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# Fabrice Bensimon, Quenton Deluermoz, and Jeanne Moisand, eds., "Arise Ye Wretched of the Earth": The First International in a Global Perspective

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[See table of contents](#)

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in the crisis, voters turned to the Labour politicians who promised to do so.

Although the Labour victory was short-lived, Clifford shows in the next two chapters that the alliance of Liberal and Conservative municipal politicians that remained in power after 1900 learned their lesson from the 1898 election. Labour supported the public health officer as he responded to a spike in deaths attributed to typhoid and diarrhea during the 1890s; his hybrid approach of improving sanitary conditions and health services would be sustained by the alliance through the early 20th century. Clifford is sensitive to the complex debates over health of the period, but concludes that the initiative yielded positive results, improving outcomes in West Ham through the early decades of the 20th century. The alliance also proved more sensitive to unemployment crises, even before the adoption of the Labour-inspired national Unemployed Workmen Act. As the local government responded to demands for relief work, they turned to projects aimed at another water issue – flooding. Municipal engineers who wanted to prevent major floods such as occurred in 1888, 1897, and 1904 proposed drainage schemes that offered low skill work to relatively large numbers of the unemployed workers. Two such projects provided relief between 1905 and 1907, although a much larger and more ambitious 1908 plan to address industrial damage to the riverscape of West Ham collapsed. As a result, the district remained vulnerable to severe flooding, and the larger public works project languished until an even more devastating flood struck the district in 1928. The riverscape was improved by a project in the 1930s, although by that time the industrial suburb already had begun a slow economic and demographic decline that would continue through to the next big public works project – the Olympic Games of the 21st century. That

project has undoubtedly improved environmental conditions in parts of West Ham, although whether that has resulted in improved social conditions for those living in the district is less clear.

Did that 1898 election make any real difference in the lives of West Ham residents? The conclusion one can reach from *West Ham and the River Lea* is that the election prompted a belated and limited response to serious environmental damage done by decades of rapid industrial and demographic growth. Municipal politicians had limited resources for tackling the immense problems they faced, especially given that those who regained political control in 1900 had little interest in seeing local taxes increase. In spite of some improvements in health outcomes, many residents continued to live in a seriously damaged environment, vulnerable to the next economic or environmental crisis.

Clifford is a very good guide to the environmental damage and the limited governmental response to it in the industrial suburb of West Ham. His GIS and other statistical analyses offer the reader the geographer's bird's eye view of industrial development and its social and environmental consequences. Throughout the book, but particularly in his chapters on turn-of-the-century local political responses, the historian in Clifford seeks to give a human face to those otherwise impersonal maps and tables. The result is a careful study that will be of interest to a variety of historians who seek to delineate and understand the impact of industrial change on the material, social and political landscape.

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Fabrice Bensimon, Quenton Deluermoz, and Jeanne Moisand, eds., *"Arise Ye Wretched of the Earth": The First*

*International in a Global Perspective*  
(Leiden: Brill 2018)

THE YEAR 2014 marked the 150th anniversary of the creation in London of the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA), the so-called First International (1864–1872). Marked by several commemorative events, gatherings, and contributions, including one by the author of this review, the sesquicentennial of the founding of the first independent international workers' association offered the opportunity to revisit its short history in light of the current developments and new approaches in labour studies as well as in cognate fields. The book under review here grew out of such a conference in 2014, convened by the co-editors and held at the Maison de la Recherche of the Université Paris-Sorbonne in Paris. Fifty years earlier in the same capital, as social history was budding as a new sub-field of historical research, the Centenary conference of the First International had undertaken a decisive shift in the study of the IWMA from congress-history to movement-history, putting its rank-and-files back at the centre of the story. This volume builds on and continues that research trajectory by extending it in new directions, including transnational history, intellectual history, and cultural history, and by shedding light on omitted or forgotten themes, such as the place of women and former colonial subjects. I cannot adequately respond and do justice to each of the rich and diverse contributions to this collection, resigning myself instead to only highlight those that are particularly insightful or most original.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first, "Organisations and Debates," contains six essays about the context of emergence and the organizational nature of the IWMA, with themes spanning from the Paris Commune to the General Council's role in English labour politics

to the machinery question. The most interesting and innovative chapter in this section, in my view, is offered by Nicolas Delalande, who investigates how IWMA members managed to turn sentimental calls of labour solidarity into real, practical, and effective actions of mutual aid among workers of different countries. In focusing on fundraising and money flows circulating through Europe-wide systems of donations and loans to support strikes, Delalande takes us into the daily functioning of the IWMA, for which money – as for any labour organization, then and now – was the sinews of war. While the General Council functioned as a coordinating body putting distant IWMA members in mutual contact, local sections were the real pivots of monetary transfers to striking or locked-out workers, and they did so through already-existing infrastructures of solidarity. Donations did occur in some desperate cases, but most transfers were made in the form of loans, which followed the Proudhonian free-credit philosophy (no fixed payback requirement) aimed at forging an ethics of solidarity and egalitarian relations between sections. The First International was thus not only a dense network of labour societies. It was also and simultaneously "a dense network of debts." (83)

The second part, "Global Causes and Local Branches," contains eleven chapters that explore the embeddedness of local sections' politics from Latin America to Russia in transnational political cultures. Jeanne Moisand's essay on the entanglement of republicanism and labour internationalism during the "Cantonalist" revolutions in Spain (1868–1878) stands out here. Since Engels, the conventional interpretation of the federal-republican undercurrent that drove the revolutions tended to view it as both an import of Bakunin's anarchism and the Swiss canton model of federalism. In placing the Cantonalist revolutions in an imperial

context, Moisand shows that they owed as much to radical political traditions coming from the Atlantic world. Spanish naval seamen and port workers were at the forefront of the revolutionary movements. They were active members in the Spanish branch of the IWMA and were well represented in Barcelona during the Spanish first congress of the Association. When the republic was officially proclaimed in February 1873, crews of naval seamen who had been conscripted under the monarchy to fight against Cuba's war of independence mutinied in the Spanish fleet in Cartagena, proclaiming a federal canton there that lasted the longest. They revolted against the new regime because of the refusal to follow through on the promise to abolish conscription in both the army and the navy. Shaped more by seafaring experience across the empire than by political philosophy coming from the Continent, their republicanism was wedded to the bodily freedom of workers.

The last part of the volume, "Actors and Ideologies," re-approaches the IWMA through biographical and intellectual histories. The essay by Gregory Claeys on the role of British positivism in the founding of the IWMA is an original addition to the current body of scholarship on those topics. Edward Spencer Beesly, who helped organized the IWMA's inaugural meeting and who pronounced the opening speech, was a leading figure of the positivist philosophy in England, which was highly critical of European imperialism abroad. Through Beesly, Claeys fills an important blind spot in the IWMA literature with regards to the colonies. Another insightful essay is provided by Antje Schrupp who recovers, albeit with very limited sources, the life of four women activists of the First International: Virginie Barbet, Elisabeth Dmitrieff, André Léo, and Victoria Woodhull. They did not leave much writing behind, but

their daily presence in the activities of the IWMA, where women were not expected (or even welcomed), connected socialism with feminism in a concrete fashion, which Schrupp calls the embodiment of politics.

In sum, *The First International in a Global Perspective* is a highly worthwhile collection. Its main weakness is its geographical reach, which is not exactly global in scope as the title suggests. To be fair, the collection's first appendix on the chronology of local sections does mention the existence of an IWMA antenna in Australia, but no chapter is dedicated to it unfortunately. Moreover, while the 1964 Centenary Paris conference proceedings pointed out to sections in Egypt and Turkey, both Africa and the Middle East are absent in the collection. This omission is curious given that scholars, such as Anthony Gorman on the Egyptian sections, for instance, have since then produced new findings on those regions. Yet, overall, this collection is an important contribution that greatly improves our understanding the First International, charting out promising, new research trajectories for the next decades.

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Neville Kirk, *Transnational Radicalism and the Connected Lives of Tom Mann and Robert Samuel Ross* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2017)

ANOTHER BOOK ON transnational labour history? Another book by Neville Kirk on transnational labour history? Yes, as Kirk makes clear, he has had an enduring interest in transnational and cross-national comparative labour history. He was trained as a transnational labour historian: first as one of a group of talented MA students at Warwick