

understood the league as those suffragists who had rejected the First World War, as she had, and counted on these links in relation to various causes from India to locked-out miners. More generally, she supported anticolonial movements irrespective of their attitude to violence. Indeed, Wilkinson and Conze's *Why War?* criticized the league for the futility of "educating the imperialists." Likewise, Beers's repeated use of "social justice" (a phrase that rings of contemporary nongovernmental organization activism or Rawlsian liberalism) overlooks the significance of the rare occasion that Wilkinson herself used the phrase: in a collection of Fabian essays in 1940, the very moment she assimilated into the Labor leadership and Labor's ideological mainstream.

While this biography's strength is its familiarity with British high politics, it becomes less assured elsewhere. Middlesbrough is neither a "single industry" nor a "city." Jarrow is not a port. The Flint sit-down was at Fisher/GM, not Ford. Sarojini Nehru (not Naidu) led the Women's Indian Association. Overall, then, this is a welcome contribution to the debate on this most intriguing and enigmatic of British politicians, one who continues to fascinate and inspire activists today, but it has substantial limitations. Beers succeeds in reconstructing Wilkinson's international activism, but she misses the opportunity to use the transnational approach to revise our understanding, fundamentally accepting an internationalized version of Vernon's interpretation published twenty-five years ago. That revision would have required treating Wilkinson's Labor colleagues who were casting back to their youthful reminiscences of "Red Ellen" with greater skepticism.

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DUNCAN BELL. *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016. Pp. 441. \$39.50 (cloth).
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The relationship between liberalism and empire has been one of the most productive sites of scholarship in the humanities over the last decade. But work in this area is in danger of reductionism in two directions. On one hand, it is too easy to assume that once we expose the complicity of many canonical "liberal" thinkers in the justification and practice of imperialism, liberalism is doomed. Liberalism is then merely another form of imperialism, *simpliciter*. On the other hand, it is too easy to assume that we can inoculate liberal political philosophy—and liberal political practice in our public culture—from this history by acknowledging it and moving on. Reverting to conceptual analysis high above the muddy complexity of the historical grounds of liberalism will not do.

The best scholarship in this field manages to avoid both forms of reductionism and has generated some of the most original work in political theory and the history of ideas in the past decade. This superb collection of essays by Duncan Bell, with its historical breadth and theoretical sophistication, is a wonderful exemplar of such work. Bell dives deep into the historical context surrounding many of the key intellectual figures of the "Anglo-sphere" of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century political thought. In doing so, he provides an indispensable reading of an often neglected, misunderstood and complex tradition. Bell's essays include wide ranging and fascinating discussions of J. S. Mill, J. R. Seeley, T. H. Green, Herbert Spencer, and Henry Sidgwick, among others, read through the distinctive frameworks of an emerging Victorian global racial order and commonwealth settler colonialism. Each essay

helps to contextualize and deepen our understanding of the development not just of modern “liberalism” in early twentieth-century thought but also of liberal democratic practices more broadly.

Bell provides two distinctive contributions to the way we can think about liberalism and empire today. First, his book provides a rich historical and theoretical taxonomy of justification of empire. In doing so, he draws the recent work of Charles Taylor and Manfred Steger, among others, who point to the important role of “social imaginaries” (in Taylor’s evocative term) in helping to articulate and hold in place particular doctrines and theories that motivate individuals and groups in the world. Bell calls these “imperial imaginaries”: “those aspects of social imaginaries that pertain to the justification or governance of empire” (95). In the process, he is able to shift the focus of Taylor’s influential concept beyond the internal constitution of discrete societies to more a global context. In particular, he shows that this modern imperial imaginary is one in which the world is conceived of as a space of radical difference and inequality. “Peoples” and “societies” are arrayed in a hierarchical manner and in light of “the meta-concept of the modern imperial imaginary” (96), civilization. Throughout all of the essays in this volume, Bell shows how this concept is conceived of in a range of different ways—as a process, a telos, and in constructive or essentialist terms. Even more interestingly, he also demonstrates how both defenders and critics of imperialism alike embraced the concept of “civilization.”

Bell identifies at least five different ways of justifying empire: First, empire could be justified on the basis of the commercial and economic exploitation of the distant colonies for the metropole, or at least particular interests within the metropole—the classic Marxian analysis. But this was never a sufficient reason, as Bell’s historical excavation of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British imperialism shows (and Marx himself was deeply ambivalent about imperialism—critical of the violence it spawned, but seeing it as an unavoidable aspect of the transition from “oriental” societies to modern ones). Second was a realist-geopolitical justification, whereby imperialism was the product of competing imperial state formations, and a mechanism to secure geopolitical advantage. The third was appeal to a “liberal civilizing imperialism,” epitomized in the work of Mill, in which imperial tutelage is justified on the basis of the benefits it brings to those “backward” populations subject to it. Fourth, and closely related to the liberal civilizing justification, but one whose roots are much older, was “republican imperialism.” Here the focus was on the benefits that imperialism generated for the development of the collective character and virtue of the imperial state—fostering virtue among citizens and national honor and glory for the state. Finally, there was the martialist justification of empire and the transcendent role of violence in shaping the collective character of the imperial nation state and the virtue of its citizens (105). Bell’s taxonomy of the different ways of justifying empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century provides a rich context within which to locate the texts he goes onto explore in greater detail throughout the book.

The second distinctive contribution Bell makes with this book is to deepen our understanding of liberalism today. In a very interesting opening chapter, he adopts what he calls a “comprehensive” account of liberalism, in which liberalism is said to have no essence but instead is to be grasped as a “summative conception” that includes all those formulations endorsed by self-proclaimed liberals over time (70). This means the tradition is messy—it includes both libertarians and social democrats, individualists and methodological communitarians—but not necessarily incoherent.

It also means that the history of liberalism, and thus of liberalism today, includes both justifications of empire and sustained critiques of it. It serves no historical or normative purpose to try and line up defenders of liberal empire on one side, and critics on the other, as in a kind of history-of-political-thought fantasy football match. Bell’s essays make clear just how deeply the roots of British imperialism are wrapped around the foundations of modern Anglo-American liberal political theory. The legacies of settler colonialism, in particular, are still being worked

out today. But Bell's book is also a major step along the way to decolonizing those liberal imperial imaginaries within which we are still enmeshed.

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JOHN BEW. *Clement Attlee: The Man Who Made Modern Britain*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 670. \$39.95 (cloth).
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With *Clement Attlee: The Man Who Made Modern Britain*, John Bew presents a fresh, bold, lively, and favorable biography of Attlee that enhances the recent re-appreciation of the prime minister whose governments “made modern Britain.” This work has many strengths, although it provides no significantly new information or interpretations on political history, the ground having been covered ably by the early major 1980s biographies, numerous more recent shorter ones, and many articles and monographs on facets of Attlee's career. Bew praises several of those works in his prologue.

Bew's first major strength is his incorporation of those extensive primary and secondary sources, including the very recent ones, wide-ranging memoirs, and especially contemporary press articles. Even though the prologue and epilogue have such historiographical sections, Bew effectively uses the contemporary press or participants' memoirs to provide contrasting views on key episodes.

His second virtue is that he is a marvelous storyteller. Many episodes become vivid: Attlee's East End during the Blitz; Attlee's wartime trips into Western Europe; and his campaign tours in 1945, 1950, and 1951. Moreover, for many political crises Bew provides easily readable background coverage. The book's structure is usually successful. It offers perceptive synthetic analyses in the prologue, first chapter, and epilogue. Each chapter begins with a literary quotation (or political cartoon) with commentary, followed by a chronological narrative and a brief conclusion linking the literary introduction to the narrative. Bew accents that Attlee's voracious readings had a significant impact on his life.

Bew's third and most important major goal is to explain how Attlee's “belief system, values and ethical code [infused] ... his political thought” (20). Bew continuously focuses on Attlee's guiding principles: citizenship (linking the individual to the state); patriotism (imbibed through his family upbringing, his public schooling at Haileybury, his military experience); respect for the common people (especially those in London's East End, his wartime soldiers, trade unionists during his public career, and voters in political campaigns); practicality (never an ideologue, he pursued tangible goals); and advocacy for ethical socialism (greatly expanded social services, including the National Health Service, full employment, adequate housing, educational opportunities, and others). Bew also stresses that Attlee respected and liked Winston Churchill, not just during the wartime coalition and during their retirement, but throughout their entire careers.

Bew writes that Attlee never rejected the values instilled through his upper-middle-class upbringing in a late-Victorian family, his public school patriotism, and his fundamental respect for common people. Attlee always stressed that British socialism grew from British experiences, not from the ideologies of Marx and Marxists. Bored with his lackluster incipient legal career, he soon began social work in London's East End. His interest in the people and their living conditions led him to seek changes, become a socialist, and engage in local political action.