

The Historical Journal, 63, 5 (2020), pp. 1378–1389 © The Author(s), 2020. Published by Cambridge University Press.

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doi:10.1017/S0018246X20000084

REVIEW ARTICLE

TOWARDS A HISTORY OF GLOBAL HUMANITARIANISM

The transnational activist: transformations and comparisons from the Anglo-world since the nineteenth century. Edited by Stefan Berger and Sean Scalmer. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Pp. 364. ISBN 9783319662053. £80.07.

Empire of hell: religion and the campaign to end convict transportation in the British empire, 1788–1875. By Hilary M. Carey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. 360. ISBN 9781107337787. £75.00.

From empire to humanity: the American Revolution and the origins of humanitarianism. By Amanda B. Moniz. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 175. ISBN 9780190240356. £62.00.

The charity market and humanitarianism in Britain, 1870–1912. By Sarah Roddy, Julie-Marie Strange, and Bertrand Taithe. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. 240. ISBN 9781350057982. £75.00.

We are currently witnessing the emergence of global humanitarianism as a fully fledged historical field. Eighteenth-century transatlantic abolitionists, nineteenth-century imperial missionaries, twentieth-century aid workers, and twenty-first-century activists inhabit the pages of more and more published books and articles. Global humanitarianism denotes a sphere of action as well as an object of study. Questions as to where or what the global is persist. The books under review all operate within the sphere of Western influence: North America, the British empire, or former colonies. They also have similar protagonists. They are largely populated with practitioners of humanitarianism, rather than the objects of their beneficence. This raises some questions. Where does global humanitarianism take place and who does it encompass? Is global humanitarianism inherently enmeshed with Western expansionism and unequal power dynamics?

These books' shared setting and cast of characters may, to some extent, be accounted for by tracing the scholarly lineage of global humanitarian history. The field emerged from human rights studies and the new imperial history. Historians seeking to trace the origins of humanitarian sensibility present opposing birth-dates and motivating factors in a contested scholarly landscape. Lynn Hunt's and Samuel Moyn's competing views regarding the origins of

human rights established many of the key debates within humanitarian history. Hunt has situated the birth of human rights in the eighteenth century, manifested by the Declaration of Independence in the United States and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in France. She argues that these two events were the natural culmination of a growth of autonomy and empathy among the French and North American settler populations.¹

Moyn disagrees, asserting that modern human rights emerged in the late 1970s.² He suggests they represent a 'last utopia' in response to the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the waning of the optimism that accompanied decolonization and independence across Africa and Asia.³ Universal human rights, he argues, are the antitheses of the rights articulated by the revolutionary movements in France and the United States.⁴ These rights were those of citizens rather than individual persons, relying upon the power of the nation rather than existing as a universal code of conduct. Furthermore, human rights and humanitarianism have been used by nationalist historians in the United States and Britain to create a 'history of American morals' and a narrative of 'imperial humanitarianism', respectively.⁵ Historians writing after Moyn and Hunt, including the authors of the works under review, both expand upon and contest their ideas. Amanda Moniz challenges Moyn's timeline, situating rights discourse in the eighteenth century. She also echoes Hunt's argument about the emergence of human rights in the late eighteenth century, suggesting that a burgeoning culture of sensibility, encouraged by the emergence of novels and a republic of letters, led to a growth of humanitarianism. All four books also engage with discussions regarding the relationship between humanitarianism and empire.

As the field of humanitarian history has expanded, so too has the gap between histories of human rights and humanitarianism. Michael Barnett has suggested that 'human rights typically focuses on the long-term goal of eliminating the causes of suffering, humanitarianism on the urgent goal of keeping people alive'.⁶ This is but one of many interpretations of the differences between the two. Indeed, Barnett's description of 'alchemical humanitarianism', which seeks to remove the root cause of suffering, closely resembles his definition of human rights.⁷ Perhaps it is easier to spot the difference in practice. Alan Lester and Fae Dussart suggest that George Arthur, the lieutenant governor of Van Diemen's Land, practised humanitarianism as a defence against a discourse of human rights which he believed was incendiary and revolutionary.⁸

¹ Lynn Hunt, *Inventing human rights: a history* (New York, NY, 2007), p. 32.

² Samuel Moyn, *Human rights and the uses of history* (London, 2014), p. 51.

³ Samuel Moyn, *The last utopia: human rights in history* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), p. 8.

⁴ Moyn, *Human rights*, p. 13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. xiv, xviii.

⁶ Michael Barnett, *Empire of humanity: a history of humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY, 2011), p. 16.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸ Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, *Colonization and the origins of humanitarian governance: protecting Aborigines across the nineteenth-century British empire* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 42.

In this example, humanitarianism represented the status quo which rights discourse sought to subvert. The books under review continue to expand upon definitions of humanitarianism, exploring who humanitarians were, where they worked, and what they sought to achieve.

While Moyn and Hunt were pursuing the intellectual and cultural origins of human rights, respectively, historians of imperial humanitarianism were beginning to examine the material trajectories of specific global humanitarian networks and transnational activists. In this respect, the field has followed the same trajectory as several others, from labour history to the history of migration and mercantile networks. Another powerful influence on the study of imperial humanitarianism has been the ‘new imperial history’ that came of age in the 1990s and early 2000s, with its interdisciplinary borrowings from post-colonial theory, anthropology, and literary studies.⁹ Historians such as Antoinette Burton and Catherine Hall seek to place the metropole and the colony in a more equally balanced relationship, and attempt to include the voices of the marginalized and subaltern, often taking a transnational approach.¹⁰ Others, like Tony Ballantyne, Simon Potter, and Zoe Laidlaw conceive of the empire not simply in terms of a metro–periphery dichotomy, but as a networked or webbed entity.¹¹

Practitioners of the new imperial history identify humanitarianism as an important weapon in the arsenal of imperial expansion and the moral justification for empire. For example, Christopher Leslie Brown has highlighted the importance of the abolitionist campaign in the construction of the idea of a British moral empire. He suggests that the abolition of slavery enabled the British state to ‘restore [its] moral authority’ in the wake of the American Revolution.¹² David Lambert and Alan Lester have also revealed the intimate relationships between humanitarians and empire, tracing the trajectories of philanthropists who utilized the structure of the British empire to carry out their activities, namely missionary work, abolition, and the protection of indigenous peoples in the Antipodes. These actors did not advocate for an end to imperial expansion, but rather believed that the forces of empire could be used to improve the lives of all those living under imperial rule.¹³

⁹ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in question: theory, knowledge, history* (Berkeley, CA, 2005); Paul Gilroy, *The black Atlantic* (Cambridge, MA, 1993); Laura Ann Stoler, *Carnal knowledge and imperial power: race and the intimate in colonial rule* (Berkeley, CA, 2002).

¹⁰ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of history: British feminists, Indian women, and imperial culture* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994); Catherine Hall, *Civilising subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago, IL, 2002).

¹¹ Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of empire: locating New Zealand’s colonial past* (Vancouver, 2014); Simon Potter, *News and the British world: the emergence of an imperial press system, 1876–1922* (Oxford, 2003); Zoe Laidlaw, *Colonial connections, 1815–1845: patronage, the information revolution and colonial government* (Manchester, 2005).

¹² Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral capital: foundations of British abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), p. 29.

¹³ David Lambert and Alan Lester, ‘Geographies of colonial philanthropy’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 28 (2004), p. 323.

Thus, Skinner and Lester propose that the history of humanitarianism can be seen as a component of imperial relations; at the same time, however, stressing that its study must encompass trans-imperial, international, and transnational approaches.¹⁴ Yet employing empire as a backdrop for histories of global humanitarianism presents challenges in terms of whose story is being told. Tehila Sasson cautions against the risk of focusing on the practitioners of humanitarianism, thereby denying agency or a voice to those on its receiving end.¹⁵ Recent works have emerged that challenge and interrogate this imbalance. Lester and Dussart assert that power imbalances between ‘donors’, ‘practitioners’, and ‘recipients’ are integral to humanitarianism.¹⁶ Rather than isolating one agent in this triptych, they examine the humanitarian relationships themselves, treating them as the constitutive entities which make up global humanitarianism. They interrogate the relationship between practitioners of humanitarianism and indigenous peoples, in particular Dja Dja Wurring aboriginal peoples in Port Philip Victoria.¹⁷ Bronwen Everill has studied the role of Sierra Leonean ‘liberated Africans’ as ‘bridgeheads of Empire’, in their missionary work along the West African Coast, in particular Nigeria and Cameroon.¹⁸ These missionaries – former slaves and Christian converts – complicate the label of practitioner and beneficiary, engaging in a humanitarianism that sought to deliver ‘civilisation, commerce, and Christianity’ and the eradication of slavery to West Africa.¹⁹ These two examples also demonstrate the challenges of including unmediated subaltern voices within the humanitarian relationship. The voices of the Dja Dja Wurring were recorded for posterity by the English missionary Edward Stone Parker, while Everill’s subjects were operating within structures of British imperial humanitarianism.²⁰

This prompts the question, can a history of global humanitarian exist outside these imperial entanglements and unequal power dynamics? Barnett asserts that humanitarianism’s history can only be understood within a global context.²¹ However, his analysis of the emergence of an ‘international humanitarian order’ is limited to Western traditions of humanitarianism. Barnett’s humanitarianism is global in its reach, but in its character and practice it is firmly European and imperial. The emergence of global history heralded an

¹⁴ Rob Skinner and Alan Lester, ‘Humanitarianism and empire’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40 (2012), p. 729.

¹⁵ Matthew Hilton, Emily Baughan, Eleanor Davey, Bronwen Everill, Kevin O’Sullivan, and Tehila Sasson, ‘History and humanitarianism: a conversation’, *Past and Present*, 241 (2018), p. 20.

¹⁶ Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the origins of humanitarian governance*, p. 11.

¹⁷ Bronwen Everill, ‘Bridgeheads of empire? Liberated African missionaries in West Africa’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40 (2012), p. 31.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 790.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the origins of humanitarian governance*, p. 31.

²¹ Barnett, *Empire of humanity*, p. 7.

approach that sought to move away from national histories, studying instead connections and comparisons on a worldwide scale.²² Yet from its inception, global history has been criticized for failing to shirk entirely the legacies of Eurocentrism and modernization theory, for being predominantly written in English, and, at times, for confusing and conflating the imperial and the global.

The books under review all grapple with the representational imbalance between the practitioners and recipients of humanitarian work. Their protagonists are mostly European men, who were active in the Anglo-American sphere of influence, thus sharing an intellectual and geographic setting. At the same time, however, these books do suggest new ways of approaching global humanitarian history. All interdisciplinary and transnational, they raise important questions as to who or what the focus of global humanitarian history should be.

In *From empire to humanity: the American Revolution and the origins of humanitarianism*, Amanda B. Moniz examines a generation of American and British philanthropists who came of age in the Anglo-American Atlantic world before the American Revolution, or what Moniz terms a ‘transatlantic civil war’ (p. 59). Moniz studies how this generation adapted to the post-revolutionary political landscape. She posits that their common upbringing in this Atlantic world, characterized by a belief in Enlightenment ideas of progress, improvement, and universal benevolence enabled them to create a transnational philanthropic community. This cosmopolitan community was eventually fractured by the French and Haitian revolutions at the close of the century. These political upheavals, along with the dying off of the pre-revolutionary generation, led to the splintering of this transatlantic benevolent sphere and a renewed focus on national and imperial causes.

Moniz contends that ‘the history of the era’s charitable and voluntary activity has typically been studied within the parameters of a distinct nation or particular movements, such as anti-slavery or prison reform’ (p. 3). She criticizes this approach, suggesting that it establishes artificial boundaries between activists and organizations. She posits that an ‘activist centered’ history recreates a more authentic and holistic image of transatlantic humanitarianism in the period in question (p. 4). Moniz’s protagonists composed a relatively small sector of the Anglo-American Atlantic sphere. They were educated, wealthy, and voluntarily mobile. Her book is populated with networks of medical practitioners who travelled for work and education, confessional communities, evangelical missionaries, and travelling merchants. They include the English prison reformer John Howard, the American doctor and social reformer Benjamin Rush, and Irish-born ship’s surgeon John Crawford. The movements these men were involved in bled into and influenced one another. The life-saving movement influenced abolitionism, and the universalist aims of the Royal

²² Jürgen Osterhammel, *The transformation of the world: a global history of the nineteenth century* (Princeton, NJ, 2014); Christopher Bayly, *The birth of the modern world, 1780–1914: global connections and comparisons* (Oxford, 2004).

Humanitarian Society anticipated the later goals of the Royal Jennerian Society to wipe out smallpox worldwide.

Although Moniz focuses on individuals rather than movements, her work is not simply a series of biographies of particular privileged men. Her thesis is that their humanitarianism does not reflect their own exceptional nature, but rather their intellectual and material milieu. For example, John Crawford established one of the Anglophone world's first medical dispensaries in Barbados. Moniz suggests that he was able to do this not because he was 'a great man' but because he had 'particular connections and motivations' due to 'a life of migrations shaped by revolutionary wars' (p. 117). Thus, these men were not exceptional people, but the conditions of their lives enabled them to do exceptional things.

Moniz ends her demonstration by describing how as the eighteenth century came to a close British and American humanitarians withdrew into their respective empires and nations. Hilary Carey's *Empire of hell: religion and the campaign to end convict transportation in the British empire, 1788–1875* picks up where Moniz leaves off. Carey traces the development of the intellectual and religious debate regarding convict transportation within the British empire, beginning with the inception of formal transportation in 1788 and ending with the abolition of the penal transportation system in 1857. She transports the reader from Van Diemen's Land to Norfolk Island to offshore hulks in Gibraltar and Bermuda and finishes in the remote penal colony of Western Australia.

Carey is primarily concerned with the religious tenor of these debates. She argues that a consideration of religion is crucial in order to understand how activists, politicians, and magistrates conceived of the moral and utilitarian requirements of transportation. Her book 'poses the radical argument that religious reform was fundamental, not incidental, to convict colonization in the British Empire' (p. 2). She advocates for a reinterpretation of the church–state relationship with regards to the settler empire, asserting that 'collaboration, rather than hostility between Church and State would be the norm for the emerging philanthropic state of Victorian Britain and the settler empire' (p. 5). This collaboration was not without conflict. Carey presents a dense field of competing philosophies of religious reform.

In the metropole at least, the transportation debate was not an issue that provoked popular participation the way the campaign to abolish slavery did. As such, the protagonists of Carey's narrative are not those who were transported or the general public, but politicians, magistrates, and religious reformers. The story she tells is one that is primarily played out in a textual sphere of intellectual exchange, and her sources are the letters, reports, and pamphlets that her scattered cast of characters sent each other. She delves, for instance, into the pamphlet exchanges between the archbishop of Dublin, Richard Whately, and Colonel George Arthur, the lieutenant governor of Van Diemen's Land. This dispute was 'the intellectual high point in the religious debate about the validity of transportation as both an effective deterrent to crime and an

opportunity for the reform of the criminal' (p. 71). The debate pitted Whately's utilitarian Christianity against Arthur's reformist evangelicalism. Proponents of Christian utilitarianism were in favour of punishing and restraining prisoners. Whately feared that criminals saw transportation as a reward rather than a punishment, and therefore suggested it was an impetus for crime. He advocated for the introduction of domestic, American-style penitentiaries where prisoners would carry out hard labour, as an alternative to transportation. Arthur, on the other hand, espoused penal reform and improvement through religious education and a regime of silence and separation. His views were aligned with those of other evangelical reformers in England. This debate highlights the degree to which public thinkers in the metropole such as Whately viewed the settler empire as a natural extension of British rule and therefore within their intellectual jurisdiction. Carey deftly resurrects and dissects a debate that traversed oceans and continents, absorbing many politicians, magistrates, and religious leaders along the way.

The central thesis of *The charity market and humanitarianism in Britain, 1870–1912* is that in the late nineteenth century the nature of charity was transformed by the development of an expanding and increasingly competitive charity marketplace in which local, national, and international organizations vied for donations. It was 'a classically "free" market, unfettered by state intervention' (p. 11). The authors build upon Thomas Haskell's thesis that the increase in global trade in the eighteenth century led to an awareness of distant sufferings and the growth of humanitarian sensibility.²³ In the late nineteenth century, there was an even wider range of goods to which a wider strata of society had access. The main concern of the book is charitable fundraising, and the authors focus on the donors as well as the practitioners of charity. In this period, the demography of charitable donors expanded beyond the 'typical bourgeois participant' to the working classes (p. 13). The authors engage with material culture in their analysis of this expansion of 'compassionate consumption' (p. 13). Donations were made in exchange for something tangible, like a teapot, a pin, or a postcard. The authors' approach is interdisciplinary, a blend of material culture, economic history, social network theory, and business studies. They historicize social and economic theories. For example, chapter 6 investigates the practice of franchising, the study of which began in business schools. The authors assert that 'franchising for social purposes and for social good has a history of its own which ought to be taken into account' (p. 144). They argue that organizations like the Salvation Army and the Lord Mayor of London's Mansion House Fund constitute early examples of franchising.

While primarily preoccupied with the domestic charity market, Roddy et al. engage with global humanitarianism throughout the book. In doing so, they

²³ Thomas L. Haskell, 'Capitalism and the origins of the humanitarian sensibility, part 1', *American Historical Review*, 90 (1985), pp. 555–6.

reveal the persistence of global forces in domestic charity. Indeed, the existence of such an expanded charitable market was made possible by global commerce. The authors dwell upon particular objects which embody this marriage of global trade and domestic compassionate consumption. For example, in the 1880s, the UK market was inundated with paper napkins imported from Japan. These napkins were printed with black text to commemorate a royal event, or a domestic tragedy like a mining accident, and sold to raise money. The authors also directly address global humanitarian networks in their chapter on aristocratic fundraising and the politics of imperial humanitarianism. The chapter focuses on the members of the Stafford House Committee and their humanitarian intervention during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–8. The authors argue that ‘even in increasingly democratic times, aristocracy and wealth exuded brand values of quality, reliability and worthiness’ (p. 125). George Sutherland-Leveson-Gower, the third duke of Sutherland, presided over the Stafford House Committee. Sutherland-Leveson-Gower adapted his pre-existing overseas commercial enterprises for humanitarian purposes. The authors describe Stafford House as ‘a network of venture capitalists and investors, bound by commercial as well as moral interest’, thus establishing the primacy of expanding market forces even in a more traditional form of humanitarianism (p. 136).

The transnational activist: transformations and comparisons from the Anglo-world since the nineteenth century, edited by Stefan Berger and Sean Scalmer, is a collection of case-studies that chart the chronological development of practices of transnational activism from the Antipodean journey of Quaker missionaries James Backhouse and George Washington Walker in the 1830s to twenty-first-century animal rights activism. The collection is expansive; over thirteen chapters, contributors examine nationalist campaigners in the British empire like Roger Casement and Mohandas Gandhi, the international labour movement, and human rights campaigns in Indonesia, East Timor, and Australia.

The book is unified by a shared methodology and geographical sphere. The central aim of the contributors is to apply social network theory to the historical study of transnational activism. Berger and Scalmer’s approach is ‘stimulated by sociological debates about global social movements’, particularly the work of Sidney Tarrow and his theories regarding rooted cosmopolitans (p. 6). They define rooted cosmopolitans as those who reach ‘outward physically and cognitively to make connections with other worlds, and yet also maintain strong ties to the experiences and networks of [their] own society’ (p. 6). The contributors also challenge social theories by applying them to specific historical examples. In the book’s afterword, political scientist Donatella della Porta highlights the benefits of this approach. She describes how the social sciences work on an aggregated level, using survey data and identifying general correlations and patterns. Such an approach, she argues, is unable to ‘single out the causal mechanisms in the development of specific forms of political socialism that accompany commitment to transnational activism’ the way studies of historical individuals can (p. 341). Indeed, in his chapter on the transnational activism of the

Rainforest Information Centre in the 1980s, Iain McIntyre argues that specific examples can highlight the limitations of social theories, noting that ‘attention to individual groups and activists will often challenge the validity of broad hypothesis in neatly explaining the source, pattern and workings of political activity’ (p. 309).

The collection also interrogates narrow definitions of transnational activism. Liam Byrne analyses the careers of Labour activists Tom Mann and John Curtin. Mann was far more mobile than Curtin. He travelled from Britain to Australia and back again during his career, whereas Curtin remained at home in Victoria in order to support his family. Byrne argues that Mann’s greater mobility did not make him more of a transnational activist than Curtin. Regardless of his physical stasis, Curtin was a transnational activist because ‘intellectually he was deeply enmeshed with the thoughts of international radicals who conceptualized ways to challenge capitalism and empire’ (p. 131). Byrne suggests that only considering those who physically traversed national borders to be transnational is problematic because doing so erases marginalized groups who did not have the means to engage in expansive travel due to social and economic restrictions. *The transnational activist* grapples with the limitations and challenges of histories of global humanitarianism and convincingly argues for an interdisciplinary approach to the topic, marrying social theory with historical specificity.

Although they vary in chronology and methodology, these books have similar protagonists and a shared setting. Their pages are populated by a select group of voluntarily mobile humanitarians who travelled and worked within the Anglo-American sphere of influence. Rarely do the voices of the beneficiaries of their humanitarianism, or indeed female or non-European humanitarians, intrude upon the pages of these books. This leads one to question why these voices remain absent, and what this absence reveals about the nature of global humanitarianism and its history.

The authors are aware of these imbalances and account for them in different ways. Moniz acknowledges that ‘many could not participate’ in the humanitarian network she chronicles; ‘women and people of African descent, including notables such as Hannah Moore, Richard Allen and Olaudah Equiano, helped shape agendas through their writings or local activities. But in the eighteenth century, only men of European ancestry with claims or aspirations to gentility corresponded in [this] broad web of activists’ (p. 193). Moniz’s aim is not to interrogate the power inequalities that characterized the relationships between these humanitarians and their beneficiaries. Rather, she is concerned with how these men rebuilt their transatlantic community in the wake of the American Revolution. Indeed, Moniz hints that, for them, these relationships were more relevant. She suggests that American humanitarians were more likely to establish a new project based on trends and fashions within their transatlantic benevolent community than in response to the needs of those in their local communities. They looked to Norfolk rather than North America for inspiration. Carey’s primary concern is not the relationship between the

governors of penal colonies and the displaced indigenous peoples who lived there, or the convicts they governed, but rather the intellectual development of the transportation debate in the colonies and the metropole. Roddy et al. expand the domestic charitable landscape in their book, describing how more and more members of the population from different social strata began to engage with charitable consumption. However, once they turn to humanitarianism on a global scale, those involved are limited to members of the aristocracy, who resided within transnational networks of wealth and commerce. Thus, from studying these texts, one might conclude that global humanitarianism appears to have been a practice confined to the wealthy and powerful.

This is also the case with the chief protagonists of *The transnational activist*. The contributors spend time interrogating this imbalance in representation, often using interdisciplinary methods. One can trace the chronological development of this imbalance throughout the book, revealing the collection's internal consistency, despite its multiple contributors. Penelope Edmonds analyses the relationship between William Backhouse and indigenous women he met in Australia, focusing on the testimony he took on these women's behalf. She highlights the inaccuracies that can result from these acts of ventriloquism by the powerful. Edmonds also addresses the inherent inequities embedded within the language of humanity and sympathy employed by Backhouse. Drawing on the work of Margaret Abruzzo, she describes how such language 'is too often centred on the body of the enslaved, colonized or subaltern subject and the infliction of pain on that body, rather than the right of those subjects to be free from pain' (p. 56).²⁴ Hannah Loney's chapter on the work of Timorese activist Bella Galhos in the 1990s presents the chronological development of this practice of gathering testimony for humanitarian purposes. Unlike the women Backhouse interviewed, Galhos travelled around the Western world telling her own story. Loney argues that 'it was the use of her personal experiences of suffering, as evidence of the violence that underpinned Indonesian rule [in East Timor], which resonated most strongly with her audiences' (p. 210). In this example, we see the transfer of authorial voice from the observer to the victim of violence, alongside the persistence of bearing witness as a method of transnational activism. Loney also interviewed Galhos for the chapter, allowing the reader direct access to the voice of this victim turned humanitarian. This raises questions regarding access to source material. Loney is able to engage with the living voice of her subject, whereas eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historians are often limited to the voices of a privileged minority. This is a critique levelled at global history more broadly. Its practitioners are often forced to engage solely with the sources left by the colonizer rather than the colonized, and thus may only tell a limited story. Regarding global humanitarian history, this raises the question as to whether

²⁴ Margaret Abruzzo, *Polemical pain: slavery, cruelty and the rise of humanitarianism* (Baltimore, MD, 2011), p. 48.

humanitarianism as a whole is being studied, or whether humanitarians alone are the focus of scholarship.

Moreover, those being studied here appear to be a select group within the humanitarian community; female humanitarians in particular are notable for their absence in many of these stories. Moniz acknowledges the lack of women in her story, asserting that they did not move in her chosen networks. Although Carey's work is largely concerned with a masculine republic of letters, she devotes time to analysing the influence of Elizabeth Fry on prison reform both at home and overseas. Perhaps this is a question of the scale and setting of these histories. One might argue that women's voices are neglected in global humanitarianism because they were not as voluntarily mobile or transnational as their male counterparts. However, as we have seen, scholars are beginning to question definitions of transnationalism only that rely upon physically traversing borders. It has been long established that women were crucial transnational agents during the abolitionist movement, arguably the origin story of modern Western humanitarianism. When British women in the 1820s refused to purchase sugar produced using slave labour, they were engaging in a transatlantic system of trade and commerce, whether they were physically mobile or not.²⁵ Moreover, some female humanitarians were mobile, be it exceptional individuals like Eglantyne Jebb or Mary Prince, or the thousands of European Catholic nuns practising missionary work in convents scattered worldwide.²⁶

But like their male counterparts in the books under review, these female humanitarians operated within systems of Western expansion, leading one to question whether it is possible to conceive of global humanitarianism existing outside imperial structures. The protagonists of these books relied upon the infrastructure of empire regardless of whether they were its advocates or antagonists. Edmonds presents Backhouse and Walker as 'institutional opponents' within the British empire (p. 34). This term coined by political scientists J. Craig Jenkins and Bert Klandermans refers to 'social agents who oppose particular state policies yet are acting within the formal political system' and, what is more, are supported and sponsored by it (pp. 51–2). Backhouse criticized the mistreatment of indigenous people under colonialism, but advocated for Christian reformist colonialism rather than a halt to the colonial project. This is similar to Chloe Ward's chapter on the Australian feminist Jessie Street. Street practised a patriarchal form of 'Imperial Feminism' in the twentieth century, campaigning for the protection of aboriginal people alongside their assimilation into Australian society (pp. 233–4). The global humanitarians discussed by Roddy et al. are not so much institutional opponents as mercenary

²⁵ Linda Coley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1701–1937* (New Haven, CT, 1992), p. 284.

²⁶ Anne O'Brien, 'Catholic nuns in transnational mission, 1828–2015', *Journal of Global History*, 11 (2016), pp. 387–408; Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the origins of humanitarianism, 1918–1924* (Cambridge, 2014).

opportunists. They suggest that the head of the Stafford House Committee, George Sutherland-Leveson-Gower, sought to expand his railway business into the Ottoman empire in the wake of the Russo-Turkish War. Humanitarianism was a way for him to penetrate new markets overseas.

Even those seeking to subvert empire still relied upon its framework to operate. Sean Scalmer argues that the British empire offered Gandhi a 'trans-national target, political resources and a potential network' (p. 91). The very structure which Gandhi sought to undermine provided him with the resources for his campaigning. Similarly, the Second International, the global network of which Mann and Curtin were a part, traversed the British empire, and used 'imperial routes of information and exchange' to 'spread dissent against the empire itself' (p. 114). Empire in these texts represents a multifaceted entity, both an agent and an arena, a force to be undermined and reformed, but also a source of knowledge exchange and information. Thus, global humanitarianism in the Western world appears to be wedded to the forces of empire and capitalistic expansion. But different humanitarian groups interacted with empire in various ways. Humanitarians could be the handmaidens of empire, enemies of empire, or institutional opponents.

Are we moving towards a truly global history of humanitarianism, and if so what does this history look like? Is it the history of humanitarians, the history of humanitarian networks, and the history of empire and imperial expansion? Is it a history of resistance and repression and humanity in crisis? Is it a history of expanding markets and consumption? The books reviewed suggest global humanitarian history is closely linked with empire, and concerned with a minority of people, influenced by commerce, social networks, upbringing, war, and migration. Interdisciplinarity and the creative use of sources enable an expanded version of this definition. Examining alternative humanitarian practices, and alternative geographical spheres, may allow for the production of a global humanitarian history that is not also a history of imperial humanitarianism.

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