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**From Imperial Science
to Post-Patriotism: The
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by

EMMA GATTEY

ABSTRACT

Through a brief intellectual biography of British imperial history, this article examines and expands upon recent academic demands for a renovated ‘professional ethics’ of history. It also tracks new developments in global environmental historiography, and asks how global and imperial historians can best acquit themselves of their professional and ethical responsibilities in the Anthropocene. The ideological operation of imperial history was manifest in the racist self-justification of imperialism and its associated policies of dispossession, exploitation, genocide, and assimilation, as disseminated through British imperial history taught at Oxbridge in the nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. But it is also present, if less obvious, in the transnational histories of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which tend to ignore climate change. The latter strand of imperial history thus functions to disguise or vindicate the political and economic interests of the Global North in failing to mitigate and adapt to further climate change, and the resulting crises which will be disproportionately borne by the states and citizens of the Global South. This article argues that in order to identify the harms of empire—both epistemic and physical, past and ongoing—imperial history must address the role of empire-building in the origins and trajectory of the climate crisis.

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Emma Gattey is a first-year PhD student in History at the University of Cambridge. Her current work focuses on Māori activist-intellectuals and their participation in transnational anticolonial networks in the late twentieth century. She is a writer and literary critic from Aotearoa New Zealand, a former barrister, and has studied law and history at the University of Otago, and Global and Imperial History at the University of Oxford.

From its inception in the late nineteenth century, the field of British imperial history was intended to provide ideological and practical support for empire. Although this sub-discipline has evolved through multiple theoretical ‘turns’ in recent decades, inevitably affected by the methodological developments in global history, imperial history is still used to naturalise global power structures as well as geopolitical and economic imparities. It is also used to criticize these same hierarchies, but as several global and imperial historians have remarked, there are serious ethical challenges associated with tethering history to policy, and to public understandings of the past. To meet these challenges, Richard Drayton and Dane Kennedy have urged academics to adopt a ‘post-patriotic’, self-reflective imperial history, one which transcends ideology.¹ Well-known scholars within the burgeoning sub-discipline of global and imperial history, and with extensive publications on the history of science, race, and British imperialism, both Drayton and Kennedy have cast a keen methodological eye towards global history’s longevity, morality and impact. This is no doubt meaningful

work. However, these historians’ entreaties are marked by their own positionality, one which focuses on ideological and political battlegrounds between polities and empires, at the expense of a truly global focus on the most pressing planetary conjuncture of our time: the climate crisis, and its enduring connections with empire. This essay summarises these debates, which have long tended to sidestep environmental and climatic concerns, before surveying recent global histories which have closely analysed the interconnections between empire and climate change. Paying closer attention to the dialectics of world-ecology,² these new works of scholarship signal a tipping point in global environmental historiography.

Taking Drayton and Kennedy’s demands for a ‘professional ethics’ of history as a springboard, this essay argues that historians must expand our professional ethical agenda to a fully global, or planetary, scale. This essay recognises the ‘special responsibilities’ of global and imperial historians to spur a post-imperial ‘global studies’ movement.³ It highlights our related obligations to be self-reflexive about our practices and positionality, and to expose presentist, ideological claims about the past.⁴ But it also takes these arguments further, in order to

1 Richard Drayton, “Where Does the World Historian Write From? Objectivity, Moral Conscience and the Past and Present of Imperialism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no. 3 (July 2011): 684, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41305352>; Dane Kennedy, “The Imperial History Wars,” *Journal of British Studies* 54 (January 2015): 5–22, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2014.166>.

2 See Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015).

3 Drayton, “Human Future,” 158, 166–9.

4 Kennedy, “Imperial History Wars,” 5–6, 22.

augment both the discipline itself and the public response to anthropogenic climate change. In short, to identify the harms of empire, imperial history must address the role of empire-building in the origins and trajectory of the climate crisis. The twenty-first century 'professional ethics' of history demands nothing less.

AN 'IMPERIAL SCIENCE'?

Assuming 'specifically imperial roles' by training colonial administrators in both theory and praxis, select British universities became 'stakeholders in Empire' and an integral part of 'the apparatus of Britain's imperial system'.⁵ Within this apparatus, imperial history served as both ideological justification for empire and colonization, and as an integral part in the training programme for colonial administrators.⁶ The twentieth-century consolidation of colonial rule in Britain's newer colonies in Africa led to, amongst other things, the inauguration of Colonial Service training at Oxford and Cambridge in 1926.⁷ Both universities developed particular expertise in the emergent subfield of imperial and Commonwealth history.⁸ Although anthropology became the social science most intimately

associated with imperialism during the interwar period,⁹ imperial history, too, was a crucial weapon in the pedagogical arsenal of empire.¹⁰ From the late twentieth century, in the wake of postcolonial studies, deconstructionism and structuralism, anticolonial critiques have spread to encompass anthropology and ethnography. Both disciplines have grappled with issues of appropriation, decolonisation and representation, often being equated with colonial ideology.¹¹ Imperial history, however, has not faced the same degree of external critique and disciplinary soul-searching. Since each of these disciplines had such a formative position in shaping racist knowledge, their practitioners bear a special responsibility to acknowledge past wrongs and to reorient and decolonise methodologies for the present and future.¹²

Against this evolving background of intra-disciplinary politics, several leading historians have stepped into the breach. Drayton has repeatedly traced the intellectual genealogy of British imperial history as a 'patriotic

5 Sarah E. Stockwell, *The British End of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 7-8, 23.

6 Stockwell, *British End*, 26-7.

7 Stockwell, *British End*, 23.

8 Stockwell, *British End*, 27, 30.

9 Stockwell, *British End*, 27.

10 Dane Kennedy, "Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24, no. 3 (September 1996): 345, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086539608582983>.

11 Nicholas Thomas, *The Return of Curiosity: What Museums are Good for in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 12, 20.

12 See Gurminder K Bhabra, Dalia Gebrial and Kerem Nişancioğlu (eds.), *Decolonising the University* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).

enterprise' which inflicts both epistemic and physical violence by obscuring the role of coercion and violence in the expansion of empire.¹³ Writing most recently as Rhodes Professor of Imperial History at King's College London, Drayton's self-described polemics are animated by a sense of professional responsibility to interrogate this historiographical past.¹⁴ Drawing a direct line between the 'national chauvinism and pro-imperial sentiment' of John Seeley's *The Expansion of England* and the twenty-first century imperialist hagiography of the Scottish-American popular historian Niall Ferguson,¹⁵ Drayton also examines the earliest incumbents of the endowed chairs at Oxford, who adopted and preached a 'uniformly benign view of British imperium'.¹⁶

While conceding that the Oxford programme was attractive in its chronological and geographic scope (the centuries-long timeframe and worldwide focus of colonial history), Drayton argues that this history was 'wholly subordinated to the psychological needs of the

British polity'.¹⁷ The scholarship of Sir Reginald Coupland, Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford (1920-1948), epitomises the ideological defence of empire. Coupland spoke and wrote of the British Empire as an honourable trustee: a benevolent force in the world, operating according to 'the doctrine of trusteeship'.¹⁸ In this view, he was no outlier. In 1942, Oxford's Registrar Sir Douglas Veale wrote to Sir Ralph Furse, Director of Service Recruitment at the Colonial Office, assuring him that at Oxford, cadets would be exposed to 'objective' scholarly assessments of Britain's imperial record, but would still believe in 'the value of what they are doing ... that on the whole the British Empire has been a beneficent Institution'.¹⁹ Clearly, this training involved the very antithesis of 'objective' historical scholarship. Imperial history was an extension of, and even a monument to, the benevolent spread of British cultural, socio-political, and economic systems.

13 Drayton, "Where Does the World Historian Write From?," 675. See also Richard Drayton, "Imperial History and the Human Future," *History Workshop Journal* 74, no. 1 (Autumn 2012): 156-172, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbr074>.

14 Drayton, "Human Future," 158.

15 Drayton, "Where Does the World Historian Write From?," 672, 675. For an account of Ferguson's neo-imperialist history, see Pankaj Mishra, 'Watch This Man', *London Review of Books*, 33/21 (3 November 2011) <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v33/n21/pankaj-mishra/watch-this-man>.

16 Drayton, "Human Future," 157.

17 Richard Drayton, "Imperial and Commonwealth History: A Genealogy" (address to Modern History Faculty, Oxford, 29 October 1997): 7-8.

18 See Reginald C. Coupland, *The Empire in These Days: An Interpretation* (London: Macmillan, 1935). For a critique of the mandate system of the League of Nations and its successor, the trusteeship system under the United Nations, see Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ch 3.

19 Bodleian Library, Oxford University Archives, UR 6/Col/6, Sir Douglas Veale to Sir Ralph Furse, 11 September 1942, cited in Stockwell, *British End*, 34.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL EVOLUTION

Predictably, the historiographical pendulum swung on. Co-authors and leading Oxbridge historians of imperial and commonwealth history, Jack Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, challenged this patriotic orthodoxy from the 1950s. Through their work, they extended the scope of imperial history beyond formal empire and recognised the colonized as agents of historical change.²⁰ Not needing the subject-recognition of academic observers, Indigenous and other colonized peoples had long recognised themselves as agents of historical change and creators of historical meaning.²¹

Still, this ostensibly ‘anti-ideological turn’ could not, of course, transcend ideology.²² By refocusing attention on indigenous agents and the ‘submerged’ histories of specific peripheries,²³ Gallagher and Robinson’s thesis insulated the imperial core and ‘the national story’ from association with overseas violence.²⁴

In 1984, David Fieldhouse (arguably once the world’s ‘leading imperial economic historian’)²⁵ and the American historian Robin Winks separately diagnosed the fragmentation—presumably irreparable—of imperial history in the aftermath of decolonization.²⁶ Both historians saw the field dissolving into nationalist histories in service of the new nation-states. However,

20 Jack Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” *Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (August 1953): 1-15, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0289.1953.tb01482.x>; Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1957). Gallagher (1963-70) and Robinson (1971-87) were successive Beit Professors of Commonwealth History at Oxford. Gallagher went on to become Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial and Naval History at the University of Cambridge (1971-80).

21 See, for scant but significant examples, Makereti, *The Old-Time Maori* (London, 1938; repr. Auckland, 1986); Te Rangihira, ‘The Coming of the Maori’, in *Cawthron Lectures: Volume II* (Nelson, 1925), pp. 17-57. For analysis, see Jane Carey, ‘A “Happy Blending”? Māori Networks, Anthropology and “Native” Policy in New Zealand, the Pacific and Beyond’, in Jane Carey and Jane Lydon (eds.), *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections and Exchange* (New York, 2014), pp. 184-215; Ned Blackhawk and Isaiah Lorado Wilner

(eds.), *Indigenous Visions: Rediscovering the World of Franz Boas* (New Haven, 2018), pp. 3-41.

22 Drayton, “Where Does the World Historian Write From?,” 677-8.

23 Gallagher and Robinson, “Imperialism of Free Trade,” 1.

24 Drayton, “Where Does the World Historian Write From?,” 678.

25 Peter Burroughs, ‘David Fieldhouse and the Business of Empire’, in Peter Burroughs and A.J. Stockwell (eds.), *Managing the Business of Empire: Essays in Honour of David Fieldhouse* (London: Routledge, 1998), 7.

26 David Fieldhouse, “Can Humpty-Dumpty Be Put Together Again? Imperial History in the 1980s,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12, no. 2 (January 1984): 9–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086538408582657>; Robin W. Winks, “Problem Child of British History: The British Empire-Commonwealth,” in *Recent Views on British History: Essays on Historical Writing Since 1966*, ed. R. Schlatter (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984): 451–92.

these have proved premature eulogies. From the 1980s onwards, subjecting itself to turn after turn, imperial history has constantly regenerated its field of inquiry and methodology through interaction with other disciplines.²⁷ As part of the social and cultural turns of the 1980s, imperial history has extended its sphere of concern and methodology by borrowing from comparative literature, historical anthropology, feminist history and gender history.²⁸

This brings us to the font of postcolonial studies: the influential literary and cultural critic, Edward Said. Flowing from Said's seminal text, *Orientalism*, postcolonial theory revealed that imperial power is not reducible to material phenomena, but endures as an epistemological system sustaining relations of power which have far outlasted political decolonization.²⁹ Racist power relations remain one of the most salient, violent vectors of the intersectional harms of imperial legacies. Although initially hostile to the perceived encroachment (or

'colonization') of postcolonial theory,³⁰ imperial historians have increasingly adopted its innovations and dialectics to assess the cultural, discursive, and racist dimensions of imperial power.³¹ Drawing on structuralist, deconstructivist and postmodernist strands of literary theory, Said's critical analysis revealed the imperial sciences of Orientalism as disciplines yoked to the imperial project of constructing an Oriental 'Other' and thus, in opposition, constructing the Occidental 'Self'.³² This analysis has helped imperial historians to understand the creation and preservation of cultural hegemony. In another foundational postcolonial text, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', the literary scholar and critical feminist theorist Gayatri Spivak similarly argued that the geopolitical and economic hegemony of 'the West' is not a miracle of parthenogenesis. Indeed, 'to buy a self-contained version of the West is to ignore its production by the imperialist project'.³³ As a corrective to this epistemic violence, Spivak advocated for 'counterhegemonic ideological production', to be achieved through rigorous ideological analysis of forms of representation.³⁴

27 See Christopher Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989); Peter J. Cain and Antony G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Harlow: Longman, 2002); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1820* (London: Pimlico, 2003).

28 See, for example, Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

29 Kennedy, "Imperial History," 347.

30 Kennedy, "Imperial History," 346.

31 Kennedy, "Imperial History Wars," 9.

32 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 21, 27.

33 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 86.

34 Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 69, 75.

The discipline continued to evolve, with a fresh turn in the 1990s to ‘new imperial history’, marked by a theoretical shift from the notion of unilateral subjugation to concepts of networks and connections. Historians working under this novel approach challenge the metropolitan/colonial binary and maintain that both colonizer and colonized must be studied, because ‘Britain’s relationship with its empire was mutually constitutive’.³⁵

Drayton argues, however, that although these successive ‘turns’ are not sanguine accounts of empire, nor are they sufficiently sanguinary. In their metaphysical focus on ‘epistemic violence’, historians have ignored the reality of physical violence throughout imperial history.³⁶ The ethical implications of writing post-colonial global and imperial history are significant, because while academic historians remain silent on violence, the ideological project of imperialism is ongoing in both explicit and more insidious, discursive ways. Pro-imperial views of the past, Drayton suggests, have obvious political valence in the contemporary era of imperial violence and terror.³⁷

Popular historical texts reverberate in public and political attitudes to the past and therefore influence opinions on the use of coercion and power abroad.³⁸

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Instead of passive or active collusion with the imperial project, Drayton calls for ‘post-patriotism’ in imperial history, one which rejects false ‘nostalgia and teleology’.³⁹ Setting a professional ethical agenda, Drayton suggests that historians have ‘special responsibilities’ to galvanize a post-imperial ‘global studies’ movement, which is both interdisciplinary and collaborative across universities.⁴⁰ Within this project, world (or global) history ought to lead the way. All historians ought to recognise the constitutive power of how they narrate the story of the past, which shapes the very form of the present.⁴¹

Kennedy similarly emphasizes the global historian’s two-pronged obligations: (i) to be self-reflexive about our practices, or ‘self-aware of our own subject positions’, recognising how our specific

35 Kennedy, “Imperial History Wars,” 9; see Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 1.
 36 Drayton, “Where Does the World Historian Write From?,” 680.
 37 Drayton, “Where Does the World Historian Write From?,” 676.

38 Drayton, “Where Does the World Historian Write From?,” 680.
 39 Drayton, “Where Does the World Historian Write From?,” 684.
 40 Drayton, “Human Future,” 158, 166-9. An ethical scholarly agenda remarkably fulfilled in Catherine Hall’s ‘Legacies of British Slave-Ownership’ Project: “The Database”, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/details/>.
 41 Drayton, “Human Future,” 166-7.

temporal and spatial settings inform our scholarship; and (ii) to expose presentist, ideologically weighted claims about the past *and* to illuminate the agendas such claims are intended to serve.⁴² These dual professional ethics will improve the discipline itself, by revealing ‘the forces that have helped to ensure that British imperial history retains its relevance today’.⁴³

A PLANET-SIZED BLINDSPOT?

And yet, these clarion calls for a professional ethics of global and imperial history are incomplete. Oddly, their blind spot is the globe itself.⁴⁴ In their self-avowedly polemical and provocative works, Kennedy and Drayton show no consciousness of *physical* space. With their focus being political—specifically, with the ‘Military Intellectual Complex’⁴⁵—they neglect to engage with the interrelated history of climate, colonization and empire. In so doing, they forgo the role of imperialism in critically endangering the biosphere, geosphere, atmosphere, in the blink of a geological eye.⁴⁶

This focus on ideology ignores the longer-term violence humankind has inflicted on the planet through greenhouse gas emissions, a process inextricably connected with the British empire, the primary causes of industrialization, the rise of manufacturing, and the global extraction and exploitation of natural resources.⁴⁷ This position ignores the interconnections between exploitation of the environment, labour, social reproductive capacity, women and children, and the violence inflicted on various constructed categories of ‘Other’. This is grimly similar to the denunciation of the ‘planetary analytic’ of the Anthropocene for its erasure of histories of racism, slavery, and violent dispossession.⁴⁸ Too much is omitted; too many are omitted. This position also ignores the global carbon imbalance, whereby developing countries of the Global South have contributed far less to human-induced climate change (with certain areas even acting as carbon sinks at various periods) than developed countries, and yet are far more likely to experience the worst of the climate crisis, and sooner.⁴⁹ One would

42 Kennedy, “Imperial History Wars,” 5-6, 22.

43 Kennedy, “Imperial History Wars,” 22.

44 Julia Adeney Thomas, “The Present Climate of Economic History,” in *Economic Development and Environmental History in the Anthropocene: Perspectives on Asia and Africa*, ed. Gareth Austin (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 294-8.

45 Drayton, “Where Does the World Historian Write From?,” 674.

46 John L. Brooke, *Climate Change and*

the Course of Global History: A Rough Journey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 452.

47 Brooke, *Climate Change*, 470.

48 Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 2-8.

49 Brooke, *Climate Change*, 487-8. See also J.R. McNeill and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration. An Environmental History of the Anthropocene Since 1945* (Cambridge,

assume that the scientific consensus on climate change would be salient to practitioners of global and imperial history,⁵⁰ particularly given the parallels with other metanarratives and concepts within the field. For example, these inequities mirror the self-perpetuating, inequitable and racist international division of labour that was consolidated following the Great Divergence.⁵¹ However, most imperial historians are silent about the Anthropocene and the connections of empire to the current climate crisis. Even when anthropogenic climate change is the subject of historical analysis, racist global power hierarchies are paid insufficient attention. Indeed, Pasifika scholars have described this inattention to differentiated climate burdens and historical responsibility as a ‘feeling of helplessness’ comparable to ‘former colonies in Oceania being colonised a second time’.⁵² To study a topic

of this magnitude, amongst other methodological shifts, we need to forge a decolonized, egalitarian global and imperial history. Such a history would examine climate change ‘from below the elite level’, include perspectives from the Global South, and chart diverse ‘experiences of climate against a human history that is built on a scaffolding of inequality’.⁵³

Increasingly, global historians are addressing the nexus between empire, colonialism and climate change. One of the leading voices is the postcolonial historian Dipesh Chakrabarty.⁵⁴ In his influential article, ‘The Climate of History’, Chakrabarty observes that historians must revise many of their fundamental assumptions and procedures in this era of the Anthropocene, in which ‘humans have become geological agents, changing the most basic physical

Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 1-6, 155-205; and Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

- 50 Spencer R. Weart, *The Discovery of Global Warming* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 142-192; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C Above Pre-industrial Levels* (2018).
- 51 See Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11, 21-4.
- 52 Vilsoni Hereniko, “The Human Face of Climate Change: Notes from Rotuma

- and Tuvalu,” in *Pacific Futures: Projects, Politics, and Interests*, ed. Will Rollason (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 228. Pasifika is a collective term used to refer to individuals/communities of Cook Island, Māori, Niuean, Fijian, Tongan, Samoan and other South Pacific nations. It includes Island-born, New Zealand-raised or New Zealand-born and Island-raised people.
- 53 Nancy J Jacobs, Danielle Johnstone and Christopher S Kelly, ‘The Anthropocene from Below’, in Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne (eds.), *World Histories From Below: Disruption and Dissent, 1750 to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 197.
- 54 Most recently, in Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Crises of Civilization: Exploring Global and Planetary Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

processes of the Earth'.⁵⁵ However, Chakrabarty's advocacy of an undifferentiated 'species history' has both obscured global asymmetries in responsibility for climate change and deflected attention from the intersections of imperialism and environmental degradation.⁵⁶ Through the lenses of the Great Divergence, postcolonial theory, and 'climatic orientalism',⁵⁷ along with other concepts and themes of global history, John Brooke, Andreas Malm, Corey Ross and other historians have shown that the two dovetailing forms of violence—epistemic and physical—are mutually reinforcing within the history of empire and climate change.⁵⁸ These

studies reveal intimate, necessarily *longue durée* linkages between the industrialisation, fossil-fuel combustion, and exploitative socio-political structures underpinning both imperialism and climate change.

To master the empirical data and multi-scalar nature of climate change, many academics have argued that historians need renewed concepts and methodologies.⁵⁹ Within existing analytical frameworks, however, global historians have demonstrated that the discipline is well-equipped to assess the complex role of imperialism in causing and intensifying climate change. Thus, global historians ought to continue contributing to this inherently interdisciplinary, transnational field. The focus of 'new imperial history' on circuits of material, economic and scientific exchange between—as well as within—empires is a promising lens for examining the histories of atmospheric science and change beyond national frames of reference.⁶⁰ More scholarship is

55 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry*, 35, no. 2 (2009): 197-222, <https://doi.org/10.1086/596640>.

56 Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, "The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative," *The Anthropocene Review* 1, no. 1 (January 2014): 64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019613516291>.

57 Fabien Locher and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, "Modernity's Frail Climate: A Climate History of Environmental Reflexivity," *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 3 (Spring 2012): 587, <https://doi.org/10.1086/664552>.

58 Brooke, *Climate Change*; Jason W Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015); Jason W Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016); Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso, 2016); Andreas Malm, *The Progress of This Storm* (London: Verso, 2018); Corey Ross, *Ecology and Power in the Age of Empire: Europe and the Transformation of the Tropical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017);

Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 152; Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate* (London: Penguin Books, 2015); Naomi Klein, *On Fire: The Burning Case for a Green New Deal* (London: Allen Lane, 2019).

59 Chakrabarty, "Climate of History"; Jorge E. Viñuales, *The Organisation of the Anthropocene: In Our Hands?* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 24; Thomas, "Present Climate," 297-8.

60 See Alan Lester, "Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire," *History Compass* 4, no. 1, (January 2006): 124-41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-9906.2006.00124.x>.

required on intra- and inter-imperial forces and processes of exchange which stimulated and exacerbated global warming, work which transcends dyadic core-periphery models of imperial relationships in order to understand the interrelation of climate and empire.

In order to identify the harms of empire—both epistemic and physical, past and ongoing—imperial history must address the role of empire-building in the origins and trajectory of the climate crisis. Much of British imperial history has been directly involved in the ideological defence and perpetuation of slavery, empire, and the colonial project. While imperial history has grappled with its ideological underpinnings insofar as they relate to international geopolitical and economic inequities and contemporary violence, it has yet to engage fully with the intersections of empire and climate change. To resolve the seemingly internecine ‘family quarrel’ of imperial history, ‘self-reflection’ is a recurring prescription.⁶¹ But the current global moment requires a rallying point beyond the self, beyond party politics, beyond arbitrary national borders, and beyond clashes of civilization. To ‘speak truth unto power—power in the present and not simply in the past’,⁶² historians must

examine all forms of empire as they are connected to global warming and the present climate crisis.

org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2005.00189.x.
61 Durba Ghosh, “Another Set of Imperial Turns?,” *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (June 2012): 774, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.117.3.772>.

62 Linda Colley, “The Difficulties of Empire: Present, Past and Future,” *Historical*

Research 79, no. 205 (2006): 382, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2281.2006.00395.x>.