Historians are at last beginning to interest themselves in the subject of globalization. This was not the case even a few years ago, when I published *Globalization in World History* in 2001. Objectively, the reasons for studying the question were already fully formed: globalization was clearly upon us, whether in the shape of massive financial movements or in the guise of universal pop music. Moreover, social scientists had generated a huge literature from the early 1990s seeking not only to explain globalization but also to date its origins. All of this bypassed the historical profession. Institutional rigidities ensured that attention continued to be focused on the study of national history; postmodernism, which was still thought to be at the cutting edge of the subject, had shifted interest away from ‘structural history’ and the ‘totalizing project’; claims for novelty imported from the other social sciences were received with traditional scepticism among historians. Disengagement ended with Nine Eleven, which struck the United States in every sense — material, psychological and academic. Since the USA is the academic powerhouse of the world, where it leads we, the rest, follow.

The consequence has been the appearance in the last two or three years of an increasing number of books, written by historians, containing the word ‘globalization’ in their titles. However, if my sample is accurate, almost none of these show any familiarity with the social science literature on globalization, and a large proportion do not even discuss the concept. At this stage, we have the marketing of the term but not yet a genuine commitment to the subject. It is therefore a pleasure to welcome a book edited by two of the pioneers of the subject, Bruce Mazlish and Akira Iriye, whose jointly-taught course on the history of globalization at MIT and Harvard is one of the first, if not the first, of its kind. Mazlish has long been an advocate of global history (an approach that seeks to overcome the difficulties associated with the study of world history); Iriye’s well-established and well-known interests in international history have developed in more recent years into studies of globalization that are clearly based on, and equally clearly contribute to, the social science literature on the subject.

The present book is prefaced by a general introduction followed by twenty-eight essays, which are divided into fourteen sections, each with its own mini-introduction. The sections cover the main themes in the literature, ranging from the information revolution to terrorism, and including transnational corporations, migrations, consumerism, the environment, human rights, non-governmental organizations, internationalism (which includes an essay on the nation state), global culture, and the globalization of disease. All the essays are extracts from a variety of published studies, so keen readers will need to go back to the original source for the authoritative version. However, the extracts are substantial and coherent as they stand, and the editors judged, correctly, that this strategy would enable them to cover a much wider range of topics than would otherwise be the case. Only a small proportion of the essays are written by historians, headed by Mazlish and Iriye themselves, but it is impossible at present to produce a book on the subjects covered here without drawing heavily on other scholars because so few historians are as yet familiar with
the literature. In any case, the main task at this early stage in the historiography of the subject is to introduce historians to the social science literature so that they are better able to explore the term rather than merely gesture in its direction.

This reader will be a valuable aid to historians who are keen to teach courses on the history of globalization but realize that they do not have the material they need. The extracts are accessible as well as important and ought to reassure historians of a nervous disposition that they can not only master the subject but contribute to it as well. Moreover, since the study of globalization spans all disciplines, there are leads here for historians of every kind, whether their interests lie in economic or cultural branches of the subject or at points in between. The book will certainly point historians in the right direction and help greatly in making the subject more widely taught in universities and colleges. It is hard to think of a more important or rewarding theme for the next generation of historians, and indeed citizens of the world, in a century that has already delivered dramatic evidence that we must learn to live together because we can no longer live apart.

Britannia’s Empire: Making a British World
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DOI:10.1017/S174002280600009X

Elegantly and entertainingly written, this book is a highly accomplished chronological overview of the rise and fall of the British imperial system over the past five centuries. It should be especially recommended as a subtle and nuanced companion, and counterpoise, to Niall Ferguson’s, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, London: Allen Lane, 2003. Ferguson has famously argued that the British empire was the progenitor of contemporary globalization. Nasson agrees that the British leviathan may have ‘done more than any other empire to bring the world together’ (p. 205). In the concluding chapter he highlights, for example, the legacies and major impacts of capitalist economic development, the creation of a major world language, and institutional transfers from medicine to the rule of law to Anglicanism.

At the same time, however, Nasson’s synthesis reminds us of the limits of British imperialism, and that frequently the largest empire that the world has ever known acted more as a force for ‘localization’, particularly in Africa and Asia. Hence, England’s ‘colonies’ in seventeenth-century West Africa were restricted to ‘shuffling, coastal toehold[s]’ (p. 28); the East India Company in eighteenth-century India ‘pos[ed] not so much as a London commercial operation but as an integral Indian ruling power’, with the British ‘more than content to ape the society over which they were slowly extending their dominion’ (pp. 64–5); while, in attempting to preserve apparently idyllic peasant societies in nineteenth-century India or Malaya, ‘the Victorian civilising mission was not improvement but conservation’ (p. 118). This lack of impact derived partially from a lack of resources—as late as the Second World War, there were barely one thousand expatriate administrative officers in British tropical Africa, ‘fewer than the current complement of Scandinavian aid workers in the same region of independent countries’ (p. 11). As such, Afro-Asian societies were not ‘helpless victims or dupe of imperialist oppression…. Everywhere, long-term colonial rule was insupportable without the consent and complicity of African and Asian collaborators’ (p. 206). Moreover, when the British attempted to manage decolonization after 1945, their carefully planned federations in central Africa, the West Indies and Southeast Asia crashed on the rocks of territorial parochialisms, while, even within specific colonies and protectorates as small as the Gold Coast/Ghana, ‘anti-British nationalisms themselves were not the product of single visions’ (p. 179). Indeed, the very ‘looseness’ of the imperial grip was perhaps its very success: ‘[I]t was the fine balance of a lax yet well-run empire of the middle ground that had enabled the British to maintain the innumerable cushy benefits of global power, while ducking its crushing burdens. Skilled in the arts of adaptation, adjustment and compromise, it was also no great surprise, then, that the British were able to relinquish their empire relatively calmly’ (p. 189).
World History as a new field in historiography has quite unique origins. Deborah Smith Johnston in ‘World History Education’ narrates the field’s beginnings. World History was developed in the United States after the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Unfortunately, the new curriculum was a version of the old Western Civilization with the addition of a ‘more or less historical tour of the “non-West”’ (p. 258). Following a meeting of the American Historical Association and the US Air Force in 1982, the World History Association was formed. In high schools an AP (Advanced Placement) World History course and a national exam were established and World History classes are now being taught in colleges and universities. The new field has found serious obstacles in the educational system and in the intellectual domain. The theoretical framework of the new history implies moving from regions or nation states to a worldwide perspective. The ‘process-driven’ World History differs in method from the civilization or area-studies approach and moves from an emphasis on the accumulation of facts to an awareness of overarching concepts. (p. 273).

In spite of its universal claims World History has found few followers worldwide: ‘Outside the US, it is interesting to note how political influence has steered schools away from world history and towards national history’ (p. 260). This problematic landscape of an emerging new historiography makes opportune the present volume. The introduction of Hughes-Warrington indicates that in world history the explicit nature of the ‘omissions and inclusions’ present in all historiography makes intellectual assumptions more evident (p. 10). A serious fault is pointed out in Judith P. Zinsser’s essay. Zinsser—a former president of the World History Association—remarks that world historians neglect ‘women’s varied past and […] the gendered reality of both sexes’ lives’ (p. 210). Bruce Mazlish’s article discusses the terminology and precedents of the world history field and Patrick Manning reflects about the relations between the genres of historical writing. David Christian criticizes the tendency to forget nomads or prehistorical peoples and notes that ‘to do world history, you have to learn to move through multiple scales in both time and space’ (p. 82). Donald Hughes documents the growth of ecological historiography, indicating that environmental history is not another field of history, rather ‘an interpretative tool that stands ready for use by all historians’ (p. 250).

In his chronological survey of ‘ancient and modern’ world histories, Craig Benjamin is quite pessimistic in his assessment of the field: ‘Mainstream world history writing has settled for a conservative, traditional and anthropocentric set of assumptions,’ granting that ‘world and universal historians have been responsible for a dramatic extension of our conception of the timescales of human history’ (p. 106). Echoing Hayden White, Marnie Hughes-Warrington, in ‘Readers, Responses and Popular Culture’, explores the narrative variations of world histories and their intellectual assumptions. Michael Lang shows the conflicts between world history and deconstruction, concluding: ‘We cannot kick away the ladder. We can critically historicize the operations of history’ (p. 184). Ricardo Duchesne ends his summary of current works on world history with this arguable statement: ‘Affirming the uniqueness of Western civilization does not imply affirming its isolation but its greater interactions with different cultures of the world’ (p.160).

The absence of important names in the field makes the current volume somewhat short of its potential. However, the articles point out the achievements and limitations of this developing historical genre. The authors use sophisticated theoretical approaches and avoid unnecessary jargon. Their collective knowledge of writings about world history is remarkable. Historians interested in historiography, methodology of history, graduate students and World History teachers and researchers will profit greatly from reading World Histories.