

The most significant limitation of Fowler's otherwise rigorous study – apart from some minor redundancies and a conclusion that reads more like an additional chapter than a synthesis – is its lack of engagement with slavery in Dutch colonies beyond the Atlantic, particularly in the Indian Ocean world and the South African Cape Colony. Fowler justifies this omission “for reasons of scale” (p. 126), but the absence remains consequential. It undercuts the global entanglement of the Dutch West India Company (WIC) and the Dutch East India Company (VOC) – connections Fowler herself references repeatedly (e.g., pp. 23, 85). This *absence* becomes especially pronounced in the final chapter's discussion of the historiography of racialized slavery; a field recently expanded by scholars working on Dutch slavery outside the Atlantic world, including Matthias van Rossum (and the members of the GLOBALISE project), Julia Holzmann, Eva Marie Lehner, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Marsely L. Kehoe. The visual archive of Dutch Batavia, for example, contains ample evidence of slavery's *presence* in the plantation “interiors” and enslaved people's *visibility* to Dutch citizens. Fowler briefly notes this presence (p. 137), though refrains from exploring these materials further – an inclusion that could have deepened and contextualized her central argument.

*Slavery and the Invention of Dutch Art* is a model of interdisciplinary scholarship. It invites us to read, see, and feel what lies beneath the surface of papers, canvas, and colours. Highly recommended for those seeking methodological innovation, critical engagement with the legacies of slavery, and empathy for those (historically) forced into the record by others.

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Elisabeth Heijmans and Sophie Rose (eds), *Diversity and Empires. Negotiating Plurality in European Imperial Projects from Early Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2023). 243 pp. ISBN 9781032325859.

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In *Diversity and Empires. Negotiating Plurality in European Imperial Projects from Early Modernity*, editors Elisabeth Heijmans and Sophie Rose bring together scholars to examine the diversity of social groups as an inherent

element of early modern and modern European colonial empires. Building on Jane Burbank's and Frederick Cooper's influential concept of a "politics of difference" as a key strategy in imperial governance, the volume offers a multifaceted investigation into the production and contestation of difference between colonizers and colonized, as well as among colonized peoples. Global in scope and intersectional in method – attending to race, ethnicity, religion, class, and gender – the volume frames diversity not as a recent concern tied to identity politics, but as a foundational and enduring feature of imperial rule.

The volume opens with a brief introduction in which the editors clarify their conceptualization of diversity as the volume's guiding concept. Heijmans and Rose define "diversity formations" not as fixed realities but as historically and politically constituted processes that are continually shaped and reshaped across time and space. They emphasize that these formations often persist over extended periods, overlap with one another, and interact in complex ways. Importantly, the editors highlight the dynamic interplay between top-down and bottom-up forces, including the actions, negotiations, and resistances of different social groups themselves.

The eleven case studies that follow are organized into four thematic parts. Part one, dedicated to the theme of religion and the negotiation of belonging, opens with Tamar Herzog's analysis of how categories of 'new' and 'old' Christians became markers of otherness in the Spanish empire. Ângela Barreto Xavier examines Portuguese attempts to limit diversity in marriage rituals among Goan populations, and Alexander Geelen explores categorizations of people as enslaved, Christian, and Pulaya through Dutch East India Company court cases in eighteenth-century Malabar. Part 2 is on slavery and legal status. André Luís Bezerra Ferreira studies how Indigenous, African, and mixed-race enslaved people claimed their freedom through the legal system of the Captaincy of Maranhão in the Portuguese Amazon in the eighteenth century. Stef Vink examines criminal court cases in 1730s and 1740s Curaçao to illuminate the experiences of enslaved people as well as colonial authorities' attempts at wielding control. Rafaël Thiebaut compares labor relations and regulatory systems affecting indigenous and imported enslaved workers in the Dutch colonies of Cape Colony and the Guianas. Part 3, on subjecthood and imperial states, opens with McGregor's chapter on the Dutch conquest of English Surinam and English conquest of New Netherland in the 1660s and how surrenders and peace negotiations contributed to the development of an inter-imperial legal repertoire

aimed at managing mobility and diversity. Tessa De Boer follows with a nuanced reading of understandings of foreignness and illegality through the application of the eighteenth-century French prohibited trade regulations, the *Exclusif*, on the island of Guadeloupe.

A major strength of these three sections, all of which focus on the early modern period, is the contributors' commitment to interpretive nuance. The case studies skillfully interweave macro- and micro-level analysis, integrate both top-down and bottom-up perspectives, and resist reductive binaries. Thiebaut and McGregor's comparative, multi-sited approaches are particularly compelling, illuminating both convergences and divergences across and within empires. Other rich thematic resonances – such as the legal tactics of colonial authorities or the varied strategies of resistance among the colonized – emerge across the first three parts of the volume, though much of the comparative synthesis is left to the reader. A minor shortcoming is that not all these chapters engage directly with the volume's central conceptual language. Although most contributors expose layered hierarchies of social differentiation among different groups, several do so without invoking the editors' overarching framework or clarifying how their analysis advances the volume's core agenda.

The fourth and final section extends the analysis into the modern period. Margret Frenz explores how diversity was practiced and understood in twentieth-century South Africa across different regimes, with particular attention to educational policies and the region's Indian population. Jane Burbank highlights diversity as a fact of imperial life, first through an overview of Russian empire management in a "Eurasian mode" and then through an analysis of theories of ethnic and religious diversity among twentieth-century Russian intellectuals. The longer-term perspectives in these two chapters underscore the continuity of strategies of diversity management from the early modern to the modern period. Jean-Frédéric Schaub's concluding chapter ties the volume together, highlighting how hierarchies of differentiated status, especially through processes of racialization, functioned as political tools within and beyond imperial contexts. Schaub ends with a methodological call for collaboration and multilingual and vernacular abilities to counteract biases in studying diversity on an imperial and global scale.

As a whole, *Diversity and Empires* compellingly demonstrates how diversity formations were not static conditions but dynamic processes, shaped and contested by a range of actors across imperial contexts. The volume's attention to both structural mechanisms, such as laws, institutions, and classificatory regimes, and the agency of individuals

and communities is especially effective. Particularly noteworthy is its foregrounding of the agency of Indigenous and enslaved people, groups often marginalized in imperial narratives. Acknowledging contemporary debates around diversity and identity politics, the volume offers a timely reminder that such issues are nothing new. Scholars and students of empire will find in this collection a nuanced and generative contribution – one that deepens our understanding of how difference was constructed, regulated, and experienced across empires, and why those histories continue to resonate today.

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Peter Scholliers, *A History of Bread. Consumers, Bakers and Public Authorities since the 18th Century* (New York & London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024). 192 pp. ISBN 9781350361775.

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In food history, bread – particularly the production and consumption of French bread – has dominated the field. The worldwide sweep of *The Structures of Everyday Life. The Limits of the Possible* (the first of three volumes of Ferdinand Braudel's *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th – 18th Century*, first published in French in 1967) established the centrality of daily bread in the European diet and inspired a generation of French historians in the Annales School tradition to pursue social histories of bakers and bread crises, economic histories of market prices, political histories of grain provisioning, and cultural histories of taste, especially what makes “good bread” so good. Steven L. Kaplan has devoted his career to the topic of bread across three centuries, publishing four monographs on this topic, as well as a Parisian guide to bakeries. It raises the question of how a history of bread since the eighteenth century provides any new knowledge to the field. Peter Scholliers, a leading scholar of diet, consumer society, and labor history, as well as co-editor of numerous collections on European foodways, has provided a masterful history of bread in the Belgian context which draws on vibrant and varied scientific and culinary sources, as well as serial studies of bread prices and standards of living among Belgium's rural and urban populace.

The scope of the book is impressive, spanning from the 1700s to the present. Scholliers writes with a lively and accessible style that provides