The Reformation and „the Disenchantment of the World" Reassessed, in: Historical Journal 51,2 (2008), pp. 497–528; Sebastian Conrad, Enlightenment in Global History. A Historiographical Critique, in: American Historical Review 117,4 (2012), pp. 999–1027.

[126]John-Paul Ghobrial, The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory, in: Past and Present 222,1 (2014), pp. 51–93; Carlos M. N. Eire, Reformations. The Early Modern World, 1450–1650, New Haven, 2016, chs. 15–19.

[127]Adas / Cagle, Age of Settlement.

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[128]Carla Gardina Pestana, Protestant Empire. Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World, Philadelphia 2009; Norman Etherington (ed.), Missions and Empire, Oxford 2005.

[129]Gabriel Glickman, Protestantism, Colonization and the New England Company in Restoration Politics, in: Historical Journal 59,2 (2016), pp. 365–391.

[130]Brent S. Sirota, The Church. Anglicanism and the Nationalization of Maritime Space, in: Stern / Wennerlind (eds.), Mercantilism Reimagined, pp. 196–217; id., The Christian Monitors. The Church of England and the Age of Benevolence, 1680–1730, New Haven 2014; Travis Glasson, Mastering Christianity. Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World, Oxford 2012.

[131]Wendehorst, Altes Reich, p. 46; Härter, Mehrschichtiges Rechtssystem; Lauren Benton / Richard J. Ross, Jurisdiction, Sovereignty, and Political Imagination in the Early Modern World, in: id. (eds.), Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500–1850, New York 2013, pp. 1–17; Richard J. Ross / Philip J. Stern, Reconstructing Early Modern Notions of Legal Pluralism, in: ibid., pp. 109–141.

[132]Lauren Benton, Possessing Empire; id., Crime, in: Levine / Marriott (eds.), Imperial Histories, pp. 393–406; Jane Burbank / Frederick Cooper, Rules of Law, Politics of Empire, in: Benton / Ross (eds.), Legal Pluralism, pp. 279–293.

[133]Burbank / Cooper, Empires in World History, pp. 68, 86, 96, 108, 133f., 186, 199.

considered more prominently. Successions drew imperial networks in sharp relief as they were often accompanied by purges or struggles over rights to particular subjects, territories or privileges. Furthermore, taking dynastic thought seriously sets Europe apart from other dynastic systems: Agnatic primogeniture, monogamous marriage, and Salic law framed political conflict. At the same time the focus on the rule of the first-born son from a legitimate marriage also created dynastic crises well into the eighteenth century.

Regarding the Mughal Empire, Munis Faruqui's inspiring study also departs from the terms of modern statecraft.[134] It shows the sheer dynamism of a competitive succession system that helps explain the empire's longevity. In the system that came into being in the sixteenth century, addressing princely misconduct became a means of discussing 'imperial policies'. Faruqui convincingly shows how the critique of a prince pierced through layers of courtly etiquette that otherwise prevented a discussion of policies. What past historians have, thus, often considered a failure to create *modern* institutions served an important political function in harnessing elite rivalry and preventing critique from damaging the emperor. Subjects in empires also made sophisticated legal claims that did not merely pit an imposed legal system against a pre-existing one. Quite often these claims considered multiple legal repertoires.[135] Saliha Belmessous' edited volume shows „native and European legal arguments could be strikingly parallel".[136] As Belmessous herself discusses for the Mi'kmaq and other northeastern Algonquian-speakers, they „expressed their claims to ter-

ritory using comparable legal arguments".[137] Native counter-claims, which referred with legal sophistication to rights of discovery, cession, purchase, and conquest also existed elsewhere.[138]

(5) The question about 'divergence' long stood at the heart of much of the discussion about commerce and early modern empire: Why did Europe grow rich and powerful while other parts of the world did not and why did some parts of Europe grow faster than others? At the centre of many of the answers stood an ideal type that approximated the British Empire combining a powerful fiscal-military state at home with a mercantilist system abroad.[139] The Catholic powers France and Spain that the British imperial thinkers had long defined themselves against, impacted how imperial models could be theorised. But this static view has become a lot more fluid in recent years.[140] Historians have challenged the singularity of mercantilism and the allegedly consensual economic rationale undergirding it.[141] Steven Pincus stresses the importance of rivalling political ideologies in the making and unmaking of the British Empire, while Carl Wennerlind's collection focuses on the conflicts about economic theory, foremost, in early modern Britain. The editors suggest that transformations of thinking about the universe, the natural world, and the body politic were inseparable from commerce in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. European trading companies, combining as they did joint stock capital, organisation, and a state-backed monopoly, were, in-

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[134]Faruqui, Princes; Sanjay Subrahmanyam / Muzaffar Alam, The Mughal State, 1526–1750, Oxford 1998; Hasan, State and Locality; Michael H. Fisher, Mughal Empire, in: Levine / Marriott (eds.), Imperial Histories, pp. 161–186.

[135]Matthias Schnettger, *Imperii Germanici Ius ac Possessio in Genua Liguistica*. Heinrich Christian von Senckenberg und der Kampf um die Reichsrechte in Ligurien, in: Wendehorst (ed.), Anatomie, pp. 281–301; Stephan Wendehorst, Johann Jacob Moser. Der Reichspublizist als Völkerrechtler, in: ibid., pp. 303–324; Chatterjee, Black Hole, p. 337.

[136]Saliha Belmessous, Introduction. The Problem of Indigenous Claim Making in Colonial History, in: id. (ed.), Native Claims, pp. 3–18, here p. 4.

[137]Id., Wabanaki versus French and English Claims in Northeastern North America, c. 1715, in: ibid., pp. 107–128, here p. 125.

[138]Andrew Fitzmaurice, Powhatan Legal Claims, in: ibid., pp. 85–106.

[139]John Brewer, The Sinews of Power. War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783, London 1989; Perry Gauci, Emporium of the World. The Merchants of London 1660–1800, Oxford 2007; id., The Politics of Trade: the Overseas Merchant in State and Society 1660–1720, Oxford 2001.

[140]David Armitage, The Ideological Origins of the British Empire, Cambridge 2000, pp. 61ff.; Gould, Entangled Histories.

[141]Steven Pincus, Rethinking Mercantilism. Political Economy, the British Empire and the Atlantic World in the 17th and 18th Centuries, in: The William and Mary Quarterly 69,1 (2012), pp. 3–34; id., Addison's Empire. Whig Conceptions of Empire in the Early 18th Century, in: History of Parliament 31 (2012), pp. 99–117; Philip J. Stern / Carl Wennerlind, Introduction, in: id. (Hrsg.), Mercantilism Reimagined, pp. 3–22.

deed, unprecedented.[142] Philip Stern has shown for the East India Company that these corporations did not just organise trade with different empires before the battle of Plassey. They combined personal with political and economic responsibilities without always drawing clear boundaries between them.[143] Recent research on political economy has been able to shed instructive new light on the tension between *composite monarchies* and *empires*. Consider, for instance, the classic case of Spain and its empire. The work of Arndt Brendecke and others on information suggests that the ideal of an all-knowing ruler aspiring to dispense justice was confronted with agents in Spain and overseas who filtered, exaggerated, and misinformed.[144] Vera Candiani's history on the desiccation of the area now known as Mexico City intersects with that of Brendecke through the manifold ways in which the 'Spanish' depended on their local subjects' knowledge.[145] In fact, Candiani confronts a historiography looking from Spain to its empire with change that was driven by non-Spanish actors. Fidel Tavárez traces those who put Enlightenment economic thinking 'on the ground' suggesting that attempts to transform a composite under one ruler into an empire proper were only successful in the eighteenth century, when a set of ministers reimagined colonies, formerly places

for resource extraction, as groups of consumers.[146]

(6) The tangible and material effects of empire also became obvious in the commodification of goods and people that it promoted. If the annual silver fleet did not arrive in Iberia at the right time, it made a difference in European politics.[147] If warfare in central Africa ceased, if rivalling companies competed for access to the West African coast or if the exclusive rights to trading slaves to the Spanish Americas were taken away from France and granted to Britain, it made a material difference.[148] If consumers increasingly developed a 'sweet tooth', a taste for tea, coffee, and tobacco, demands fed back into the Atlantic system.[149] But once consumption brought the empire back home, consumers also increasingly claimed agency in imperial affairs.[150] This was especially tangible in the case of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Slavery stood at the apex of a spectrum of forms of unfree labour that maintained different empires in world history. As such, practices of slaving are central not just to the history of early modern European empires[151], but both to the history of empire and

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[142]Nuala Zahedieh, The Capital and the Colonies. London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660–1700, Cambridge 2010; Burbank / Cooper, Empires in World History, ch. 6.

[143]Philip J. Stern, „Bundles of Hyphens". Corporations as Legal Communities in the Early Modern British Empire, in: Benton / Ross (eds.), Legal Pluralism, pp. 21–47; id., Companies. Monopoly, Sovereignty, and the East Indies, in: id. / Wennerlind (eds.), Mercantilism Reimagined, pp. 177–195; id., Company, State, and Empire. Governance and Regulatory Frameworks in Asia, in: Bowen / Mancke / Reid (eds.), Oceanic Empire, pp. 130–150; id., The Company State. Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India, Oxford 2011; Huw V. Bowen, No Longer Mere Traders. Continuities and Change in the Metropolitan Development of the East India Company 1600–1834, in: id. / Margarette Lincoln / Nigel Rigby (eds.), The Worlds of the East India Company, Woodbridge 2002, pp. 19–32.

[144]Arndt Brendecke, The Empirical Empire. Spanish Colonial Rule and the Politics of Knowledge, Berlin 2016; Bethany Aram, Distance and Misinformation, in: Andrade / Reger (eds.), Limits of Empire, pp. 223–236; Paul M. Dover, Philip II, Information Overload, and the Early Modern Moment, in: ibid., pp. 99–120.

[145]Vera Candiani, Dreaming of Dry Land. Environmental Transformation in Colonial Mexico City, Stanford 2014.

[146]Fidel José Tavárez Simó, La invención de un imperio comercial hispano, 1740–1765, in: Magallánica 2,3 (2015), pp. 54–73; id., Viscardo's Global Political Economy and the First Cry for Spanish American Independence, 1767–1798, in: Journal of Latin American Studies 48,3 (2015), pp. 537–564.

[147]Shinsuke Satsuma, Britain and Colonial Maritime War in the Early Eighteenth Century. Silver, Seapower and the Atlantic, Woodbridge 2013.

[148]William A. Pettigrew, Freedom's Debt. The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672–1752, Chapel Hill 2013; Paul E. Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa, 2nd ed., Cambridge 2000.

[149]Sidney Mintz, Sweetness and Power. The Place of Sugar in Modern History, New York 1985; James H. Galloway, The Sugar Cane Industry. An Historical Geography from its Origins to 1914, Cambridge 2005.

[150]Erika Rappaport, Consumption, in: Levine / Marriott (eds.), Imperial Histories, pp. 343–358; Timothy Breen, An Empire of Goods. The Anglicisation of Colonial America, 1690–1776, in: Journal of British Studies 25 (1986), pp. 467–499. Id., The Marketplace of Revolution. How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence, Oxford 2004, probably takes this argument farthest, but see also more recently Lynn Hunt, Writing History in the Global Era, New York 2014.

[151]Consider e.g. the long-lasting debate about legal differences with regard to slavery between the British and the Spanish empires: Frank Tannenbaum, Slave and Citizen. The Classic Comparative Study of Race Relations in the Americas, Boston 1992.

the connected history of Europe more generally.[152] Wendy Warren's recent work traces the fate of slaves closest to the founding narrative of the United States: in early seventeenth-century New England.[153] As Abigail Swingen has shown, the Atlantic slave trade was also made possible due to a shift away from exporting to retaining unwanted surplus populations. The influx of convict labour that once jump-started sugar, could not maintain it subsequently.[154] The history of knowledge production and reading practices is strikingly absent from some of these narratives. Trevor Burnard's work on the Jamaican plantation overseer Thomas Thistlewood signals how deeply slaveholders in the Caribbean were themselves invested in questions of status in colonial society.[155] Through their sexual violence they produced hierarchy and defined colonial masculinity. For historians, they showcase early modern forms of intersectionality: How ties between status, race, and gender were made in practice and (re)produced in writing practices.

(7) Slaves were not the only labourers that imperial projectors lured into far-distant regions.[156] Outright enslavement coexisted with other forms of unfree labour. Those organising migration, for instance, accepted work as a payment for passage.[157] Political events helped uproot and unsettle skilled labourers. During the Seven Years' War, for example, shifting borderlands displaced French settlers[158], while during the American Revolution the expulsion of royalists led to a mass exodus from North America.[159] Religion could also provide an incentive for labour migration as an intriguing work on the journey of a couple of dissenting Protestants, the so called Moravians, suggests.[160] European communities, built around religious belonging, did not always welcome religious refugees.[161] More work is needed exactly on how brokers established migration patterns, how people made religious, political, and economic concepts intersect in family migration.[162]

(8) Those who did empire also profoundly changed the land- and seascapes that they inhabited. They contributed to what some now call the Anthropocene. Imagine for a moment the sight of a silver mine in Peru, a sugar mill on Jamaica, or a *hacienda* in colonial Mexico. It is a daunting task. Most readers in a modern consumer society, myself included, inhabit a world in which humans decisively impact upon the environment, but in which they often live disconnected from the materiality of (imperial) production.[163] The task would be even more daunting without the many nuanced works in social, economic, and increasingly cultural history that have turned to commodities: From furs and textiles, over sugar, coffee, tea, to precious metals and gems

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[152]Stefan Hanß / Juliane Schiel (eds.), Mediterranean Slavery Revisited (500–1800) / Neue Perspektiven auf mediterrane Sklaverei (500–1800), Zürich 2014; Stefan Hanß, Sklaverei in vormodernen Mediterraneum. Tendenzen aktueller Forschungen, in: Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung 40,4 (2013), pp. 623–661.

[153]Margaret Ellen Newell, Brethren by Nature. New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery, Ithaca 2015; Wendy Warren, New England Bound. Slavery and Colonization in Early America, New York 2016.

[154]Marjory Harper / Stephen Constantine (eds.), Migration and Empire, Oxford 2014; William O'Reilly, Movements of People in the Atlantic World, in: Nicholas Canny / Philip D. Morgan (eds.), The Oxford History of the Atlantic World, Oxford 2011, pp. 305–323; Swingen, Labor; Ted McCormick, Population. Modes of Seventeenth-Century Demographic Thought, in: Stern / Wennerlind (eds.), Mercantilism Reimagined, pp. 25–45.

[155]Trevor Burnard, Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire. Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World, Chapel Hill 2004.

[156]Aaron Spencer Fogleman, Two Troubled Souls. An Eighteenth-Century Couple's Spiritual Journey in the Atlantic World, Chapel Hill 2013; Ned C. Landsman, Nation, Migration, and the Province in the First British Empire. Scotland and the Americas, 1600–1800, in: American Historical Review (1999), pp. 463–475.

[157]Jean-François Reynier's falling into indentured servitude in Fogleman's Two Troubled Souls is an instructive case in point. Swingen, Labor; McCormick, Population.

[158]Hodson, Acadian Diaspora.

[159]Jasanoff, Liberty's Exiles.

[160]Fogleman, Troubled Souls.

[161]William O'Reilly, Strangers Come to Devour the Land. Changing Views of Foreign Migrants in Early Eighteenth-Century England, in: Journal of Early Modern History 21,3 (2017), pp. 153–187; Mary S. Sprunger, The Limits of Faith in a Maritime Empire. Mennonites, Trade and Politics in the Dutch Golden Age, in: Andrade / Reger (eds.), Limits of Empire, pp. 59–77.

[162]Harper / Constantine, Migration and Empire.

[163]Amitav Ghosh, The Great Derangement. Climate Change and the Unthinkable, Chicago 2016.

they have received more and more attention. Human changes to the environment subtly accompanied most of the processes of empire. Every piece of silver intersected in a meaningful way with a vast set of people all embedded in networks of dependency to patrons, family members, and social peers.[164]

(9) If, then, as this essay has argued, families and extended patron-client-networks made and unmade empire, gender becomes a central, perhaps *the* field-defining category.[165] Historians have shown that empire was not just believed to require well-to-do and connected subjects to make it a success, but that it could also distance people so far from their (allegedly fixed) societal position at home that they were seen as effeminate, and perceived to have 'gone native'.[166] Empires provided a large canvas onto which the ideals of the well-ordered society and the realities of constant adaptation both could be sketched. But they also pushed societies built on interaction, trust, and bonds of family, clientage, and friendship to their natural limits.[167] Taking the gendered nature of early modern politics as a point of departure has led many historians away from a focus on the singular (often male) heroic individual that itself partly emerged from an imperial context. As this literature review should have made clear, it also led them closer to how historical agents themselves conceived of the worlds they inhabited. A history of early modern empire needs to account for the intersecting roles of individual agents and the intertwined nature

of systems in early modern society.[168]

5. Conclusion: Contemporary Problems?
Paying close attention to actual practices of empire helps openly address the pressing question of 'presentism'[169]: For whom do historians write history and to what extent should that interest guide their eyes and hands as they understand archives and write their texts? Especially historians educated in a European tradition deny that empires of the past can teach policy-makers lessons for today.[170] I have tried to shed light on some of the problems of definitions and to anchor them in a positive phenomenon, the increasing connections between different academic geographies. The task for historians of empire today is, thus, formidable: It requires a substantial commitment to language-learning and scholarly work across continents, an awareness of the striking similarities that existed between early modern empires as well as a careful attention to the minutiae of text and circumstances that constantly undercut these similarities on another analytical plane. It is perhaps an imperial history of a particular moment that bespeaks a political project to intellectually connect parts of the world (as some still hope beyond a market rationale). This essay has shown that an approach to early modern empire that operates closer to the older sense of *imperium* as a set of practices has analytical value. I would argue that it has political value as well for it incentivises historians to speak openly about the material and personal – often unintended – consequences of a globalising world. Foremost, this approach allows

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[164]Enrique Tandeter, Coercion and Market. Silver Mining in Colonial Potosí, 1692–1826, Albuquerque 1993.

[165]Philippa Levine (ed.), Gender and Empire, Oxford 2004.

[166]Nicholas B. Dirks, The Scandal of Empire. India and the Creation of Imperial Britain, Cambridge, MA 2006; Philippa Levine, What's British about Gender and Empire? The Problem of Exceptionalism, in: Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 27,2 (2007), pp. 273–282.

[167]Rudolf Schlögl, Anwesende und Abwesende. Grundriss für eine Gesellschafts-geschichte der Frühen Neuzeit, Konstanz 2014.

[168]Hillard von Thiessen, Normenkonkurrenz. Handlungsspielräume, Rollen, norma-tiver Wandel und normative Kontinuität vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Übergang zur Moderne, in: id. / Arne Karsten (ed.), Normenkonkurrenz in historischer Perspektive, Berlin 2015, pp. 241–286; Niels Grüne, „Leute, welche dieser Stellen [...] unwürdig sind?". Konsistenzerwartungen und Normenassimilation in der Frühen Neuzeit, in: ibid., pp. 121–138.

[169]E.g. Alexandra Walsham, Introduction. Past and ... Presentism, in: Past and Present 234,1 (2017), pp. 213–217, and the other contributions to that issue.

[170]Ulrike von Hirschhausen / Jörn Leonhard, „New Imperialism" oder „Liberal Empire"? Niall Fergusons Empire-Apologetik im Zeichen der „Anglobalization", in: Zeithistorische Forschungen 3 (2006), pp. 121–128; Wendehorst, Altes Reich, p. 50.

historians to combine the stringency of comparison with the surprises of connection.

For the sake of a common denominator, comparative history seems to reify containers that many historians shun for good reasons. As historians suggested years ago, comparing also eschews the (still) primary orientation towards national historiography.[171] But comparative projects take time, cost more, and run the risk of falling short on either side of the comparison.[172] So, why then integrate a comparative perspective to histories of empire? Foremost, because comparisons unmake exceptionalisms as Julian Go has argued in an instructive comparison of the British and the US Empire.[173] Second, because historical agents themselves arrive at their categories by comparison and while historians seek to see things their way, they should also not gamble away that in retrospect they can see more than the people they study.[174]

In this way, comparative and connected approaches could meaningfully be combined in the history of empire as historians follow agents as they attach themselves to one or another set of imperial projects.[175] They would also see them cross or fail to cross boundaries that are guarded. Investigating the asymmetries of power that allow or

disallow them from doing so mitigates a criticism often voiced against connected history: that it seeks out the few mobile agents and neglects the real limits to mobility that confined most people in early modern Europe.[176] Studying who inflicts limits upon mobility and connection itself links back to the authority often derived from a larger entity. This kind of imperial history does not run the risk of 'going global' that Durba Ghosh voiced recently.[177] At least not if 'global' is defined – as Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori propose – as „the methodological concern with experimenting beyond familiar geographical boundaries", but „without, at the same time, imposing some other boundaries, like regional, continental, or intra-imperial".[178] To the contrary, not referring to the imperial power that people claimed to attach themselves to would obfuscate the sources under consideration.

Additional value of this approach to empire as practice lies in its chances to personalise. There is no good reason why historians should not introduce their audiences to big data and social structures through the eyes, ears, hands, and mouths of people of the past.[179] Two highly readable examples spring to mind that echo many other cases.[180] James H. Sweet introduces his readers to an enslaved man from the fringes of the expanding kingdom of Dahomey in West Africa who traversed the Portuguese Atlantic. It poses an important challenge to histories of slaving suggesting that this man, Domingos Álvares, was not after individual freedom, but after belonging.[181] He used his healing practices that lead to clashes with authorities in Iberia as

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[171] Heinz-Gerhard Haupt / Jürgen Kocka, Historischer Vergleich. Methoden, Aufgaben, Probleme. Eine Einleitung, in id. (eds.), Geschichte und Vergleich. Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung, Frankfurt am Main 1996, pp. 9–45; Michael Gehler / Robert Rollinger, Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte – Epochenübergreifende und globalhistorische Vergleiche, in: id. (ed.), Imperien und Reiche, vol. 1, Wiesbaden 2014, pp. 1–32.

[172] Johannes Paulmann, Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer. Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts, in: Historische Zeitschrift 267,3 (1998), pp. 649–685.

[173] Go, Patterns of Empire.

[174] Philippa Levine, Is Comparative History Possible?, in: History and Theory 53 (2014), pp. 331–347; Stoler / McGranaham, Introduction; Ann Laura Stoler, Tense and Tender Ties. The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post)Colonial Studies, in: The Journal of American History 88 (2001), pp. 829–865; Angelika Epple / Walter Erhart (eds.), Die Welt beobachten. Praktiken des Vergleichens, Frankfurt am Main, 2015.

[175] Simon J. Potter / Jonathan Saha, Global History, Imperial History and Connected Histories of Empire, in: Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History 16,1 (2015), n.p.

[176] Ghobrial, Whispers of Cities, p. 9; Jürgen Osterhammel, Global History and Historical Sociology, in: James Belich et al. (eds.), The Prospect of Global History, Oxford 2016, pp. 23–43.

[177] Ghosh, Imperial Turns.

[178] Samuel Moyn / Andrew Sartori, Approaches to Global Intellectual History, in: id. (eds.), Global Intellectual History, New York 2013, pp. 3–32, here p. 21.

[179] Methodologically Lara Putnam, To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World, in: Journal of Social History 39,3 (2006), pp. 615–630.

[180] E.g. Colley, Ordeal; Jonathan D. Spence, The Question of Hu, New York 1988; Bernard Bailyn, The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson, Cambridge, MA 1974.

[181] James H. Sweet, Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World, Chapel Hill 2011.

well as in Brazil to restore ties of sociability. Ann M. Little traces the captivity of Esther Wheelwright, a New Englander, born Protestant and raised among free and enslaved women in Maine, converting to Catholicism at age six among the Wabanaki Indians, and choosing to spend her life as an Ursuline nun in Quebec.[182] For them, empires did not rise, rule, and fall, but their lives changed in unexpected ways due to forces they did not fully understand themselves. Many subjects such as Álvares or Wheelwright made early modern empires. But few men such as Montesquieu, Burke, and Gibbon created narratives about their rise and fall.[183] If historians of early modern empire seek to define their subject more sharply, the unsettled reality of its social stratification needs studying[184]: a world certain about above and below in words, but at times surprisingly upward-mobile in practice that differs markedly from ours that speaks less often of above and below, but stratifies rigidly in practice.

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[182] Ann M. Little, The Many Captivities of Esther Wheelwright, Cambridge, MA 2016.
[183] Michael Mosher, Montesquieu on Empire and Enlightenment, in: Muthu (ed.), Empire, pp. 112–154; Uday S. Mehta, Edmund Burke on Empire, Self-understanding, and Sympathy, in: ibid., Empire, pp. 155–183; Rosamond McKitterick / Roland Quinault (eds.), Edward Gibbon and Empire, Cambridge 1997.
[184] Sankar Muthu, Introduction, in: id. (ed.), Empire, pp. 1–6, here p. 6; Arndt Brendecke, Eine tiefe, frühe, neue Zeit. Anmerkungen zur *hidden agenda* der Frühneuzeitforschung, in: Andreas Höfele / Jan-Dirk Müller / Wulf Oesterreicher (eds.), Die Frühe Neuzeit. Revisionen einer Epoche, pp. 29–46; Benjamin Steiner, Nebenfolgen in der Geschichte. Eine historische Soziologie reflexiver Modernisierung, Berlin 2015, pp. 127ff.

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