

# GLOBAL ENCOUNTERS AND THE ARCHIVES: BRITAIN'S EMPIRE IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

*A LEWIS WALPOLE LIBRARY CONFERENCE*

Friday & Saturday, February 9 & 10, 2018

The Graduate Club, New Haven, Connecticut

## Day 1. Friday, February 9, 2018

**9:45** Registration. Coffee

**10:15** Opening Remarks

**SESSION 1. 10:30 *What is Empire?*** Chair: **Carl Wennerlind**, Associate Professor of History, Barnard

**Onur Ulas Ince, School of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University**

*Imperial Economy and Intellectual History: Capitalism and Liberalism in the British Empire*

This paper is part of a book that examines the impact of colonial economic relations on the formation of liberal thought in the early-modern British Empire. Today, “liberalism and empire” stands as a shorthand for a growing field of study that centers on the premise that liberalism (as a political language, philosophical tradition, or normative system) has emerged and evolved in the context of European colonialism and its enduring legacies. In this paper, I identify the limitations of this scholarship and propose a new interpretive framework for studying liberal ideas that critically augments the current literature. I mainly argue that the fine-grained textual analysis of liberal ideas in imperial contexts has not been matched by a clear socioeconomic analysis of imperial relations themselves. As a result, an overly linguistic or culturalist orientation undermines the analytical power and critical commitments of the scholarship on liberalism and empire. I elaborate an alternative approach to interpreting liberal ideas in imperial contexts, one that brings into focus their mediation by capitalist relations. The principal contribution of this perspective is to disclose the contradictions between, on the one hand, liberal market conceptions of capitalist relations as articulated in British metropolitan political economy, and on the other, the violent methods and coercive processes that gave rise to capitalist forms in the colonies. Through the lens of “colonial capitalism,” we can delineate violent capitalist transformations in British colonies as an ideological problem for a self-avowedly liberal polity, which proudly contrasted itself to the despotic and imperialist spirit that it imputed to its Continental rivals. By the same token, we can analyze how British liberal thinkers, canonical or otherwise, struggled to navigate this problem in ways that proved formative of liberalism as a political language in the early-modern period.

**Douglas Fordham, Art History, University of Virginia**  
*Citadels of the Imperial Imagination*

The question “What is Empire?” implicitly entails a follow up question, “and to whom?” As an art historian, my central interest has been in the ways in which the world and Britain’s place in it came to be represented in the eighteenth century. The change was dramatic. In 1700 Britons had recourse to remarkably few images of colonies in the Americas or East Indies. By 1823 the entrepreneur John Ebbers opened an “Illustrative Subscription Library” in London from which one could borrow richly illustrated books relating to every continent on earth. But what if the metropolitan public’s imagination was unable to keep up with the proliferation of painted and printed images? Might older icons and metaphors of distance and difference persist in this bold new world of printed maps and views? This talk examines the persistent recurrence of generic icons of the city, what I will term the citadel motif, in Walpole’s Britain. As the world of visual representation expanded, the citadel motif grounded fluid borders, cultures, and images in fixed locations with clear geopolitical implications. The citadel captures a certain psychology of metropolitan viewing, one that sought landmarks in a sea of complex visual media. Citadels offered a visual mnemonic by which viewers could navigate art exhibitions and the lending library, providing imperial art with a structure, while also constraining complex or contradictory messages.

**James Vaughn, History, University of Texas, Austin**

*The Pitts of Empire: Britain's Imperial Expansion in Global Context from Chatham to Pitt the Younger*

This presentation examines the transformation of British overseas expansion between the imperial policy pursued by William Pitt the Elder during the Seven Years' War and the imperial policy pursued by his son, William Pitt the Younger, during the French Revolutionary Wars. In doing so, it interrogates the concepts of "empire" and "imperialism" deployed in contemporary scholarship, from postcolonial theory and Subaltern Studies to dependency theory and development studies. Its central argument is that what contemporary scholarship takes as the fundamental features of European imperialism--autocratic rule, economic underdevelopment, and racialist ideology--is a historical product of the way British overseas expansion was consolidated in the late eighteenth century during the counter-revolutionary global leadership of Pitt the Younger and his chief imperial architect, Henry Dundas. By this era, British imperialism had become a weapon in the battle against the democratic revolution.

**12:00 LUNCH**, The Graduate Club for all attendees

**SESSION 2. 1:00 *Conceptualizing Political Economy***. Chair: **Emily Erikson**, Associate Professor, Sociology, Yale

**Ashley L. Cohen, English, Georgetown University**

*Staging a Global Political-Economic Crisis*

Recent scholarship has established that the so-called American Crisis was historically experienced—and is perhaps best understood—as a global crisis in imperial affairs. In the early 1770s the need to render the global scope of the burgeoning crisis visible in the field of representation was keenly felt by onlookers from across the political spectrum. Usually, we think of classical political economy as the genre best suited to capturing global systemic ties. My paper argues that during the American Crisis, another medium also served this purpose: the theatre. Using Samuel Foote’s popular play *The Cozeners* (1774) as a case study, my paper shows how playwrights used highly condensed, highly topical, highly citational styles of signification to represent the political, economic, and institutional linkages between Britain’s colonies in North America and India, thereby teaching audiences to envision the present crisis as a global-systemic affair.

**David Stasavage, Silver Professor of Politics, New York University**

*How the ‘First Modern Economy’ Failed to Invent Modern Political Representation: Great Britain and the Dutch Republic Compared*

Economic historians have called the Dutch Republic the “First Modern Economy.” So why did the Dutch not also invent modern political representation and with what consequence? The Republic had representative institutions characterized by fragmentation and a lack of autonomy for deputies who were bound by mandates. This reflected a pattern seen in many European states at this time. English representative institutions were exceptional (if not unique) in having a centralized form of political representation in which, from an early date, representatives did not accept instructions from their constituents. I will argue that in many ways English representative institutions were less “democratic” than those in the Netherlands, but paradoxically less “democracy” may ultimately have provided a more favorable environment for economic growth.

**Abigail Swingen, Department of History, Texas Tech University**

*The Political Economy of the South Sea Bubble and its Aftermath*

Economists and historians often conclude that the infamous South Sea Bubble of 1720 was an indication of the “irrational exuberance” of Britain’s immature financial sector. It is important to remember, however, that the Bubble was the first major financial crisis faced by the new Hanoverian regime. Despite this, the political implications of the Bubble and its aftermath have yet to be fully explored by scholars. This paper will examine why rescuing the South Sea Company became a key part of the government’s agenda in 1721-22. Under the leadership of Sir Robert Walpole as Chancellor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury, the government orchestrated several financial schemes to

save the South Sea Company. Such strategies were deemed necessary by Walpole and his Whig allies to keep Britain's public credit afloat and the country stable at a time of great domestic and international uncertainty, especially as Jacobite plots remained a major threat to the new regime. This paper considers the political significance of these rescue plans in terms of how public credit and its ideological associations were utilized by both supporters and opponents of the plans. Such a consideration will emphasize that the Whig supremacy (and the political isolation of the Tories) in the early eighteenth century needs to be understood in political-economic terms. At the same time, such an analysis will show that Britain's Financial Revolution was deeply politicized and the South Sea Bubble had significance well beyond the economic sphere.

**SESSION 3. 2:30 *Indigenous Peoples***, Chair: **Silvia Sebastiani**, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales at Princeton IAS

**Brendan Kane, History, University of Connecticut**

*Irish, Indians and indigeneity: thinking about peoples and politics across the British Empire*

This paper focuses on Irish and American Indians as means to think about both the comparative history of certain indigenous peoples in the first British Empire and the possibilities offered by "indigeneity" as an analytical framework for such comparative work. There are numerous attempts to think comparatively about American Indian and Gaelic Irish experiences of, and perspectives within, the early empire. The results of those attempts are mixed: they have provided valuable insight into links across indigenous experience and, from the colonizers' perspective, enriched our sense of how empires are both conceptualized and constructed; however, in order to do so they have frequently collapsed tremendous difference into a historiographically-useful sameness. Moreover, modern-day political concerns and mentalities often find their way into such analyses of early historical settings and understandings. The concept of indigeneity offers certain ways forward in such comparative work. For instance, it side-steps both the teleological tendencies to focus on national consciousness and the reductive civil-savage binary so prominent in postcolonial approaches. But the term itself brings its own reductive pitfalls, as well as problematic connections to other proximate and nuanced terms such as ethnicity and identity.

This paper uses the frame of indigeneity to reconsider similarities/dissimilarities in the Irish and Indian experience with British forms of empire. In doing so, it also attempts to think through some questions associated with an approach focused on indigeneity: how do we avoid essentializing and reducing matters to authenticity; how do we navigate the fact that place of birth and identity are not always perfectly aligned; how important to the comparative approach are indigenous political thought and views of the metropole; to what extent must we be conscious of changes over time in metropolitan cultural and political forms (i.e. we must not be reductive in our approach to the British side of the study); and, in keeping with the conference theme, what archival sources exist for such work, and are they themselves comparable? I wish to speculate that the eighteenth century was a crucial moment in the divergence of Irish and American Indian experience with the British empire and, in closing, attempt

to argue that point by considering the highly-divergent states of indigenous Irish and Indians within present-day political configurations.

**Gregory Evans Dowd, History, University of Michigan**

*American "Mfecane"/Southern African "Shatter zone": Indigenous Turmoil beyond the Edge of Empire*

As empires of settlement became established in both southern Africa and eastern North America, indigenous societies experienced upheavals that have drawn vast scholarly and even popular attention. North Americanists argue about late-seventeenth century "shatter zones," "Beaver wars," and "Iroquois conquest." Southern Africanists struggle over the concept of an early nineteenth-century "mfecane," or, "crushing," a somewhat discredited term closely associated with the so-called "Wars of Shaka" or "Zulu Wars." These periods of great internal turmoil have gripped writers on each continent since long before they drew attention from such nineteenth-century scholars as Francis Parkman (North America) or George McCall Theal (South Africa). The conflicts contributed to imperial myths, such as that of self-destructing indigenous peoples who both needed pacification and, providentially, cleared the way for settler expansion. In our time, the southern African debate involves the broader relationship between colonialism and profound indigenous developments that occurred beyond the direct reach of imperial or settler power. These developments include new social formations, new scales of war, and new relationships with the environment. Did the Atlantic slave trade (which reached well into the Indian Ocean), or the Atlantic trade more generally, bear strongly on power struggles within and among indigenous polities distant from the colonial ports? Is it proper to speak of indigeneity as a relation to empires, or is it better to "reorient" the field to center the interior places of the continent, keeping the colonizers at the periphery? These have been, and remain, fighting questions in southern Africa, and so too are they in eastern North America. Who knew? This paper seeks to put historians of native North America in conversation with southern Africanists. It juxtaposes some of the major themes and methodologies of the two fields, which themselves have very different scholarly traditions. It finds some dissonance, much harmony, and a disturbing kinship.

**Professor Maxine Berg, History, University of Warwick**

*Value and Exchange at Nootka Sound: Alexander Walker's Global Microhistory 1785-6*

My subject brings me to a small obscure and far-away place on the Northwest Pacific Coast of North America – Nootka Sound. It has a very local history as a place of seasonal residence and ceremony for the Mowachaht people, a group within the larger Nuu-chah-nulth language category, dating back over 4,000 years. It also has a wide global and international history as the site of a sea otter trade linking Britain, India and China as well as Russia, Spain, France and the USA to this coast.

I investigate accounts of events of this trade of furs for iron and copper as conveyed by Europeans between 1774 and 1792, and especially the account provided by Alexander Walker in 1786. Walker's account takes me to the heart of connections between the Pacific and an East India Company trade between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean and East Asia. I approach this from a methodology of 'global microhistory', and from the framework of 'locality' and 'interstitial spaces' in global history.

## **DAY 2, Saturday, February 10, 2018**

**9:45** Coffee

**10:15** Welcome.

**SESSION 4. 10:30 Slavery.** Chair: **Carolyn Roberts**, Postdoctoral Associate (Assistant Professor beginning Fall 2018) History of Science and Medicine, History, and African American Studies, Yale

**Marisa Fuentes, History and Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers University**

*The Archives of Slavery: Critical Methodologies and the Ethics of Historical Practice*

This paper centers on the lives of enslaved women in eighteenth-century Bridgetown, Barbados entangled within an archive of violence. Drawing upon my recent book, *Dispossessed Lives, Enslaved Women, Violence and the Archive* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016) I will engage fragmented archival sources with interdisciplinary methodologies including black feminist theory, critical studies of history, the archive and slavery, to understand how the construction of legal, architectural and historical "spaces" marked enslaved women's bodies, in life and death. In my comments, I will focus on unnamed women, violated by a brutal punishment in a scene recounted by white British naval officers during the British Abolition debates of the late eighteenth century. These enslaved women materialize in a violent and violating archive and offer us a chance to think about historical methodologies that at once attend to the violence on enslaved female bodies while considering the stakes of an ethical historical practice.

**James Oakes, Distinguished Professor, American History, The Graduate Center, CUNY**

*What's the Difference between Slavery and Capitalism?: And a Few Other Questions*

The recent revival of interest in the relationship between slavery and capitalism has been accompanied by a conscious refusal to define "capitalism" as well as a strong tendency to collapse the distinction between capitalism and slavery. This is a startling departure from earlier generations of scholars who *began* their discussions by carefully defining their terms. But there was a problem. The "transition" debates were clear about the definition of capitalism but had little to say about slavery. The debate over capitalism and slavery began with a careful definition of slavery, but never actually defined capitalism. Reviewing those earlier definitions may help clarify some of the issues in the more recent discussion.

**Julia Gaffield, History, Georgia State University**

*Imperial Friendship: British de facto Recognition of the Haitian Declaration of Independence*

The Haitian Declaration of Independence on January 1, 1804 signaled the end of the Haitian Revolution, but this ending was also the beginning of a whole new array of challenges for Haiti. It was a hostile world, one in which slaveholding powers dominated the seas and the political landscape, but these powers were at war. In this context, the British, as enemies of the French, played a central role during 1804 and in the years that followed in both helping Haiti secure independence but also in limiting that independence. Their interest was shaped by military strategy, economic investment, and a fear that the revolution might spread throughout the Caribbean. In their attempt to achieve these goals, the British extended economic, *de facto*, and temporary recognition of Haiti's independence while withholding official diplomatic recognition. In helping Haiti maintain its independence from France while also withholding recognition, the British learned a lesson that they carried forward in their dealings with Spain's former colonies in the 1820s.

**12:00 LUNCH**, on your own

**SESSION 5. 1:30 Material Culture.** Chair: **Paola Bertucci**, Associate Professor, History, Yale

**Robbie Richardson, English, University of Kent**

*The Antiquarian's Indian: Collecting and Understanding Indigenous Material Culture*

This paper will look at the ways in which Horace Walpole and other British antiquarians and collectors acquired and understood material culture from the Americas. Objects such as wampum and calumets possessed multiple symbolic meanings that challenged European epistemologies. Further, for some antiquarians, Indigenous objects were crucial to the discovery of Britain's own ancient past.

**Catherine A. Molineux, History, Vanderbilt**

*African London: Rethinking the Archives*

**Margaret M. Bruchac, Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania**

*Reverse Ethnography: Tracking Collectors to Recover Indigenous Objects and Relationships*

Ethnographic collections and museum archives are often perceived as silent repositories of antiquated objects and papers. Yet, Indigenous materials in these collections often encode, embody, and communicate long-forgotten relationships. Through collecting, these objects lost contact with their communities; through research and exhibition, they took on meanings that reflected the desires of their collectors. Curators and researchers, consciously or not, then selectively revealed and/or concealed stories captured in the collections. The technique of “reverse ethnography” tracks the movements and intentions of collectors to locate clues that reconnect with Indigenous origins. By re-examining antiquarian records of collecting--using archival research, object cartography, discourse analysis, and exhibition critiques--we can begin to recover and restore Indigenous voices and object agencies that have been silenced.

**SESSION 6. 3:00 Alliance and Diplomacy.** Chair: **John Shovlin**, Associate Professor, History, NYU

**Eric Hinderaker, History, University of Utah**

*Appropriation and Mimesis: Cross-Cultural Diplomacy in the Age of Horace Walpole*

Taking two images from the on-line Global Encounters and the Archives exhibit as a starting point, this talk will use the complementary notions of appropriation and mimesis to consider the complex cross-cultural dynamics of diplomacy between Native Americans and Europeans in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century North America. By appropriation, I refer to the way that one culture takes up the trappings of another one, transforming them, or even hollowing out their meanings, in the process. Mimesis, I take to mean imitative behavior whose goal is to claim acceptance or legitimacy in the eyes of the people whose behavior is being imitated. Most often, these terms are used to refer to situations in which a dominant culture takes up elements of a subordinate culture (appropriation), or in which a dominant culture imposes behavioral norms on a subordinate one (mimesis). But in early modern North America the patterns were considerably more complicated, with cultural influences running in both directions and unforeseen consequences abounding.

**Sarah Rivett, English, Princeton University**

*Missionary Imperialism and Indigenous Alliance in the Seven Years War*

The last imperial war in colonial North America (1754 - 1763) intensified the French and British battle for American Indian souls. Mid-eighteenth century French Jesuits and Anglo Protestants established an approach to missionary linguistics in opposition to each other. In François Picquet’s Mohawk mission



and Pierre Maillard's Mi'kmaq mission, linguistic knowledge became a medium of authority and military control. By contrast Gideon Hawley and Samuel Hopkins espoused a conversion theology that for the first time in Anglo colonial history did not depend on hearing proselytes speak Christian truths in their own native tongue. Increasingly, American Indian children were instructed in English and their faith became evidence of a firmly rooted New World Protestant-millennial identity. By contrast, knowledge of indigenous words and symbols secured native allegiance to France and established an indigenous Catholicism as a lasting mark of France's imperial presence in the New World.

**Holly Shaffer, Art History, Brown University**

*A Menagerie of Arts in India and Britain, circa 1800*

In this talk, I focus on a painting of a menagerie to investigate the ways that British and Indian artists and patrons generated art, as well as diplomacy, in the western Indian city of Pune around 1800.

**Stephen Conway, History, University College London**

*New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Diplomatic History*

This paper considers the scholarly study of diplomacy from its nineteenth century heyday, when foreign policy seemed to be the principal concern of the emerging historical profession, to our own time, when diplomatic history is making something of a comeback, though in a very different form. The focus is particularly on recent approaches that draw on the insights offered by other kinds of history and by other disciplines, ranging from international relations theory to cultural studies. The examples chosen relate to eighteenth-century Britain and its empire and demonstrate the kind of sources that scholars can deploy to study the diplomacy and alliance-making of the period, including materials held by the Lewis Walpole Library.

**RECEPTION TO FOLLOW, GRADUATE CLUB**