



‘Learning by Doing: Notes about the Making of the Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History’,

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Pierre-Yves Saunier

Learning by Doing: Notes about the Making of the *Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*

Just as a famous character of French 17th century theater, Molière's Monsieur Jourdain, realized he had been speaking in prose when his private lecturer in rhetoric tried to teach him versification, I brutally discovered I had been doing transnational history without knowing it. I even remember the day. It was in the spring of 1998, just after receiving a press copy of Daniel Rodgers's *Atlantic Crossings* which I had smuggled from the publisher; the book's catalogue blurb had captured my attention the year before.¹ Rodgers' endnotes directed me towards a 1991 forum of the *American Historical Review* where Ian Tyrrell and Michael McGerr had crossed swords about the possibilities involved in approaching US history through the study of phenomena that stretched well beyond the domestic sphere.² In his article, Tyrrell made his proposals for "the possibilities of a transnational history". I have suffered from sub-disciplinary shell shock ever since.

Such readings allowed me to name the game I was playing, that is the kind of research project I had been developing for a couple of years, and I occasionally began to use the "transnational" tag to explain what I was doing as the result of adopting a "transnational perspective". Quite curiously, though, this encounter with what seemed to be my fate left me unable to articulate any pretension to reshape the field, herald a new paradigm or claim a new dawn was coming that would transform "history as we know it". Something had happened to destroy these pavlovian reflexes of historians and social scientists, despite their having been embedded in the history of our disciplines since they became elements within the research universities that grew up from the second half of the 19th century. I was numbed, unable to write the slash and burn manifestos and excommunications that would have been worthy of my ancestors when they turned their worship to social history, quantitative history, gender history or the linguistic turn with equal rage and blindness. I could not believe in the "next big thing" any more.

¹ D. T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings. Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge/Mass., 1998).

² I. Tyrrell, "American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History", *American Historical Review* 96, 4 (1991), 1031-1072.

After that ill-fated day, things were never the same. The more I shared my research or editorial projects with colleagues with a similar interest in circulations and connections across national limits in the modern age, the more I scoured libraries for literature, the worse my condition became.

Besides, it seems to have been a pandemic, when one looks at most of the different texts suggesting, promoting or pleading the transnational approach that have been published by fellow historians in recent years. From the early 1990s, when the term was used in the field of American history by colleagues like the Australian Ian Tyrrell or Prasenjit Duara and David Thelen, up to recent publications by European historians such as Kiran Patel or Sebastian Conrad, the differences of generation or place have not significantly affected this reticence.³ While they insist on the usefulness of an approach that emphasizes flows, which stretch across the material and symbolic limits that nation states established as they gained strength during the last two centuries, almost none of the protagonists of these discussions have claimed to be changing the paradigms. And this occurred, despite a very favourable *Zeitgeist* that has made globalization a buzzword during the last 30 years. While American Studies scholars proclaimed a transnational turn, and now that Peggy Levitt and Sanjeev Khagram have suggested that there is something like “Philosophical Transnationalism”, which “starts from the metaphysical assumption that social worlds and lives are inherently transnational”, historians still behave demurely.⁴

³ P. Duara, “Transnationalism and the Predicament of Sovereignty: China 1900–1945”, *American Historical Review*, 102, 4 (1997), 1030–1051; D. Thelen, ed., “The Nation and beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History: a Special Issue”, *The Journal of American History* 86, 3 (1999); K. K. Patel, “Nach der Nationalfixiertheit. Perspektiven einer transnationalen Geschichte“, *Öffentliche Vorlesungen der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin* 128 (2004); G. Budde, S. Conrad and O. Janz, eds., *Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien* (Göttingen, 2006).

⁴ S. F. Fishkin, «Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies – Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004”, *American Quarterly* 57, 1 (2005); P. Levitt and S.

Thus, when JMEH offered me free therapy, I thought this was an opportunity to face this strange individual and collective syndrome. To do so, I will travel through two stages: first, I shall offer some clues on how historians have missed the transnational turn, before explaining why we should relish it. In the second part, I will look with hindsight to an ongoing editorial project, the *Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (to be published in 2009) in order to make some proposals for the practical study of circulations and connections.

1. How historians have missed the transnational turn...

Historians' modesty should not be attributed altogether to a sudden increase of wisdom, or the coming of more peaceful academic ways. As the transnational turn has been proclaimed in several other fields of the humanities and social sciences, such late comers as historians cannot decently display the same rage. An awareness of the previous attempts to explore the past across national borders has also left its mark.

The virtues of reflexivity?

Credit and respect for past attempts to break with "methodological nationalism" have been acknowledged from the start by those historians who began to use the "transnational" label. In the *Journal of American History's* 1999 special issue, which contained historiographical pieces by Robin Kelley and Ian Tyrrell on the lineage of historical narratives that unfurled across borders,⁵ David Thelen acknowledged that the whole idea was not to suggest a new approach, but to recover and reuse inquiries, experiences and narratives that had been put forward by many historians during the 19th and 20th centuries. When one surveys current and past literature, this recovering of past lines of inquiry resonates loud and clear. The methodological nationalism that resulted from the ontologic relationship between the nation-state and history as a discipline was not an iron cage however, and many have been able

Khagram, "Constructing Transnational Studies", in *The Transnationalism Reader. Intersections and Innovations*, ed. P. Levitt and S. Khagram (London, 2007).

⁵ R. D. G. Kelley, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem': Black History's Global Vision 1883–1950", *The Journal of American History* 86, 3 (1999), 1045–1077.

to escape. Support came from even the most surprising corners, as with the French early modern historian, Pierre Chaunu. A staunch defender of French identity in his publisher's and journalist's garb, he issued some of the fiercest calls to burst out of the national framework when writing the history of early modern Europe.⁶ Research into medieval or early modern history that unfurled over regional or global frameworks has, indeed, been far from uncommon. Some are very famous: Fernand Braudel's *Méditerranée*,⁷ and Sanjay Subrahmanyam's publications on the "connected histories" of early modern Eurasia,⁸ are landmarks in their field. Comparative historians, beginning with Marc Bloch, likewise rattled the narrative of national exceptionalisms, and included the comparison of societies with actual close bonds in their cross-wires, though on a minor key. The field of world history, so unfamiliar to a graduate of French universities, also offers vibrant suggestions. From William McNeill's *Plague and People* to Jerry Bentley's explorations of cross-cultural encounters, or the current revival of "oceanic history", there has been a seam of world historians who, like Patrick Manning, have felt it was their main goal to write "the story of connections within the global community".⁹ It is just not possible to claim to have re-invented the wheel with such a lineage. Historians of the modern age, who are certainly more likely to attach their investigations to national frameworks, have also been keen to explore trails that have led them to stretch their inquiries far beyond the limits of a given country. Through my research on intermunicipal exchanges, I have become familiar with the work of the likes of Anthony Sutcliffe, who has explored the interactions between

⁶ P. Chaunu, *L'expansion européenne du XIII^e au XV^e siècle* (Paris, 1969).

⁷ F. Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme* (Paris, 1979).

⁸ S. Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes toward a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia", *Modern Asian Studies* 31, 3 (1997), 735–762.

⁹ W. H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York, 1976); J. H. Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-modern Times* (New York, 1993); P. Manning, *Navigating World History. Historians Create a Global Past* (New York, 2003). The late Andre Gunder Frank coined some vibrant appeals to world historians to take on this task in the late 1990s, which have been archived in the logs of the H-World discussion list.

German, British, French and US town planning and planners.¹⁰ Exploring literature about other fields has helped me to integrate such efforts into a wider landscape of scholarship. It is striking that some of the most vigorous efforts have come in fields that were not in the mainstream of the historical academic world: women's history, Afro-American history and labour history have been distinguished for decades by interest in the study of aspirations, organisations and designs that united across borders those searching for solutions to their oppression within the limits of the nation-state. As Robin Kelley points out in the aforementioned article, black history in the US had long had a "global vision" that matched the worldviews and projects of the militants of black liberation. The interest in connections and circulations across borders was pursued long before the interest in transnational aspects became popular among professional historians of the modern age.

Scouring past and current historical literature also makes it clear that a common interest in connections and circulations can be carried within different containers. Some are comfortable with existing bottles and insist on the wine they poured, like Patrick Manning, Jerry Bentley, Chris Bayly or Anthony Hopkins, who stick to "world history" to name their concern for cross cultural and global comparisons and connections.¹¹ Similarly, a number of historians consider that "international history" is an appropriate way to tag their interest, and Matthew Connelly and Adam McKeown are developing their new Columbia University Press series under this label. At the other end of the terminology line, scholars have coined new terms: Sanjay Subrahmanyam used the term "connected histories", Michael Werner and Bénédicte

¹⁰ A. Sutcliffe, *Towards the Planned City. Germany, Britain, the United States and France 1780–1914* (London, 1981). A sample of my own explorations in P.-Y. Saunier, "Sketches from the Urban Internationale. Voluntary Societies, International Organizations and US Foundations at the City's Bedside 1900–1960", *International Journal for Urban and Regional Research* 25, 2 (2001), 380–403, and "La toile municipale aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles : un panorama transnational vu d'Europe", *Urban History Review/Revue d'Histoire Urbaine*, XXXIV, 2 (2006), 163–176.

¹¹ C.A Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914. Global Connections and Comparisons* (London, 2004); A.G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (New York, 2002).

Zimmerman have sketched what an “histoire croisée” would be,¹² David Thelen and his US colleagues have popularized the term “transnational history” before it was vigorously taken up in Germany.¹³ Wolf Lepenies and his team of young researchers in Berlin endorsed Shalina Randeria’s call for “entangled histories”,¹⁴ Bruce Mazlish has defended the idea of a “new global history”¹⁵, while “shared histories” takes its cue from people studying the connections between the history of separate ethnic groups. Many of their users would not lose time in discussing their differences and imposing one above the other, as they feel they all point to a similar research direction. At the University of Leipzig, the different programs and activities developed by Mathias Middell and his colleagues attest that substance has won out over style, because all these labels are used almost interchangeably.¹⁶ The diversity of this landscape is another reminder that there would be scarce value in claiming that a new unified paradigm is coming.

This common mental landscape does not detract from the fact that those historians with a leaning towards the study of cross-border phenomena can have different aspirations and agendas. This is quite clear among those who have used the term “transnational” in recent years. For some, the whole project should de-center the nation-state as the major locus of historians’ interest. Such a project has been very clear for US historians who identified “American exceptionalism” as the main hurdle on the way to a better understanding of American history: Daniel Rodgers, David

¹² M. Werner and B. Zimmerman, „Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. Der Ansatz der *histoire croisée* und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen“, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002), S. 607–636.

¹³ See the issues 27 (2001) and 28 (2002) of *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*.

¹⁴ W. Lepenies, ed., *Entangled Histories and Negotiated Universals. Centers and Peripheries in a Changing World* (Frankfurt am Main, 2003).

¹⁵ B. Mazlish, *The New Global History* (New York–London, 2006).

¹⁶ A good starting point is the webpage of the Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Leipzig, http://www.uni-leipzig.de/zhs/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=114&Itemid=249&lang=en.

Thelen, and Thomas Bender have led such a charge in the last decade or so.¹⁷ Elsewhere, Australian historians Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake have taken similar roads, as they tried to break out of Australia as an isolated historiographical and historical concept.¹⁸ Prasenjit Duara was one of those who went well beyond these (paradoxically) national reasons to go transnational: the idea was to rescue history from the nation-state, to make up for the ideological miscegnations that resulted from this unfortunate marriage.¹⁹ For post-colonial historians, more generally, the transnational perspective was the key to opening the era of postnationalist history. Others, though they may have shared these different intellectual and political agendas, went transnational from a different cue: it might have been the search for the roots of a multicultural world they hankered after, or a hope for a narrative of cooperation, interchange and understanding that would break with the story of clashing nation-states and civilizations. For some, it was just the direction that their research pushed them to explore: when your research material commutes across borders, be it a commodity or a community, it seems logical to follow, despite the fact it makes you an “unfocused” historian in a profession that is still framed primarily by national specialization. As Donna Gabaccia has explained, for example, it was obvious that you needed to study migrant connections over five continents if you wanted to move away from studies of Italian immigrants (focused on the USA) or Italian emigrants (focused on Italy).²⁰ In studying Chinese migrants *across* places instead of focusing on their situation *in* one place, Madeline Hsu and Adam McKeown have been keen to mould their research framework onto the movements of their subjects, together with a growing number of 19th and 20th century migrations

¹⁷ The most recent by-products of this seam are T. Bender, *A Nation among Nations. America's Place in World History* (New York, 2006) and I. Tyrell, *Transnational Nation. United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* (New York, 2007).

¹⁸ A. Curthoys and M. Lake, *Connected Worlds. History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra, 2005).

¹⁹ P. Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago, 1995).

²⁰ D. Gabaccia and F. Iacovetta, eds., *Women, Gender and Transnational Lives. Italian Workers of the World* (Toronto, 2002).

scholars.²¹ Together with other students of mobile items, they followed the object between regions, cities, groups, and traditions, crossing national borders whenever this was necessary as did others who wanted to consider the cross border adaptations, rejections or impositions of technologies, philosophical concepts, or public policies, or to assess the consequences of travel on goods, people, capital, words and their impact throughout the social formations they intersected. For another group, it was an epistemological or methodological reason that put them on the transnational road. Michael Werner and Michel Espagne began their exploration of cultural transfers between France and Germany because they felt that neither national nor comparative histories could account for the way the cultural identity of the two countries had been shaped by the other.²² Yet other historians came to study what happened in-between or across countries because they explicitly wanted to capture phenomena whose range was regional, or even global. When Michael Geyer and Charles Bright considered perspectives for future research in 1995, they insisted that one of the tasks for historians was to narrate the world's global past, and not to be happy with the views that identified globalization as a recent phenomenon.²³ This brief list does not exhaust the possibilities, and these different reasons for going transnational sometimes coalesced, with results such as the rich historical work on borderlands and diasporas of recent years.²⁴ Such a variety of

²¹ M. Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and South China, 1882–1943* (Stanford, 2000); A. McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900–1936* (Chicago, 2001).

²² M. Espagne, *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands* (Paris, 1999).

²³ M. Geyer and C. Bright, "World History in a Global Age", *American Historical Review* 100, 4 (1995), 1034–1060.

²⁴ For a general view of diasporas studies, Ember M. and al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Diasporas. Immigrant and Refugee Cultures around the World* (New York–Boston, 2004). One example of borderland studies in S. Truett and E. Young, *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.–Mexico Borderlands History, American Encounters Global Interactions* (Durham, 2004).

trajectories has been momentous in preventing historians from adopting hard-boiled attitudes.

Of the importance of being late-comers

This felicitous state of mind was not always connected to an awareness that the transnational turn had already been proposed, several times, in other disciplines and fields.²⁵ Yet, the term transnational and its lexical family have had quite a track record in the humanities and social sciences since the second half of the 19th century, not to mention its fate in common language. Because it predates the famous “first” use by the American Randolph Bourne in 1916,²⁶ it is worth remembering that the German linguist Georg Curtius had the term without any quotation marks in his inaugural 1862 lecture at Leipzig University, where he insisted that all national languages were connected to families of languages that extended beyond contemporary national frameworks (“*Eine jede Sprache ist ihrer Grundlage nach etwas transnationales*” wrote Curtius²⁷). Random use followed in the academic world, the term conveying a sense of something which crossed national limits, with some significant uses in law and economics during the 1930s and 1940s, in cases when the national vessel was deemed unsatisfactory or altogether irrelevant. Three transnational turns have in fact been proposed in the last 50 years. The first time that the term was used to support a challenge to established paradigms was by Columbia University law and international relations professor, Philip Jessup, in 1956. Jessup’s suggestion was to handle “transnational situations” in courts with reference to a transnational law that would “include all law which regulates actions or events that transcend national frontiers”.²⁸ Jessup’s message was clear: there were more than relations between nations and states in current world interactions, and there

²⁵ The material presented in this section is taken from my ‘Transnational/transnationalism’ entry in A. Iriye and P.-Y. Saunier, eds., *Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (London-New York, forthcoming) and used with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

²⁶ R. Bourne, “Trans-National America”, *Atlantic Monthly* 118, July (1916), 86–97.

²⁷ G. Curtius, *Philologie und Sprachwissenschaft* (Leipzig, 1862).

²⁸ P. Jessup, *Transnational Law* (New Haven, 1956).

were problems that stretched across national borders and across the spatial and specialized categories of law. The second turn took place in the field of political science in the late 1960s, when a group of scholars defined their approach in terms of “transnational relations” as opposed to “international relations”.²⁹ Focusing deliberately on contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries beyond the control of central foreign policy organs of government, Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane urged international relations scholars to study movements of money, persons, objects and ideas where at least one actor was not an agent of a government or an intergovernmental organization, as a crucial element to the understanding of contemporary world politics. Transnationalism became “in” for the first time with this second transnational turn. The third transnational turn came on the wings of the “global” craze and developed on three prongs. Cultural studies and anthropology might have been the most visible place from which the renewed conceptualization and uses of “transnational” emerged, a qualification whose meaning was half-way between “multicultural” and “postnational”.³⁰ This prolific thread carried the term into a large section of the social sciences, where it was taken as a way to qualify, observe, assess or prophesize a new multi-polar and multicultural world in the making during the 1990s. Another field where our terms were revamped was the study of migration, with anthropologists and sociologists leading the march through their work on “new migrating populations” and their multiple identities that did not fit within near national and territorialized definitions. From sporadic uses in the 1970s and 1980s, “transnational”, “transnationalism” and “transmigrants” became a rallying cry in 1992 when Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton-Blanc stressed the remodelling of migrations by a global capitalist system.³¹ A third core of the transnational revival was focused on these

²⁹ R. O. Keohane and J. S. Nye, eds., “Transnational Relations and World Politics”, special issue of *International Organization* XXV, 3 (1971).

³⁰ A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimension of Globalization* (Minnesota-St. Paul 1996); P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge/Mass., 1993).

³¹ N. G. Schiller, L. Basch and C. Blanc-Szanton, eds., *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* (New York, 1992).

capital flows.³² There again, it was to capture the inner, mostly economic, soul of globalization for which interest in the “transnational” resurfaced to qualify new developments.

Although they did not always acknowledge one another, these three pulsing cores of the last turn shared a similar creed: a current globalization of capital, people or image flows was making nation-states irrelevant, and the social sciences had to account for this major change in the history of the world. This role teetered on the edge of prescription and prophecy, as many of the social scientists saw some social and political purchase in their use of the transnational family terms. There is, of course, some paradox in stressing that, on one hand, “transnational” was used to capture “globalization from below”, and chimed with diasporas in pages that celebrated the potential retained by the new transnational identities and communities to oppose both the hegemonic logic of capital and nation-states, while, on the other hand, it stressed “globalization from above” where capitalist corporations and elites were setting the pace. But this is likely what gave the term its very wide appeal. From these premises began the academic epic of the transnational family, under all its declensions (transnationals, transnationality, transnationalism), with a sharp rise in success after 1998. It seems to have reached its highest tide in our days, as witnessed by current attempts to create a subdiscipline of “transnational studies”. Quite interestingly, very few historians have taken part in the Transnational Studies Initiative led by Peggy Levitt and Sajeew Khagram at Harvard University and the University of Washington. Almost none, with the exception of James A. Field Jr and Prasenjit Duara, were present in the three turns of the last 50 years. Just as historians missed those, we are also missing the ultimate transnational move that which is today claiming to reshape the social sciences as we know them.³³

2. ... and why we should relish it

All these reasons have, or should have, conspired to inspire cautiousness in historians. Pushed by their empirical explorations, more or less aware of the versatility of the “transnational” term and of its abundant use in form and

³² L. Sklair, *Sociology of the Global System* (New York, 1991).

³³ Browsing the contents of Peggy Levitt and Sanjeev Khagram’s *Transnationalism Reader* is quite instructive from this point of view.

substance, taking their lesson from a long record of abuse of historiographic fashions, ashamed of being so desperately late when compared to other disciplines, amazed by the range of past experiments that could enrich their toolbox, or lucid about the ties that bind the discipline to the nation-state and its values, there were very few who issued a call to arms to break from former habits. There has, though, been a clear shift of interest in favour of the transnational perspective, as evident when browsing publishers' catalogues, tables of contents in historical journals, or perusing workshop and conference programs. Some even consider a transnational turn has actually been taken, as Micol Seigel did when he mused about "Comparative method after the transnational turn" in a *Radical History* article of 2005.³⁴

If this is correct, the turn was taken without squeaking tyres and people quibbling over the driver's seat. Those who have used the word and applied such a perspective to their own fields, instead suggested how much endorsing a transnational perspective was complementary to the canonical approaches we are used to developing into self-contained territorial units, ranging from the neighbourhood to the nation or the region. When they said they had something different to deliver they did not say it made the older stuff obsolete. This is why, ultimately, an increasing number of historians, young and old, have found a resonance in the transnational perspective. Mind you, we might have been quite lucky to have been spared the verbose frontline battles that have marked our disciplinary past (remember the linguistic turn or the quantitative craze?). The transnational approach was thus able to develop mostly aloof of straw fights, *ad hominem* attacks and institutional stakes that have marked such episodes, while not being too preoccupied with the definition of epistemological, methodological or writing canons, those usual guns of academic wars. A versatile and enthusiastic attitude developed instead, which has made the transnational approach attractive for researchers and students as it opened stimulating vistas and perspectives. The exciting feeling of free experimentation many researchers have felt has been the most formidable by-product of this "no logo" status.

³⁴ M. Seigel, "Beyond Compare: Comparative Method after the Transnational Turn", *Radical History Review* 91 (2005), 62–90.

Catholicism of definition and excitement about possibilities, two characteristics that Michael Geyer has identified recently as being salient in the field,³⁵ have also been the motto of an on-going publishing project, which will become the *Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*.³⁶ Briefly, there are three fronts on which this volume seeks to contribute. Firstly, the historicization of interdependency and interconnection phenomena between national, regional or cultural spheres in the modern age, by charting the development of projects, designs and structures that organized circulations and connections through and between them, in an uneven and unlinear way. This is what we call our contribution to historicizing globalization. Secondly, the advancement of knowledge on neglected or hazy regions of national and other self-contained territorial histories, by acknowledging non-domestic contributions to the design, discussion and implementation of patterns that are often seen as owing their features to national or local conditions. We felt that the detailed investigation of circulations and connections could enhance our understanding of these self-contained “stable” entities. Thirdly, the capture of trends and protagonists that stretch across national settings. Migrant communities, under their different guises, are a clear case, but other kinds of groups have often been left in the periphery of national or comparative frameworks, with the study of trajectories, concepts, activities and organisations that thrived as “worlds in-between” and “Worlds across” the nations: private philanthropists, international voluntary associations, and loose transnational idea networks. The specific added value of the volume should be to provide a first set of facts, data and interpretations as to the history, role and impact of these subjects that have often been sidelined by scholarship as not relevant to its territorially defined perspectives. It is left to readers and users to assess whether we have met these aims when the volume is published in early 2009. But there are already some lessons that have been taught to the editors, and which are worth the attention of *JMEH* readers.

About gaps...

³⁵ M. Geyer, Rezension von Budde / Conrad / Janz, *Transnationale Geschichte*, in: *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 11.10.2006, <<http://geschichte-transnational.clio-online.net/rezensionen/2006-4-032>>.

³⁶ More details at <http://www.palgrave.com/history/transnational/index.asp>.

It is not to appear modest that I shall begin by mentioning some of the underachievements of the dictionary. They simply loom large in editors' minds when they consider the results of any collective work. The most salient of these is the fact that countries, *nolens volens*, are still the units overwhelmingly presented by the contributors. It is on and in countries that flows originate and end, and it is according to national bearings that we label goods, people, ideas, and funds which are on the move. This was, indeed, part of our original brief because we wanted to know how circulations and connections interacted with nations in the modern age. This should not come as a surprise, however, given the strength of nations as "realized categories" that have framed the modern age through their conceptions of sovereignty (outwards) and of citizenship (inwards), with their respective arrays of rights and duties. Last but not least, the grip of "methodological nationalism" makes it difficult for all of us to invent questions, data or sources that escape what Nina Glick Schiller and Andreas Wimmer have called the "territorialization of the social science imagination and the reduction of the analytical focus to the boundaries of the nation-state".³⁷ History, together with the other disciplines of the humanities and social sciences (and maybe more than others), has been the handmaiden of the nation-state for too long for historians to bluntly disregard the national frame, but it is also true that we may not want, or need, to jettison the nation-state as irrelevant. In other words, we still need to bring our own understanding of how to "crack the casings", and find ways to place connections and circulations within territorial and non-territorial contexts: sub-national and supranational regions, cities, neighbourhoods and their embedded societies and institutions; professional, religious or functional formations; regulated institutions and groups that create their own realm between territories. History's purpose might not be to substitute a history of the nation-state with a history without or against the nation-state, but to find a way to study how nation-states and flows of all sorts are entangled components of the modern age.

Another significant gap we identified reveals one of the current limits of the scholarship about connections and circulations. The study of international non governmental organisations is in full bloom, and the dictionary includes a set of

³⁷ A. Wimmer and N. G. Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism and beyond: Nation-state Building, Migration and the Social Sciences", *Global Networks* 2, 4 (2002), 301-334.

entries under the heading of “groups and causes”, in order to map the movements that have been organized across borders in the last 150 years. As we tried to imagine what kind of entries we would include in the volume, it quickly became obvious that it was much easier to think of organizations and causes that claimed to be doing good. It was also much easier to identify existing scholarship and possible contributors to document these positive causes. Studies in these matters are still far away from providing fully fledged historical pictures, especially because there has been a tendency to work from conference proceedings and campaign material rather than from archival material that would document the life and work of organisations and networks.³⁸ Nevertheless there is a buoyant stream of historical research about human rights and human rights organizations, a lively community of research about the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, a long tradition of studies about African liberation or the anti-slavery movement and a famous thread of studies about the cross-national character of the different feminist waves. Emancipation has long been “today’s special” on the transnational menu. It is much more difficult to identify first-hand scholarship with chronological depth that deals with the “mean and evil”. However, there have been such things as cross border organizations of eugenicists who gathered momentum from their congresses and organizations, networks of racist thinkers and administrators who exchanged segregation recipes, cross-national linkages between opponents of Catholicism who set up smearing conference tours and arranged for book translations, and a fabric of love and hate links between extreme national right-wing movements. Certainly, there are some counter examples: we are well aware of the anti-Semitic connections that propelled the global distribution of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* during the late nineteenth century, and some of the most virulent anti-communists have also been among the most enduring scholars of communist circulations. Nevertheless the

³⁸ Despite the fact they are among of my favourite books on the subject, the following volumes are not based on historical investigations of organisation’s records or private correspondence of their members: J. Boli and M. Thomas, eds., *Constructing World Culture. International Nongovernmental Organizations since 1875* (Stanford, 1999); M. E. Keck and K. Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders. Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, 1998).

“prejudice against evil” is the backbone of the study of “international civil society”. More historians have paid scholarly attention to the travels of democracy than to the open and underground ties between dictatorships; to the flows of relief rather than to those of corruption; to diplomatic relations over covert operations and intelligence, to vaccination and public health achievements rather than to the enduring odyssey of diseases; to peace movements above the arms trade and trafficking circuits, or to philanthropy’s achievements instead of conspiracy theories. At least at first sight, the narrative of global evil is gladly left to political scientists or sociologists, while we historians tell the tale of transnational do-gooding, even if sometimes with a vengeance. There are certainly many rationales for such leanings, but the most important one here might be the positive moral value that we tend to give to connections and circulations, not the least because historians and other social scientists who have chosen to work in-between nations have often been pushed by a rejection of jingoism and nationalism, by a dose of activism connected to the cause they are studying, or by a belief in multilateralism, mutual understanding and peaceful settlement of conflict. Studying cross-cultural connections and transnational circulations has often been a token of universalism, a contribution one hopes to make to a better world. While mainstream historians stuck to the national framework and its comfortable institutionalized symbolic and material pay-offs, those who dared venture out found their remuneration in the belief they were working for the common good of mankind. The downside was to tunnel historical research into limited territories, as it has established an implicit assimilation between the national and the bad, and the trans/inter/supranational and the good. We need to break the syllogistic knot that still binds us: history teaches lessons/national histories teach bad lessons/history beyond the nation should teach good lessons. Some ground has already been covered from recent shifts in the lay world and in academia: as postcolonial studies focused their fire onto the discourse of European universalism, or as anti-globalization movements have argued about the darkest sides of integration and interconnectedness, new possibilities have opened. Now that we are trying to develop a more complete picture of circulations and connections in the modern age, there is a need to explore them in all their aspects, lest we simply deliver a new gospel: the transnational perspective should not become the background narrative for positive or negative assessments of globalization, the handmaiden for a post national world.

...and bridges

At this stage, my publisher may want to hang me from a pole above the tracks at King's Cross Station. And readers may wonder whether it will be worth flicking through a volume with as many flaws as this forthcoming dictionary. The fact that I will not delve into its qualities should reassure both parties: we have learned so much from this volume as editors (that is, the only persons who will read it from A to Z) that it would take too long to list the peaks that balance the troughs. Instead, I want to insist on bridges that might contribute to spanning these troughs. These have emerged from personal first-hand research, as well as from insights from existing scholarship, and last, but not least, from the many insights of *Dictionary* contributors. The latter would certainly object to my hijacking their pieces, but the mix of their input leads me to propose two "lessons" among those I have been learning since the Dictionary began to come together. No final briefs by any means, they should be read as questions more than answers.

Lesson one is a feeling of uneasiness that has only grown stronger in recent years: the more you focus your attention on flows and movements that cross national borders, connecting and questioning several types of human systems, the less you are satisfied with a scalar conception that suggests human societies, politics, activities and non-human factors are organized into levels that go from the local to the global, through the national, with each one fitted into the other according to some pyramidal structure. Rather, following migrants in their trajectories sets forth the idea of simultaneously belonging to different levels and scales. Studying the organization of scientific communities belies the notion that the "national" commands the "international" or vice versa; considering the social and intellectual networks of activists places them into synchronic wider worlds that do not adhere to the idea of a gradual "broadening" of their horizons that would have allowed them to embrace successively their community, their city, their region, their country and only later the welfare of humankind. Examining a specific place shows how much its local characteristics are imbued with inputs and outputs that are commonly attributed to other scales; considering specific actors underlines the existence of projects that fan out through different levels rather than being implemented on one by another. By and large, circulations and connections cut through what we are used to thinking of as embedded scales, and stress the idea of relation over the idea of hierarchy as the key characteristic of the relationship between those levels. Such empirical findings have indeed rattled my own scalar framework, all the more that we historians have produced a set of tools that have conspired to consolidate such a framework. We have a yardstick that matches the quality of our research subjects with an extra

bonus given to one of these scales: local history is parochial, national history is the key factor, while international or global developments are the big picture. We try to assess how individual and social life espouses bottom-up or top-down processes, we tell the story of how social movements, ideas, and goods trickle up and down the levels. At best, we would look at how social or cultural activities on one of scales have reacted to one another, or pay attention to interscalar contestation (e. g when the “local” defies or resists the “global”). We also have an arsenal of metaphors at hand: we “zoom in” to get “closer”, to approach the “local”, the best approximation of what is “particular” and “real” ; we “change the focal length” to see different things in the background or foreground; we “zoom out” to get the “macro” and more “general” aspects, moving to the “national” or “regional” level. We rely on an in/out or down here/up there perspective that builds on the double postulate that the basic framework of our research is a bounded territory that is placed on one of these nested scales. It is quite likely that we face here a far reaching aspect of methodological nationalism, as the idea of nested scales and the values that are attached to each of them seems to have been produced in the context of the long acquaintance between the nation-state and history as a discipline, profession and system of knowledge. If we follow Charles Maier’s evidence, this set of metaphors and frames was indeed a by-product of the “Age of territoriality” that crystallized from about the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁹ The hierarchy between the local and the national, for example, seems to be the result of the combination of the project of “bordered political space”, the attempt to “fill the nation’s space” with ordered and hierarchized infrastructural, administrative networks, and the emphasis on centrality. This is, indeed, an historical incentive for all of us to participate, in one way or another, in the writing of a “history of space” as conceived by Henri Lefebvre.⁴⁰ But the combination of Maier’s evidence with the Dictionary’s insight

³⁹ C. S. Maier, “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History. Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era”, *The American Historical Review* 105, 3 (2000), 807–831.

⁴⁰ One of Lefebvre’s suggestion was to pay attention to the way in which spatial schemas structure our understanding, our sense of analysis and our actions (on economic, cultural, social or political phenomena) through notions like place, limit, crossroad or through opposing pairs (and so schemas of

casts territoriality in a different light. It is not so much, then, a way to characterize the modern age as a native framework which acts to veil some of its aspects. For the whole set of spatial metaphors, order and processes is put under pressure when one chooses to heed the connections and circulations that crack these well ordered frameworks. From such empirical grounds, one mingles with other researchers who have recently felt a similar uneasiness with scalar thinking. Quite interestingly, a number of these have reached this position as they tried to make sense of the pressure that the most recent changes in the global economy were exerting on our notions of space and place. Saskia Sassen and Ash Amin are among these. They often began their research by questioning how the local and the global interacted on one another, trying to see how scales were contested and unsettled by the reorganization of production and consumption within the last few decades. For this reason, together with a number of scholars of the “global city”, they initially identified the idea of “glocalisation” as a useful analytical construct to assess such interscalar phenomena. But, more recently, they have pointed to the overall limits of scalar analytics, insisting that it is not possible to capture the processes, flows and projects that cut across scales and levels if we do not try to break the code that has attributed specific positions and characteristics to each of these levels (the “territoriality code” that was Maier’s concern, in other words). While they are keen not to jettison scalar analytics, which they righteously deem relevant for specific questions, they nevertheless call for a multiscalar approach that makes it possible to debunk the instantiation of each scale into the others (Sassen), or they argue for a relational perspective on the spatiality of globalization, which draws on Actor Network Theory to insist that there is no “shift” between different scales or levels when you follow the network (Amin).⁴¹ The *Dictionary* project has not been able to crack the code that has established the conception of nested scaling and the respective differentiated properties and characteristics attached to each of these scales. But from the start it elicited the position that the transnational was not

reasoning) like up/down, left/right or centre/periphery. Maier’s age of territoriality seems to have been a milestone in this process. H. Lefebvre, *La Production de l’espace* (Paris, 1974).

⁴¹ S. Sassen, “Globalization or Denationalization”, *Review of International Political Economy* 10, 2 (2003), 1–22; A. Amin, “Spatialities of Globalization”, *Environment and Planning A* 34 (2002), 385–399.

another scale located near the top of the nested scales, but rather a foray that cut through levels and partly shattered their conception as distinct social entities.

Accordingly, the transnational perspective allows a direct window onto the circulations and connections whose actors and structures seize these different social spheres, simultaneously, or regardless of, their 'nested' order. We believe that the content of the final volume brings a lot of grain to grind for further development in this direction.

Lesson two deals with the tools that might be used to intensify this relational and multiscalar historical analysis based on flows and connections. The "world of global flows" has been a stylistic trope of globalization discourse, and some, like Appadurai have used it extensively, unwillingly contributing to the temptations for the imagination to see flows and fluxes floating freely everywhere. But many scholars, including Appadurai, have also been trying to search for the order underlying these flows and fluxes.⁴² Several of the contributors to this volume, with very different disciplinary or research backgrounds, have come up with a specific approach to make sense of connections and circulations they have been researching and recording over the last 150 years. The proposal is to focus on the structural but dynamic specific orders that organize, direct and empower flows and networks of goods, people, ideas, projects or capital. This does not boil down to the identification of meta-processes such as capitalism, imperialism or the rise of a few competing ideologies or religions; the proposal is also much more modest than a suggestion to rethink, refine and expand world-system theory out of the economic realm. Beyond the specific experiences that are encapsulated in the *Dictionary* entries, though, there is a growing feeling that the study of circulatory regimes or configurations, and of their connection over time, is a promising way to capture the historical developments of circulations in time, space, style and substance. I am not sure that what we mean by "regimes" or "configurations" has been inspired by the definitions of these two notions respectively by John Ruggie and Stephen Krasner in international relations theory or Norbert Elias in sociology, but this is not the right place (nor the right author) to linger on this lexical question. What we are trying to identify are sets of relations between collective and individual actors with durable effects on the orientation, extent and impact of circulations and connections. If I

⁴² F. Cooper, "What is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian's Perspective", *African Affairs* 100 (2001), 189–213.

was pushed against a wall, I would suggest a circulatory regime or configuration might be identified by the following characteristics:

- The existence of individual and collective actors who invest time, energy and resources (social, economic, or cultural) in the establishment, maintenance and use of connections made to circulate specific items beyond the limits of their polities and societies.
- The formation of intertextual (reading, translation, quotation) and interactional (visits, correspondence, formal and informal organisations) communities, which can be used as resources for action by every member of these communities.
- The establishment of long-term and relatively stable patterns of interactions between mutually identified protagonists that take part in connections and circulations (these interactions pertaining to a range of possibilities, i.e competition or cooperation).
- The agreement of these protagonists and actors on a common language that is the basis of agreements, disagreements, misunderstandings around notions, categories, processes, or worldviews that are discussed and disputed among themselves.
- The purposive development of projects, trajectories, aspirations and institutions able to establish connections, nourish circulations and orient them in specific directions.
- The production of a differentiated and uneven landscape where the value of a subject (be it a place, an institution, an individual or collective protagonist and actor) is tied with its level of integration and place into the circulatory regime and configuration.

Establishing the circulatory configurations that have succeeded, vied or cohabited in time and space would allow us to assess the orders that have presided over the timing and spatial extension of connections and circulations, and to map the changing intensity, contractions and dilatations of the latter. It would also allow us to recover the projects explicitly designed for establishing such orders, with their protagonists, their impact and their operational mechanisms (including the enduring structural effects of the latter). Again, such a concern will be familiar to our colleagues in sociology or anthropology, who have tried to make sense of the problems they had to deal with when trying to grasp people, artefacts, projects or ideas that stretched across national borders. According to their affiliations, some have used the term “system”, while others choose “social field” to name their

game.⁴³ While we would certainly all insist on the specific value and reach of these different proposals, I do nevertheless feel that they have all been triggered by a common search for order and power in the “space of flows” and a desire to recover the degree of autonomy of circulations and connections. This is a compelling program for future teaching and research.

In addition to these two lessons, I also received confirmation of two things. The first is that we are now able to study the travails of the universal, and to write a history of the universal that does not overlap with what was called universal history. The very idea that universals “existed” was simultaneously or successively heralded, rejected and smeared throughout times by a long line of priests, visionaries, political leaders, philosophers or, more recently, social scientists. Some thought their mission was to implement these universals, other deemed it necessary to undermine their validity. Many of the *Dictionary*’s contributions, together with other recent work, suggest a different approach to those of these prescriptive and performative feasts.⁴⁴ That is the study of how universals are made, unmade, unfurled as programmes, and played out as resources by a range of actors with conflicting purposes. The second is that there are indeed many strategies to enact a transnational perspective, and that it offers opportunities for it not to be the exclusive province of those with privileged access to a specific type of sources (e. g. of institutions and organisations with a transnational track record), a lavish library or a concern for “global” patterns. Historians of every walk of life are able to make something out of it when it can be useful to address their own questions and constraints. It does not mean that this is a brave new world of scholarship: current

⁴³ See L. Pries, *New Transnational Social Spaces: International Migration and Transnational Companies in the Early 21st Century* (London, 2001); N. G. Schiller, “Transnational Social Fields and Imperialism. Bringing a Theory of Power to Transnational Studies”, *Anthropological Theory* 5, 4 (2005), 439–461; *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, special issue “Constructions européennes. Concurrences nationales et stratégies transnationales”, 166–167, 2007.

⁴⁴ In addition to the collection edited by Lepenies, see also A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Global History. Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (New York–Basingstoke, 2006).

debates most often take place as conversations that are limited by regional and linguistic factors that have to do with the asymmetrical relationships within the scholarly world,⁴⁵ and the *Dictionary* itself is embedded into such a condition. We do not feel that we have lived up to our own expectations for locating and recruiting contributors beyond the so called “Global North”, imagining entries from a plurality of perspectives, or incorporating scholarship written in Chinese, Arabic, Italian or any other language that is not the current lingua franca of humanities and social sciences, English. There is still some way to go if we want to write “Transnational history, transnationally”, to paraphrase the title of a conference organised by Sven Beckert and Dominic Sachsenmeier in February 2008.⁴⁶ Still, the conversation is expanding.

3. Epilogue: so what about European history?

What can be the interest of all this for historians of modern Europe? First, it is clear that these premises and considerations will sound familiar to all who have been trying to develop a “relational” approach that stresses the place of Europe in a larger fabric of connections and circulations, as a contribution to reformulating the agenda of specific subfields like the history of imperial societies, as Christophe Charle’s recent *JMEH* forum highlighted.⁴⁷ Such concerns also echo the proposals of a number of historians and non historians who have suggested what a transnational perspective could bring to the history of modern Europe. Some, indeed, wrote

⁴⁵ One example with P.-Y. Saunier, “A Texans' Universe? First Drafts of a History of Universals”, *New Global Studies* 2, 1 (2008), <http://www.bepress.com/ngs/vol2/iss1/art8>.

⁴⁶ Global history, globally , 8–9 February 2008, Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and the Duke Center for International Affairs, http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/conferences/08_global_history/papers, accessed on February 28 2008.

⁴⁷ C. Charle, “‘les sociétés impériales’ d’hier à aujourd’hui. Quelques propositions pour repenser l’histoire du second XX^e siècle en Europe”, *Journal of Modern European History* 3, 2 (2005), 123–139.

entries for the *Dictionary*, and this conclusion draws extensively on their publications and research projects.

Starting with circulations and connections offers several points of view on European history. On the one hand, while we “follow the object”, we do not stop at the limits of a given spatial construction: connections and circulations define a (changing) space that may have no propinquity with what we call Europe, but which gives access to different instantiations of Europe during the modern age. On the other hand, placing the emphasis on flows and their order stresses the fact that what we call Europe is embedded within connections and circulations, which tie it to other regions and other logics, this otherness manifested in connections and circulations being a pivotal factor in the different definitions of Europe. It is also clear that this relational perspective should deal the last blow to the researching and writing of European history based on the juxtaposition of the history of the different countries that are included in the European Union (a frame whose obsolescence is made even clearer by the successive waves of new members). Last but not least, it might be that we are presented here with the opportunity to study Europe for what it has mostly been: the result of connected circulatory regimes, which have eventually crystallized into a construct that has received a growing attention in the modern age, where it became the object of dedicated political and cultural engineering. The adoption of a transnational perspective on European history, and the concern for connections and circulations, was certainly advocated, albeit in a different wording, many decades ago. The wheel is not being re-invented, then, but more people are now seriously trying to use it, and develop primary research projects based on old and new sources. Readers of *JMEH* are certainly familiar with the historical approach to cultural transfers developed by a group of French and German researchers led by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner on the franco-german intellectual interaction (a theme Allan Mitchell or Claude Digeon have explored on their own⁴⁸), the explorations led by Johannes Paulmann into the extent and content of internationalism, or the forays by Christophe Charle into cultural connections and

⁴⁸ C. Digeon, *La crise allemande de la pensée française 1870–1914* (Paris, 1959). The last episode of Allan Mitchell investigations is *A Stranger in Paris. Germany's Role in Republican France, 1870–1940* (New York, 2006).

circulations.⁴⁹ Other researchers have been pushing an agenda that extends beyond the history of cultural products and polarities.

Two strands seem to me to be of special value. The first one has been pursued by historians of technology. Since 2000, more than 150 scholars have contributed to the “Tensions of Europe” project, managed by our Dutch colleagues Ruth Oldenziel and Johan Schot. This has now evolved into a new research program, “Inventing Europe”⁵⁰, which is focused on the history of infrastructure and knowledge networks, with an additional stress on the appropriation of technologies by their users. The result of this collective endeavor is already significant. It has shown how technical communities, social groups, and citizens have contested, projected, performed, and reproduced “Europe”, and has placed these operations within the context of linkages, circulations and appropriations.⁵¹ “Tensions of Europe” researchers have not started from a geographical or institutional definition of Europe, but have followed the technological connections and circulations created by the polities, societies and communities they were themselves linking and delinking.

⁴⁹ J. Paulmann, “Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer. Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts”, *Historische Zeitschrift* 267 (1998), 649–685; M. Geyer and J. Paulmann, *The Mechanics of Internationalism. Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (Oxford, 2001); C. Charle and D. Roche, eds., *Capitales culturelles, capitales symboliques: Paris et les expériences européennes, XVIIIe–XXe siècles* (Paris, 2002); C. Charle, J. Schriewer, and J. Wenger, eds., *Transnational Intellectual Networks* (Frankfurt am Main–New York, 2004).

⁵⁰ “Inventing Europe: Technology and the Making of Europe, 1850 to the Present”, <http://www.esf.org/index.php?id=386>.

⁵¹ J. Schot, T. Misa and R. Oldenziel, eds., “Tensions of Europe. The Role of Technology in the Making of Europe”, special issue of *History and Technology* 21, 1 (2005); E. van der Vleuten et al., “Europe’s System Builders. The Contested Shaping of Transnational Road, Electricity and Rail Networks”, *Contemporary European History* 16, 3 (2007), 321–347.

They are increasingly keen to consider interactions with the world beyond the European continent, in particular exchanges with the colonies and former colonies. The result is certainly to be read as a contribution to modern European history, but it does not yield to the temptation to look for the origins of Europe within technological infrastructures, nor to the celebration of “big projects” as quintessentially European. While the researchers involved clearly want to write the story of what they call “Europe’s hidden integration”, they are also clear that they see this integration as contested and they are as much concerned with integration as with fragmentation.

Working from the political platform, other historians have demonstrated what a transnational perspective focused on connections and circulations could bring to the political history of Europe. Andrea Mammone has been exploring the connections and circulations of ideas, tactics, personnel and material between the French and Italian extreme right after 1968, and is now expanding his interest into earlier decades and across a bigger number of right-wing national movements.⁵² Wolfram Kaiser has already followed that path, with his research on the impact of the transnational Christian democracy networks on the “great bargains” that directed the construction of the first European institutions.⁵³ From there, he also participates in the definition of a new research agenda for the history of European integration. The purpose is to break with the predominant institutional or idealistic historical approaches to European integration, with their focus on national histories. One of the tools he puts forward to accomplish such a mission is the study of formal and informal networks of political parties, interest groups, policy experts, journalists and other actors who actively participated in the multiscalar circulation of ideas, interests, rules and policies during the early years of European construction. The result is a renewed history of European integration that springs from intensive and

⁵² A. Mammone, “The Transnational Reaction to 1968: Neo-Fascist Fronts and Political Cultures in France and Italy”, *Contemporary European History* 17, 2 (2008).

⁵³ W. Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge, 2007); W. Kaiser, B. Leucht and M. Rasmussen, eds., *The History of the European Union. Origins of a Supra- and Transnational Polity* (London, 2008).

painstaking primary research and resists the temptation of sticking to big names, big ideas, big processes, big theories. This is quite consistent with much inventive scholarship about the history of the European Union that has emerged in the social sciences, from the investigations of Antoine Vauchez into the social role of jurists within European integration to the prosopographic investigations of Didier Georgakakis and Marine de Lassalle on European higher civil servants, or the ongoing projects by Klaus Kiran Patel about European social policies.⁵⁴ All these have been thrusting the wedge of connections and circulations into the institutional core of the European institutions, and are now exerting a gentle but firm pressure on it with promising results.

These two seams of research are ultimately offering the opportunity to provincialize Europe for European historians themselves, most notably because they hold the promise to break the spell of the hypnotic twin sisters that have oriented the writing of the history of modern Europe: “European integration” and “European civilization”. Studying the connections and circulations that have ceaselessly made and unmade different Europes may offer the best chance to break with the “tunnel effect” that has constrained historians of modern Europe to work in teleological or counter-teleological ways to strengthen or undermine these big narratives. Moreover, the price will not be to jettison the study of European integration or European civilization, as the story of these can indeed be re-invigorated by the transnational perspective, as suggested above. In other words, there are reasonable chances that it can help to write the kind of European history that Stuart Woolf and other historians have been longing for.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ A. Vauchez, “Une elite d’intermédiaires. Naissance d’un capital juridique européen (1950–1970)”, *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 166–167, mars (2007), 54–65; D. Georgakakis and M. de Lasalle, “Genèse et structure d’un capital institutionnel européen. Les très hauts fonctionnaires de la Commission européenne”, *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 166–167, mars (2007), 38–53.

⁵⁵ S. Woolf, “Europe and its Historians”, *Contemporary European History* 12, 3 (2003), 323–337.

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ABSTRACTS

Un des aspects les plus intrigants du diagnostic actuel sur la nécessité d'un 'tournant transnational' en sciences sociales est qu'il omet la récurrence de ce dernier. A partir d'un bref rappel historiographique et d'une exploration de la trajectoire des mots du transnational, cet article offre des pistes pour saisir quelques unes des raisons qui ont réfréné l'ardeur des historiens à proclamer qu'une nouvelle aube est arrivée. La recherche historique sur ce qui traverse les différentes sociétés et communautés humaines n'a pas commencé dans les années 1990, et nous le savons tous. Cependant, nous savons aussi que l'adoption d'une perspective transnationale, par exemple pour ce qui concerne l'histoire des 150 dernières années, peut nous apprendre des choses. Pas seulement en termes de connaissance, mais aussi en termes de méthodes ou en ce qui concerne nos cadres d'entendements. En partant de l'expérience du *Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, à paraître en 2009, on envisage ici quelques uns des problèmes et des possibilités qui résultent de l'adoption d'une perspective transnationale. Il nous reste par exemple beaucoup à faire pour remédier à la tension entre le besoin de se détacher d'une approche stato-centrée et la nécessité de faire une histoire avec et non contre ou sans les nations, ou encore pour aborder de front l'histoire du 'mal global'. Deux 'leçons' de l'expérience du *Dictionary* sont par ailleurs examinées plus en détail: l'une au sujet de notre conception scalaire de l'histoire, ordonnant les importances et les valeurs des sujets et des processus selon une hiérarchie emboîtée allant du local au global, l'autre pour identifier les ordres dynamiques et structurants des flux transnationaux. La conclusion tente de mettre ces possibilités au service de l'écriture de l'histoire européenne, en écho avec des contributions récentes sur le terrain de l'histoire des technologies ou de l'intégration européenne.