Book & Movie Reviews - Understanding Global Transformation in the 21st Century

Social studies teachers face a uniquely difficult curricular challenge: we must negotiate standardized, textbook-based curricula that promote and reinforce a limited and often distorted view of history. I believe teachers who restrict themselves to standardized curricula serve as propagandists for the established order. To help students develop critical consciousness and to struggle for a democratic society, teachers must introduce a wide variety of information and viewpoints. This is difficult because few people have the time and energy to conduct the wide-ranging research necessary to counter dominant accounts of U.S. and global history. There are two remedies to this problem. First, we can undertake such historical investigation with students and make interrogation of the textbook a central aspect of classroom practice. Second, we can network in teacher communities devoted to sharing valuable curricular resources. Many of the books reviewed in this section are densely written, refer to a wide range of historical events and figures, and contain extended passages. They are recommended primarily for teachers, however selections can be edited for student use. Books are listed alphabetically by author. – Michael Pezone

Peter Bate (Director). ***Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death*** **(2004, English/French/Dutch with English subtitles)** - Reviewed by Martin P. Felix

This documentary brings to the silver screen the unspeakable horrors of Belgian colonialism in the Congo. It begins with scenes of terror, Congolese children, men and women without their hands. Their hands were cut off by the colonizers and their puppet troops in a macabre system of accounting. Hands were cut off because workers didn't work fast enough. Children's hands were chopped off as punishment for late deliveries of rubber. Hands were used by the puppet troops to "prove" they hadn't wasted bullets on hunting game, an offense in the eyes of the colonialists. Later in the film an African chief employs another kind of accounting: a fact-finding commission views a huge bundle of sticks representing the chief's many missing villagers. Such stories about the destruction of villages, rape and torture abound in the film.

The fanatical rush for colonies, rubber and other raw materials was part of the drive to industrialize Europe. Africa's valuable resources helped usher in Europe's motorized transportation and the proliferation of many other commodities. During the Belgian reign of terror, John Dunlop created the pneumatic tire, setting off a surge in bicycle sales and creating a huge demand for rubber latex and wild Congolese vine rubber.

In order to maximize exploitation of Africa and to ease conflict among themselves, European imperialist powers sat around tables in Berlin, Germany, between 1884 and 1885 and decided the colonial fate of Africa. Like butchers with knives dripping blood, the imperialists divided the continent into spoils. No regard was given to traditional borders or other historical factors. It was to Congo's misfortune that King Leopold was given the largest and, soon to become evident, richest chunk of the richest continent.

The film presents in almost elementary fashion the machinery of colonialism. It sheds light on how Belgium used European soldiers, administrators, businesspersons, missionaries, journalists and African collaborators to set in motion a system that transformed the huge, resource-rich, heart of Africa into a zone of death and conflict. Over the next 20 years of direct Belgian rule, 10 million Africans would die by murder, disease and the deplorable conditions of life. Resistance was put down by wanton murder and what today we would call "ethnic cleansing." In the meantime, the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber and Exploration Company racked up 700 percent profits on shipments of rubber from the Congo. The company's stock-market valuation increased 30 times in six years, while King Leopold was celebrated in European capitals as a humane and progressive pioneer of Christian values in "darkest Africa."

The film includes intermittent scenes from an imagined trial of Leopold, placing the responsibility for "civilizing" the Congo on his shoulders. Leopold's role was given too much emphasis, while a wider concert of sadistic players in a global system got too little attention. The film reminds us that the hunt for the Congo's enormous riches, including metals for the burgeoning telecommunications, gaming, and electronics industries, is not yet over.

Jagdish Bhagwati , ***In Defense of Globalization*** **(NY: Oxford).** – Reviewed by Parag Joshi.

Writing this review on my laptop (made in Japan) while drinking coffee (from Ethiopia), and checking for an email from a friend in Barcelona, this reviewer (who immigrated from India at the age of 6) is keenly aware of economic globalization. If we are to believe the commentators, protestors, and yes, Bono, economic globalization is not merely *an* issue of our day – it is *the* issue. The wonderful (or dreadful) news is that they are largely right.

If Thomas Friedman's recent exhortations (in *The World Is Flat*) about the leveling of the playing field between the "rich west and the striving rest" in the last decade are correct, an important acceleration of economic globalization has occurred. According to Friedman and others, technological (broadband, computers, etc.) and market forces (and the incentives they

create) have fueled this change from the developed world, while massive surpluses of science graduates and a hunger for economic growth have fueled this change from the other side.

But should we view this ongoing economic globalization as a force for the greater good, or more fearfully, as a race to the bottom? How should national governments around the world work together to manage this new, more forceful version of economic globalization?

Jagdish Bhagwati is a leading developmental economist who is perennially short-listed for the Nobel Prize in economics and has been referred to as "the world's foremost free trader." Over the years, he has worked with the World Trade Organization, the United Nations, and the International Monetary Fund, and has been credited with playing a key role in convincing policymakers in India and other developing nations to open the country to international economic forces. Bhagwati frames economic globalization as the "integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, direct foreign investment (by corporations and multinationals), short-term capital flows, international flows of workers and humanity generally, and flows of technology."

Bhagwati draws a complex web of benefits from economic globalization that are created and sustained by the actions of important actors working through motives of both profit and altruism. These organizations include national governments, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Labor Union, and especially the World Trading Organization. His central argument is that economic globalization (properly managed) fosters a virtuous cycle toward creating stable, democratic, and prosperous nations. Much of the book consists of rebuttals to the principal arguments of globalization's critics.

As a self-described free-trader, I expected Bhagwati to be a staunch defender of globalization, but he offers several important caveats to the management of economic globalization. Specifically, he is decidedly against what he calls "Gung-ho Financial Capitalism," the "Treasury-Wall Street Complex," and "Crony Capitalism."

One of the values of this book is in the present-ation of a largely non-ideological argument that the benefits of economic globalization (properly managed) far exceed their costs. Bhagwati relies exclusively on empirical evidence on widely-accepted quantitative quality of life indicators (e.g. life span, incomes, infant mortality) for his support of economic globalization. He flatly states that free trade is an instrument for the reduction of poverty, and that that is its test of goodness.

Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (NY: Henry Holt, 2003). - Reviewed by Michael Pezone.

The basic thesis of *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* is that humankind faces possible worldwide catastrophe unless the world capitalist system is reorganized in a revolutionary fashion. For Chomsky, the hegemonic world order is overseen by the United States, which uses its economic and military power to preserve and extend its control of world resources and people. He characterizes the US "imperial grand strategy" and "mission of global management" as "containing other centers of world power within the 'overall framework of order' managed by the United States; maintaining control of the world's energy supplies; barring unacceptable forms of independent nationalism; and overcoming 'crises of democracy' within domestic enemy territory" (16).

This mission has been implemented in various ways since the end of World War Two, but under the current Bush administration has taken extreme forms, especially evident in the doctrine and practice of "preventive war". Chomsky quotes establishment historian Arthur Schlesinger, who wrote: "The president has adopted a policy of 'anticipatory self-defense' that is alarmingly similar to the policy that imperial Japan employed at Pearl Harbor, on a date which, as an earlier American president said it would, lives in infamy. . . today it is Americans who live in infamy" (12).

In order to maintain control of world resources, US rulers are committed to a policy of "full spectrum dominance" (military superiority on land, sea, in the air, and in space). Chomsky cites US military leaders who reason that globalization is bringing about "a widening between 'have' and 'have-nots'" which will lead to unrest among the have-nots (240). As revealed in the US Space Command's *Vision for 2020*, the goal of militarization of space is "dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect US interests and investments" (229).

According to Chomsky, to pursue its imperialist ambitions, the US demonstrates contempt for international law and is the world's leading sponsor of terrorism, a reality not perceived within the constraints of official definitions that limit terrorism to actions of the weak. "If the doctrinal requirement is lifted, however, we find that, like most weapons, terror is primarily a weapon of the powerful." (189)

For Chomsky, US policies "flow from an institutional framework of domestic power, which remains fairly stable. Economic decision-making is highly centralized, and John Dewey scarcely exaggerated when he described politics as 'the shadow cast on society by big business'" (15). He defines the US political system as a polyarchy, not a democracy; that is, a "system of elite decision-making and public ratification" (5).

Chomsky argues that 9-11-01 and the "war on terror" have been used as an opportunity to roll back progressive gains made over the last century, to discipline the population, and to pursue a radical right-wing agenda. In the face of growing discontent, the Bush forces have adopted "the classic strategy" of "an endangered right-wing oligarchy", which is to create a climate of jingoism. Those at the center of power "declare that it is unpatriotic and disruptive to question the workings of authority - but patriotic to institute harsh and regressive policies that benefit the wealthy, undermine social programs that serve the needs of the great majority, and subordinate a frightened population to increased state control" (217).

As social studies teachers, it is our responsibility to help students "question the workings of authority." Noam Chomsky has been described as "the most important intellectual alive today." Students ought to be familiar with the ideas of Chomsky and others who challenge accepted views and hold out the possibility that "another world is possible." A democratic education requires no less.

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel* (NY: Norton, 1997). – By Lorriane Lupinskie-Huvane.

Every teacher of world history should read *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Jared Diamond, a physiology and geography professor at UCLA, examines themes and trends throughout history to account for the development of different societies throughout the world. He seeks to explain why history happened one way and not another. Why did Europeans conquer the Americas and not the other way around?

The book seeks to answer a question asked of Diamond by a native of New Guinea in 1972. "Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo (materials goods) and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own?" Diamond argues that in 11,000 BCE, with humans on all of the major continents, it "could not have been predicted on which continent human societies would develop most quickly." He identifies the factors he believes have determined the varying fates of human societies since then.

Section 2, The Rise and Spread of Food Production, is especially useful for teachers. In seven chapters, Diamond traces the development of agriculture. A chart titled "Factors Underlying the Broadest Pattern of History," shows the factors that allowed some people to conquer others. I use this chart in my AP World History course to reinforce some of the major trends in world history. Also included in this section are a number of easy to understand maps. An especially useful map indicates the centers of the origin of food production and it can be used effectively with a chart detailing the early major crops from the ancient world.

In Section 3, Diamond focuses on guns, germs, and steel as the proximate causes that determined who would have the cargo and who would not. Diamond clearly shows his bent towards science, especially as he describes the development of epidemic disease. The chapter "Lethal Gift of Livestock" is definitely accessible to more advanced students.

Finally, in Section 4, the history of five different societies is presented within the context provided in the previous chapters. In examining the history of the Americas, Diamond argues that differences in food production and animal domestication set the stage for "Europeans to reach and conquer the lands of Native Americans, instead of vice versa."

Woven throughout the book are detailed descriptions of the biological and geographic factors that impacted on the progress, or the lack of, in different societies. While the "science" of his explanations may seem complicated, Diamond presents his theories in an understandable fashion. I find that student who have read *Guns, Germs, and Steel* can clearly articulate the geographic circumstances that hindered the progress of New Guinea and other locations and Diamond's other main ideas.

Diamond has his critics, most notably historians who argue that his version of history discounts the role of the individual and the significance that conscious action has played throughout history. Regardless of where you stand on this controversy, the book should be on every world history teachers must read list. It is a reminder that there are always varying interpretations of historical events and processes and that it is our responsibility to present these different perspectives to our students.

Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power (*NY: Basic, 2002) – Reviewed by Gloria Sesso.

Niall Ferguson argues that Empires can be a positive force. He praises the successes of the British Empire and argues that the United States, the successor to the global power first wielded by the British, can learn from its rise and fall.

In 1897, when Queen Victoria celebrated her diamond jubilee, Britain controlled 444 million people living on 25% of the world's land surface. What is more, Britain did it cheaply and with a surprisingly small bureaucracy. The Indian Civil Service, the backbone of the Raj, rarely numbered more than 1,000 men. Britain also spent a minimum on its armed forces, much less than the United States did during the Cold War. At the time, London was banker to the world and the British held over 40% of all foreign owned assets.

According to Ferguson, Britain was a positive force for good in the world as it disseminated the English language, English forms of land tenure, Scottish and English banking practices, team sports, Protestantism and governmental practices such as Common Law, the limited state, representative assemblies and the idea of liberty. "The idea of liberty" was the most important "because it remains the most distinctive feature of the Empire - the thing that set it apart from its continental European rivals." Ferguson is quick to point out that he is not saying that the British imperialists were liberals. He is saying that whenever the British were behaving despotically, there was always a "liberal critique" from segments of British society. The negative aspects of imperialism are not denied. He identifies the effects on the colonized and their culture, enslavement and the brutality of officials. However, the negative aspects are overshadowed by the positive impact of British globalization which he calls "Anglobalization."

For Ferguson, the end of the British Empire is a noble one. The British exhausted themselves fighting the Axis powers in World War II. Faced with nationalist movements, the British gave up. Ferguson thinks this is unfortunate and he points out the unhappy fate of many new countries.

This book is useful to classroom teachers in many ways. It is an "unapologetic defense of empire" and its stories can be used to provide teachers with a positive view of imperialism. That stirs up food for debate, especially Ferguson's notion that imperialism spreads British liberty.

This book presents a controversial point of view but it does it in an entertaining and analytical way. It is food for thought and classroom strategy development.

Amy and David Goodman. ***The Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media That Love Them*** **(NY: Hyperion Books, 2004).** - Reviewed by Nicholas Santora.

Amy Goodman is a journalist in the best sense of the word. She is a serious, unabashed muckraker in an age of mass media conformity. Goodman is best known as the host of *Democracy Now!*, a daily investigative news-talk program that airs on Pacifica Radio and satellite television (www.democracynow. org). It is a no-nonsense program that covers incidents in troubled nations such as Haiti and Sudan that the major corporate-owned networks will not give the time of day to. While the issue of prisoner abuse at Guantanamo Bay took a back seat in the mainstream press, *Democracy Now!* reminded listeners of its continuing relevance. Those who accuse Goodman of advocacy journalism might want to trace the events that led to the current Iraqi conflict and the questionable reporting by supposedly esteemed journals such as *The New York Times*.

This book, *The Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media That Love Them* (co-written with her brother David Goodman), delivers exactly as the title states. The authors delineate the lies, fraud and outright crimes of the American power elite reinforced by media conglomerates. Her contretemps with Newt Gingrich and Bill Clinton is alone worth the price of the book. From the Jessica Lynch hoax to the trial of Mumia Abu Jamal, Goodman warns readers that "journalists are not entertainers". There are issues that are vital to a democratic society. A symbiotic relationship between the corporate media and the officials they report on is socially, politically and economically dangerous.

Goodman's search for the truth has taken her all over the world and placed her in dangerous situations. In 1991, she traveled to the tiny island nation of East Timor to investigate atrocities. With a gun to her head she was barely able to show the occupiers her passport. When they realized she was from the same country their weapons were from, her life was spared. Goodman was the first person from outside the region to witness and report on the massacres in East Timor.

In 2003, Goodman and journalist Jeremy Scahill documented Chevron Corporation's role in a confrontation between the Nigerian army and villagers who had seized oil rigs and other equipment belonging to transnational oil corporations. They were protesting the contamination of their land with methane in the air and exploding gas pipelines in the Niger Delta. Chevron provided helicopter transport for the Nigerian Navy and the notorious police force. Soon after landing, the Nigerian military shot two of the protesters and wounded eleven others. A Chevron spokesperson acknowledged that the company transported the troops, and that use of troops was at the request of Chevron's management. Goodman visited Nigeria to examine this incident and the military junta's execution of famed Nigerian writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his compatriots. As in East Timor, her life was in danger. Her description of checkpoint run-ins with rabid and vile soldiers is chilling. Goodman later managed to infiltrate a Chevron shareholders meeting in California. Where she requested that the practice of allowing the Nigerian military to kill protesters on company sites be curtailed.

This book is published by Hyperion Books, a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company. Goodman explained that she had the option of using an independent book company and not reaching nearly the number of potential readers a major publishing company could provide. I suppose we can at times nibble on the claw that feeds us.

Eric Hobsbawm, ***The Age of Extremes, A History of the World, 1914-1991*** **(NY: Pantheon, 1994).** - Reviewed by David Goldberg.

The Age of Extremes by Eric Hobsbawm provides a broad overview of the Twentieth Century, which the author generally defines as beginning with World War I and ending with the fall of Communism. This is not a typical history book that simply chronicles events. From the outset of the book, Hobsbawm acknowledges that this is "his" history, the way in which he sees and interprets events during this period. He appears to be disappointed with the way the 20th century has turned out, especially in comparison with the 19th Century, which he has written about in earlier work. This book has value for Global History teachers who want to present broad themes on the century in their classes. It can also help students understand the influence of an historians frame of reference on their interpretation of the past.

The book opens with twelve broad conclusions Hobsbawm draws about the 20th century, but his primary conclusion is that it was an age of opposites. Humans learned how to save more lives then ever before, yet we also destroyed more people than in any other historical epoch. Democracy and freedom grew at its fastest rate in human history, yet so did totalitarianism and dictatorial regimes. Capitalism expanded exponentially, but so did socialism. Socialism is the form of government that Hobsbawm seems to respect the most. He believes that despite its shortcomings, it had the power to manage human affairs, create a powerful state, and stabilize market forces that would prevent ecological and social meltdowns. Hobsbawm also examines more narrow influences on history but continues to highlight opposites. For example, he explores the way radio changed the lives of the poor and influenced the rise of dictatorships in Europe.

I feel that Hobsbawm treats the largest capitalist nation of them all, the United States, without much respect throughout his book. He provides different perspectives on Ho Chi Minh, who he describes as noble, "the practically minded Khrushchev," and Fidel Castro, who is "strong and charismatic" and "deter-mined to demonstrate personal bravery and to be a hero of whatever cause of freedom against tyranny." He cannot even go so far as to condemn the crimes of Joseph Stalin. For Hobsbawm, the West is responsible for the Cold war, with the United States assuming the greatest responsibility.

The study of history and the social studies should gear students toward asking and answering essential questions. Hobsbawm leaves teachers and students of world history with two large questions that will have monumental consequences on the history of the future: "Is capitalism the primary cause of crises in our world today?" and, "Is the world suffering from the negative consequences of the "privatization of life" and the growth of "consumer egoism?" Other essential questions that emerge from this book include: "What should be the role of the world's super power?" "Has capitalism kept third world nations poor?" "Did the Left's vision of a utopia in the twentieth century lead to the rise of extremism in the twenty-first century"?

Hobsbawm sees no great victory for humanity in the triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism in the 20th century. As these forces continue to shape the 21st century, and their impact accelerates with computerization and globalization, students and their teachers need to discuss whether we are trapped in the dismal world described by Eric Hobsbawn or there is an expanded possibility for a more hopeful future.

Paul Kennedy. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (NY: Random House, 1987). - Reviewed by Michael Kreidman.

Over the years, historians, politicians, and many others have wondered why some nations become more powerful than others, only to lose their superior positions. This is an especially compelling issue because in recent years we have witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise of China, and the economic problems of the United States that appear to be connected to its global military commitments.

Paul Kennedy, the Dilworth Professor of History at Yale University, exhaustively researches the economic and military abilities of nations since 1500 AD. He concludes that economically advanced nations develop the military might to protect their interests and impose their will.

However, the power of the nation declines if its military expenditures and commitments impede its economy. "In the post-feudal age, when knights were no longer expected to perform individual military services. . . nor coastal towns to provide a ship, the availability of ready cash and the possession of good credit were absolutely essential to any state engaged in war. Only by direct payment (or promise of payment) could the necessary [resources] be mobilized within the market economy [to prepare for combat.]"

A point I found particularly interesting is his argument that the inability of any single power to take over Europe led to economic and military competition that contributed to innovation in both areas. By contrast, the leaders of China and the Ottoman Empire concentrated on suppressing internal dissent rather than promoting innovation.

The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers provides teachers with over 50 useful charts, tables and maps that illustrate the author's main points. One chart demonstrates Britain's ability to raise the enormous capital necessary to support a massive military during its age of empire. To explain the outcome of World War I, he analyzes the productive capabilities of the Triple Entente and the Central Powers and how the entry of the United States changed this economic balance. Another shows how from 1980 to 2020, the economies of China and India will grow far faster than those of Western Europe. It suggests the enormous potential of these countries to emerge as super-powers.

I look forward to using material from this book to design lessons around the following questions. Why did Western Europe dominate much of global politics from 1500 AD onwards when there were other areas more advanced? How did France, Great Britain, Germany, the Soviet Union, or the United States rise to preeminent status in the world? Why are so many Americans worried about China?"

David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (NY: Norton, 1998). – Reviewed by Steven Havick.

> Several years ago a student in my 12th grade Economics class asked me why certain countries were impoverished. While I cannot recall all the possible explanations I offered, I do remember responding that the answer is deeply complex, multi-layered, and contingent on numerous variables. I added that anyone who could answer that question definitively should write a book about it. David Landes' provocative and engaging book is one historian's attempt to answer my student's question.

Unfortunately, Landes' book is Eurocentric, virtually ignoring human history before the closing centuries of the Middle Ages, and his thesis relies too heavily on cultural determinism. He asserts that certain Western cultural institutions and attributes, aided by favorable geography, are the primary reasons for European wealth and power the past five hundred years. Landes suggests that the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent primacy of Western Europe (and the United States) is owed largely to a special sense of curiosity and conception of human progress, cultural attributes that, in his eyes, are lacking in the non-European world. Among these cultural qualities are respect for the rule of law and private property, a tradition of dissent, a lack of authoritarianism, and respect for women's rights, intellectual freedom, and civil liberties. At the core of these is the so-called Protestant work ethic.

Commentators have credited Landes with moving beyond a traditional historical perspective that focuses on kings, dynasties, and wars. However, this book represents only a slight departure from traditional history. Landes simply repackages the story most of us were taught in high school and college Western Civilization classes, a story that has

been used to justify Western domination over the world which minimizes racism and aggression. The genocidal land-grab by white Americans is given a one-page treatment in the book while topics such as techniques used in steel production receive numerous full pages. The theft of native land becomes a mere footnote in the story of American economic ascendancy. While Landes' answer to my student's question fails to explain the relationship between progress and wealth, I did find things of value in the book. Its wide scope and rich narrative provide excellent reference material that enriches content knowledge about large swaths of history.

Landes claims that he is delivering the historical Truth about why the world looks the way it does. In the classroom, selected passages from The Wealth and Poverty of Nations *can be* used to help students understand the process of historical analysis and build their critical thinking skills. Here I am reminded of Fredrich Nietzsche's statement that "A great truth wants to be criticized, not idolized." The real growth for our students occurs in spaces that social studies teachers carve out for critique. This book will be a valuable tool for teaching if one uses it to encourage critical discussion of Landes' thesis and provoke deep thought about the function of historical disagreement.

Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence. China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2000). – Reviewed by Lawrence Frohman.

When it appeared five years ago, *The Great Divergence* became an instant classic that refigured the way that historians and economists think about the origins of European industrialization and the divergent developmental trajectories followed by Europe and the major civilizations of Asia (China, India, Japan). *The Great Divergence* is a complex work that operates at several different levels, all of which are directly relevant to the way we conceptualize world history in the modern era and teach the global history curriculum.

Historians and textbooks generally examine the European (and especially the English) past to find factors such as property guarantees, contracts, Max Weber's rationalism, or the spirit of entrepreneurship or science, that would account for the rise of Europe to world dominance in the 19th century. Pomeranz challenges this approach. He compares the more commercially developed regions of both Europe and Asia and concludes that before 1750-1800 there were no fundamental differences in technology, social institutions, or mentality in these regions that could account for the differences in economic power and wealth that would be so evident a century later.

Pomeranz raises the question of how one can grasp the unity of world history in the absence of a master narrative organized around "the rise of the west." He writes of "a polycentric world with no dominant center." The book offers comparative method for the study of world history based on the mutual or reciprocal comparison of different societies, rather than the search for national deviations from a Western developmental norm.

If these regional societies were more similar than different going into the second half of the 1700s, and if there is no normal path to capitalist modernity, then how does Pomeranz explain the great divergence? He argues that the decisive factor in the great divergence was the historically contingent conquest of the New World. Control of these plantation colonies directed them down the path of capital intensive economic development that eventually gave rise to that dynamic of self-sustaining growth identified by Walter Rostow and David Landes as the distinguishing feature of the modern economy.

The strength of Pomeranz' work comes from the specific ways in which he makes the linkages between colonial conquest and economic development in the European metropoles. Extra-market forces, the growth of state power, expansion of merchant capital, slavery, and the

plantation system, explain why the European economy was able to develop along a trajectory that the Asian powers could not follow. Plantation colonies provided Europe with the land-intensive primary products needed to transcend ecological constraints, an outlet for its surplus population, and a growing market for metropolitan manufactures, and it did so in ways that encouraged the development of capital intensive industrial manufacture and insured its profitability.

In China, India, and Japan the industrial regions of these countries did not dominate or coercively exploit their own domestic peripheries in the same manner that the Europeans dominated the plantation colonies of the Atlantic. The absence of such a colonial stimulus directed the economies of Asia down a different economic path characterized by the broad diffusion of labor-intensive handicraft production, the negation of productivity gains by population growth, and long-term stagnation.

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (NY: Vintage, 1994). – Reviewed by Laura Vosswinkel.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said analyzes literature to show the complexity of imperialism and its continuing impact. The focus in this book is on European literature written during the "age of empire" and contemporary literature produced in non-Western societies. Said does not believe that either the oppressors (the Europeans) or the oppressed are solely to blame for conditions in the modern world. He feels we need to "look at these matters as a network of interdependent histories that it would be inaccurate and senseless to repress, useful and interesting to understand" (19).

Among other authors, Said examines the work of Salman Rushdie, W.B. Yeats, Chinua Achebe, Goethe, and Jane Austen. He tries to discover both what major works of literature say about history and how they have shaped history. I found his discussion of rivers in Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* and James Ngugi's (Ngugi wa Thiongo) *The River Between* interesting and believe it would provide students with insight into African and European cultures and enhance their understanding of the tension generated by imperialist conquest. In *The River Between,* the river is powerful, deliberate, possess a strong will to live, and is capable of making people happy. The white man is not important compared to the river. However, in *The Heart of Darkness*, the white man, not the river, takes center stage.

> Said writes of both the positive and negative cultural impact of imperialism. "Its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental" (336). As a result of imperialism, people insist on separation and harbor fears and prejudice about those different from themselves. He claims this is apparent in most postcolonial literature. However, survival is about making connections, not pigeonholing humans and creating hierarchies. Said feels it is important to the study of the literature and the development of society to strive to overcome patterns of separation.