

Thinking the Empire Whole

A WORKSHOP ON LIVES AND DEBATES IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE THROUGH THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: THURSDAY, 9 AUGUST 2018. CONVENED BY KATE FULLAGAR

Opening with a keynote from Visiting Professor Steven Pincus, University of Chicago, this workshop includes roundtable sessions from many of Australia's leading historians on British imperial history. Participants will engage with the challenges of cohering, and contesting, the history of British expansion, 1680s–1820s.

Nostalgia for the British Empire is back, not only in various public spaces but also in certain academic circles. Scholarly pushback against this resurgent nostalgia has come mostly from historians of the 19th and 20th century. Experts on the 18th century have been quieter in reply. This is partly due to the fractured nature of 18th-century British imperial history, divided as it is into the fields of colonial America, colonial India, African slavery, Pacific exploration, Australian settlement and so on. One aim of this workshop is to forge more comprehensive thinking about the British Empire through the long eighteenth century. It will encourage cohesion among disparate scholars that will help to answer renewed questions about the purpose, morality, and exercise of British settler and non-settler colonialism throughout the modern era.

Thinking more connectedly about empire also aligns with how many people involved in British trade, settlement, protection, and exploration at the time understood it. Prof. Pincus's opening paper especially will address how the global consideration of British imperial practice worked on the ground—its agents, its imperatives, and its effects. The two following roundtables will test and extend the consequences of thinking about the British Empire as one global phenomenon. They will also showcase recent Australian scholarship on British intellectual and social history. The first roundtable features the perspectives of some lives in imperial spaces, from slavers to the enslaved, from settlers to sojourners, and from the transported to the dispossessed. The second focuses on different levels and spaces for debating the empire, from popular culture, political economy, landed gentry, and the Scottish Enlightenment.

Date: Thursday, 9 August 2018

Time: 10.15am-5.30pm

Venue: Conference Room C, Level 3, MUSE Building, 18 Wally's Walk, Macquarie University

ENQUIRIES & REGISTRATION

Enquiries to kate.fullagar@mq.edu.au. This workshop is free but registration is essential. Please register by 2 August 2018 at: <https://facingnewworlds.org/upcoming-events/>

PROGRAM

Welcomes and Keynote, 10.15am-12.00pm

Thinking the Empire Whole

Steven Pincus

Roundtable 1, 12.45pm-2.30pm

Living the British Empire

Michael McDonnell

Grace Karskens

Trevor Burnard

Jennifer McLaren

Roundtable 2, 2.45-4.30

Debating the British Empire

Alison Bashford

Bruce Buchan

John Gascoigne

Kate Fullagar

Discussion, 4.30pm-5.30pm

This event is generously supported by a Faculty of Arts Research Workshop Grant, Macquarie University, and by the Australian Research Council's Linkage Project, "Facing New Worlds."



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

KEYNOTE: STEVEN PINCUS

Steven Pincus is Thomas E. Donnelley Professor of History at the University of Chicago. He is the author of *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668*; *England's Glorious Revolution 1688-89; 1688: The First Modern Revolution*, and most recently *The Heart of the Declaration: The Founders' Case for Activist Government*. He has published numerous essays on the economic, cultural, political and intellectual history of early modern Britain, early modern Empires, the British Empire, and the early modern Atlantic. He is currently completing *A Global History of the British Empire to 1784*, which offers a new interpretation of the American Revolution and the origins of British India, and a book on the American Revolution in global context. He is also working with Jim Robinson on a book on the Divergence of Britain: the state and the making of the first industrial revolution.



ABSTRACT FOR PROF. PINCUS'S KEYNOTE

Too much writing about the British Empire in the 17th and 18th centuries focuses on a specific province or colony, or perhaps on the bilateral relationship with England. Much is lost by this. Imperial agents and imperial subjects often reasoned from the experience of other peoples and places in the empire. Commercial circuits depended on the whole of the global empire. But it is important to realize that the empire was much more than cultural affinity or sovereignty claims. It was based on institutions and infrastructure. In recent years the most ambitious attempt to think outside the merely local has come from those scholars interested in settler colonialism. But theorists of settler colonialism, because they take inspiration from a particular interpretative moment in cultural anthropology, have an insufficiently robust account of the imperial state. This in turn means that they often lump all Indigenous peoples together and fail to differentiate between different partisan groups within the empire. Our collaborative team (this paper is a collaborative effort with Alyssa Reichardt and Tiraana Bains) prefers tribalization theories that have a more ample account of the state. We argue that there was an increasingly robust and differentially powerful British

imperial state that spanned the entirety of the empire from the Americas to South Asia and beyond. Infrastructure shaped this empire, both circulating news, goods, and military supplies among the colonizers and shaping the available responses of Indigenous peoples and marginal groups within the empire. There was not a single British imperial approach but an active struggle between those who understood empire, on the one hand, as a hierarchically-organized institution based on unitary parliamentary sovereignty which existed at the service of the English landed classes, and those who saw it, on the other hand, as a confederation based on widely dispersed sovereignty that sought to improve the welfare and happiness of all its inhabitants. Only by understanding this dialectic and the different uses of imperial power made by different groups is it possible to understand both imperial resistance and imperial imposition in the age of revolutions.

SPEAKERS

Alison Bashford is Professor of History at UNSW, formerly Vere Harmsworth Professor at Cambridge. Her most recent book is *The New Worlds of Thomas Robert Malthus*, co-authored with Joyce E. Chaplin, published with Princeton University Press (2016).

Bruce Buchan is Associate Professor of History at Griffith University. He is the author *An Intellectual History of Political Corruption* (2014) and *The Empire of Political Thought: Indigenous Australian and the Language of Colonial Government* (2008).

Trevor Burnard is Professor of American History and Head of School in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. He is the author of many books including *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (2004).

Kate Fullagar is a senior lecturer in modern history at Macquarie University. She is the author of *The Savage Visit: New World Peoples and Popular Imperial Culture in Britain, 1710-1795* (Berkeley, 2012). She is co-editor with Michael McDonnell of a forthcoming collection called *Facing Empire* (Hopkins, 2018).

John Gascoigne is Emeritus Professor of History at UNSW. An expert on Joseph Banks, his latest book is *Encountering the Pacific in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Grace Karskens is Professor of History at UNSW. A leading authority on early colonial Australia, her book *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney* won the Prime Minister's Literary Award in 2010.

Michael A. McDonnell is Professor of American History at the University of Sydney. He is the author of *The Politics of War: Race, Class, and Social Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia* (2007), and *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (2015).

Jennifer McLaren has recently completed a PhD at Macquarie University. Her thesis, 'Irish Lives in the British Caribbean: Engaging with Empire, 1770-1835,' utilised the biographies of ten Irish sojourners to address the question of the Irish experience of empire. She has published in a special edition of *Éire-Ireland*.