Damousi, J., Burnard, T., & Lester, A. (Eds.) (2022). *Humanitarian, Empire, and Transnationalism, 1750–1995: Selective Humanity in the Anglophone World*. Manchester University Press.

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This edited volume emerged from a workshop hosted by Joy Damousi at the University of Melbourne in 2019, which examined the relation between humanitarianism, colonialism, and transnational movements across the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Humanitarianism—defined by the authors as "projection of empathy and concern for the welfare of others" (p. 1)—is not only viewed as a universal and benevolent force for good but involved in the structures of empire that used humanitarianism to its own ends. This book explores how humanitarianism evolved from the anti-slavery movement in the 18th century, through the rise and fall of empires in the 19th and 20th centuries, to the international humanitarian crises of the late 20th century. In particular, the book looks at how the British Empire spread humanitarianism—or what was later known as "Anglophone humanitarianism"—in unprecedented ways, promoted by missionaries, colonial activists, official protectors of enslaved persons and Aboriginal peoples, travellers, writers, colonists, and government officials (p. 3).

The first section of the book, "Transatlantic Humanitarianism from 1760–1838," contains five chapters that explain the development of humanitarianism through new conceptions and shifting perceptions of humanity, particularly in relation to the abolition of slavery. The idea of humanitarianism originated from religious values, particularly Christian ones like the golden rule—"One should do to others what one would want to have done to oneself"—that became the foundation of Western humanitarianism and later evolved into benevolent actions aimed at improving human well-being. In this section, Trevor Burnard discusses Anthony Benezet, an American Quaker who wrote *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, published in 1762. Benezet's work influenced British antislavery activists by educating the public about the horrors of the slave trade (p. 38). Benezet portrayed Africans as people worthy of consideration in imperial calculations. His ideas and writings formed

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an early and significant contribution to humanitarian thought. In another chapter, Kate Fullagar examines an incident at the Sun Tavern—a traditional bar located on the Strand in London—where a British court ruled that two Mohawk men should not be put on display because they were human subjects with rights to their own welfare. This incident sheds light on the presence of Indigenous people in Britain and how their exhibition influenced British popular opinion and thus, how the increasing public display of Indigenous individuals influenced early Anglophone humanitarian discourse.

The second section, "Humanitarianism and Indigenous Peoples, 1838–c.1950," examines humanitarian policies toward Indigenous people. In her chapter, Ann Curthoys analyzes the genocidal implications of humanitarianism through the tragic history of the Aboriginal prison on Rottnest Island in Western Australia. The prison epitomized colonial exploitation, racism, and disregard for Indigenous humanity. Inmates endured forced labor, poor living conditions, and inadequate medical care, leading to the deaths of over 370 Aboriginal men. As Curthoys notes, "The Rottnest Island prison was a place of learning for its inmates after all, but not in the sense humanitarianism intended" (p. 170). Furthermore, in West Africa, humanitarian efforts were limited by the antislavery mission. British authorities ignored local concerns such as health, hunger, and sanitation. Instead, West Africans formed their own organization and relied on mutual aid societies (p. 209). This section highlights humanitarianism's contradictions, revealing how colonial authorities justified violence, land dispossession, and forced labor under the guise of benevolence.

The third and final section of this book, "A New International Order, 1918–95," focuses on the establishment of humanitarian organizations and the increasing disconnect between humanitarianism and the British Empire. The end of Anglophone humanitarianism, closely tied to the formal dissolution of the British Empire, is reflected in Australia's involvement in international humanitarian work during the Cold War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, as well as its growing alliance with the United States (p. 23). Starting from 1961, known as the "Decade of Development," aid agencies expanded rapidly, taking various forms, ranging from highly organized and structured institutions to more individualized and independent groups. Regarding organizational humanitarian efforts, Agnieszka Sobocinska examines three major international volunteer programs: the Volunteer Graduate Scheme in Australia, Voluntary Service Overseas in Britain, and the United States Peace Corps. According to Sobocinska, these initiatives played a key role in the broader movement of volunteers in the Global South, blurring the distinction between international development and humanitarianism. Meanwhile, Joy Damousi explores individual humanitarian interventions through the experiences of three women—Rosemary Taylor, Elaine Molf, and Margaret Moses—who were involved in ameliorating the worst effects of the Vietnam War. By working independently, these women engaged directly in aid efforts, took on distinctive advocacy roles, and lobbied governments to shift public policy in ways that humanitarian organizations at the time did not.

The final two essays in this book examine the relationship between humanitarianism and human rights. Jon Piccini highlights the tensions between these two concepts, focusing on Amnesty International's activities in Australia through two case studies. The first concerns Indigenous rights. Indigenous people remained second-class citizens without individual rights, including restricted voting rights and forced relocation (310). However, Amnesty International had limited influence to address these injustices. They did not offer adoption programs for Indigenous people or report their situation to the UN. This inaction sparked various public reactions and was further intensified by the second case—the Vietnam War. In 1962, Australia entered the Vietnam War by sending a 30-man training contingent to aid the South Vietnamese government (313). Later, the government introduced a National Service Scheme that included conscription, which led to widespread protests. People who denied the notice from the National Service were taken to military prison as "prisoners of conscience." Amnesty International worked to support and prevent the imprisonment of said individuals, who they argued were simply acting in accordance with their economic, political, moral, or religious beliefs.

Adopting a broad interdisciplinary approach that incorporates history, sociology, and political science, the volume provides a complex and detailed exploration of the history of humanitarianism and imperialism over the last 300 years. Its chronological and geographical breadth, coupled with analytic depth, allows readers to understand how humanitarian ideas and practices evolved alongside the British Empire. Furthermore, the book highlights how humanitarian efforts have sometimes reinforced cultural hierarchies and social inequalities by portraying colonized peoples as passive victims while depicting imperial powers as saviors. Each of the authors carefully examines the relationship between humanitarianism and power, illustrating how humanitarian efforts have often been intertwined with political agendas and how the British Empire used benevolence to advance its own interests. The editors provide a bold analysis of the contradictions within humanitarianism, emphasizing its dual role as both a force for moral action and a tool for perpetuating imperial domination. The inclusion of specific case studies, such as humanitarian interventions in Aboriginal communities, grounds the theoretical discussions in historical contexts, making the analysis more tangible and compelling. Though primarily intended for an academic audience, the book could appeal to a broader audience, including students, practitioners, and general readers interested in humanitarianism. It provides historical context, insights, and lessons for humanitarian workers, helping them understand its origins, appreciate the diversity of global humanitarian practices, avoid repeating past mistakes, and navigate modern humanitarian challenges with greater awareness. Though additional research and reflection beyond the British Empire is necessary to understand these issues more broadly, this book is an invaluable resource for academics and students interested in imperial history, humanitarianism, and global politics, offering a critical lens through which to analyze the historical foundations and enduring contradictions of humanitarian practices.