

Introductory Comment

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Good morning to everybody and welcome to the second day of our communal caring about eighteenth-century care. My name is Hall Bjørnstad and I am here as somewhat of an interloper, since I actually work on seventeenth-century French material. But if I am an intruder, I am a *regular* interloper, since the Bloomington eighteenth-century group in general and the eighteenth-century workshop in particular offer such an exemplary and inspiring interdisciplinary scene.

We had two very strong opening sessions yesterday and I think the energy (and care) released in the discussion, and brought forward through the festive potluck dinner last night, promises well for today's sessions. Therefore, I will try to keep my opening remarks short, quickly situating the two papers in relation to each other and to our overall topic, stressing some points of contact and divergence, before opening up the general discussion with a couple of questions for each of the speakers.

So, after agreeing to serve as commentator for a session like this, it is always an interesting moment when one actually reads the papers of the session for the first time. While assessing and enjoying the papers for their own merit, there will also be other kinds of questions imposing themselves, looking for signs of the care of Rebecca's invisible hand, as it were: Why were these papers paired together? How does the constellation of these two papers create a synergy that will contribute to our overall discussion beyond the merit of the two papers considered individually?

Sometimes the answer might be obvious. Most often, as is the case here, magic happens when we come together to parse things out. We have two strong and important papers here, but work needs to be done to liberate the synergy which is there waiting for us. So, let's get to work!

My first observation is thus that these papers are obviously projects far apart. On the one hand, a paper by Erica Charters on prisoner care during the Seven-Years War; on the other, one on a sub-group of colonial conversion narratives by Laura Stevens. Furthermore, they deploy two different sets of disciplinary tools: those of the historian and of the literary scholar. However, as I will point out at the end of my comments, we already here have a starting point for an important discussion about Care, since the papers show us two different ways to care *about* and *for* eighteenth-century material as twenty-first-century scholars. In fact, the juxtaposition of these two papers allows us to identify at least three different levels of care involved in our discussion at the workshop.

Let's now turn to the first paper and its writer. Erica Charters is Associate Professor of the history of medicine at the University of Oxford. Her research explores the relationship between war and civil society during the early modern period. Her first monograph *Disease, War, and the Imperial State: The Welfare of British Armed Forces during the Seven Years War* came out last year with University of Chicago Press, and received the Best First Book award for 2014 from The Society of Army Historical Research. It traces how responses to disease shaped military strategy, medical theory, and the nature of British imperial authority. She is also the co-editor of an interdisciplinary volume with the title *Civilians and War in Europe, 1618-1815*.

The paper for the workshop is an exploration of a test case of the intersection between warfare and welfare, namely the welfare of prisoners of war during the Franco-British Seven Years War (1756-1763). I was fascinated by the wealth of empirical detail in this discussion and especially pertaining to the enormous surge in the number of long-term French prisoners in England and the wave of spontaneous and voluntary charities for French prisoners that it led to. Erica's survey of the public reception of this charity shows, not surprisingly, that this care was portrayed as rational and thereby as contributing to a higher-level patriotism. As Erica states on page 106 in the reader: "For the British public, the combination of patriotism and universal charity on display in the care for French prisoners illuminated British superiority over France." But this display could of course be manipulated, and in the last part of the article, Erica goes on to show how the reporting about prisoner care in general, both in England and France, was part of a propaganda war, driven by strategic, military, political concerns. At one occasion Erica mentions the care deployed in the reporting about care (110), and I will return to this second-level care toward the end of my comments. As of now, I have only one question, which comes completely out of ignorance, in order to better understand the situation leading to the crisis that provoked the charitable English response. Could you say two words about what occasioned the stop of the "Royal Bounty" to the French prisoners in 1758? I assume there must have been financial reasons, but how was it voiced at the time, in terms of caring and un-caring, for example?

I now turn to the second paper and its author. Laura Stevens is Associate Professor of English at the University of Tulsa. She is the author of *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) as well as articles dealing with the literature of Protestant Christian mission, sermons, female robinsonades, transatlantic circulations of ideas and texts, anti-Catholic rhetoric, and early modern scriptural interpretation. Her work has been supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Huntington Library, the John Carter Brown Library, the American Philosophical Society, and the Oklahoma Humanities Council.

The text by Laura that we have read is of course not exactly a paper, but rather a draft of the introduction to her next book, with the tentative title *Friday's Tribe: Eighteenth-Century English Mission Fantasies*. The "mission fantasies" referred to in the title of the project is a sub-corpus of conversion narratives from foreign lands that (I quote from page 124 of the reader) "describe the successful Christian conversion of foreign peoples in ways almost entirely unmoored from the hard, muddled realities of missionary encounters."

Doing some research online, I came across an earlier title of the project in Laura's faculty profile. Instead of "Friday's Tribe" the main title was "A Recipe to Convert an Indian". First of all, both titles show an expert skill in front loading the message. That said, "Friday's Tribe" is clearly the better title, making the most famous member of the tribe carry the weight of the enterprise without giving too much away. At the same time, however, the two titles make me think of two very different books. Hence my first question: what happened to the recipe idea? More precisely, I think of a striking formulation about these texts on page 124: "They do not ask their readers to care." And again two pages later: these texts "promised their readers ... the satisfaction if not delight of seeing salvation in action, without the requirement of their active involvement or concern." This

does of course point back to the title of your introduction, “On the Pleasures of Witnessing Salvations”, but I would like to hear more. What is at stake here? Was this a necessary move to save the fantasies?

One more question about the term *fantasy*, in light of the Protestant “imperative ... elevating words over images and objects, and plainness over ornament and spectacle.” (137) What exactly is a non-phantasmic imageless fantasy? (beyond a paradox, as you point out on page 138) At the very least, you seem to lose the etymological meaning of the term which seems to have been still present at the time you start your story in 1671? Why this investment in the term *fantasy*?

I will now return to my earlier remark about the three different levels of care that the constellation of these two papers allows us to see more clearly. First, there is the very primary level of care at the core of the two papers: caring for prisoners of war in Erica’s paper; the care for the soul of the Indian in the missionary phantasies in Laura’s. But in both cases, although for quite different reasons, the purity of this care is suspect. As Erica elegantly demonstrates, the prisoner care was inscribed in a wider set of strategic, political concerns that blur the line between moral and strategy, between humanitarianism and utilitarianism. The suspicion is of course even stronger in the corpus Laura analyzes, since these conversion narratives are so far from the grim reality on the ground; maybe one could even rephrase the phantasy element here as being the dream of missionary work as pure care, phantasies about care and caring, a “let’s pretend this is all about care”? (Cf. the second to last phrase of the text, p. 139: “to see a colonial arena of violence and exploitation transformed into a scene of love and care”.) In any case, these higher-order concerns, this care about care, this meta-care, if you will, poses a challenge to the modern scholar. As was pointed out in the discussions yesterday (first by Michael Meranze, I believe, and then developed by others): the notion of care comes with an often unanalyzed assumption of purity, of transparency, of selflessness, of being free of aggression. This raises questions as to whether care is undermined as care by the uncaring context inside which it occurs. Is care still care when its purity fades under our critical demystifying gaze?

These questions point to what I would call the third level of care: our care *for* and *about* the material we are analyzing. At this point, I see a clear difference in the stance of the two writers, and my final challenge to the two of you will be to comment on this difference. I read your stance, Laura, expressed in a methodological remark on page 120 of the reader, two thirds down the page, when you state that: “to halt [the] analysis at an opposition between declared religious wishes to save and authentic materialist intentions to conquer is to miss how tightly these desires are intertwined, as well as how they amplify and actualize each other. One of my premises throughout is that religious motivations are more than masks for secular desires.” Here the primary level of care is retained, despite the suspicion. I see the exact opposite attitude in the final paragraph of your paper, Erica, starting on the bottom of page 113 of the reader. First you state that “the quality of care given to enemy troops in wartime was *not simply* a matter of emerging humanitarian sensibilities. It was an essential component of military strategy, of domestic politics, and of imperial legitimacy.” This is a striking formulation of the suspicion to care that runs through the whole paper. But then, the last two phrases of the article proceed to what seems like a radical unmasking: “Humanitarianism was *not* a development born of frus-

tration with war-making or even an attempt to end wars. In the Seven Years War, it was *instead* a component of war-making, and even a way to facilitate and bolster public support for it.” (my emphasis) I stress that what I am after here is a comparison between two different methodological attitudes to the historical material, one caring and the other cynical, as a way to challenge you to think further about the care in and of your papers.