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Cecil Courtney and Jenny Mander, eds., *Raynal's Histoire des deux Indes: Colonialism, Networks, and Global Exchange*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015. xii + 349 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, summaries, bibliography, and index. £70.00 U.K. (pb). ISBN 978-0-7294-1169-1.

Review by Elizabeth Cross, Florida State University.

Cecil Courtney and Jenny Mander are right to observe in their introduction to this volume that the Abbé Raynal's *Histoire philosophique des deux Indes* has indeed come a long way since Gustave Lanson dismissed it as an "oeuvre morte" in 1895 (p. 1). Despite the fluctuating fortunes of the text—from eighteenth-century bestseller, to nineteenth and early twentieth-century oblivion—Raynal is everywhere in eighteenth-century studies now. Work by scholars such as Yves Bénot, Sankar Muthu, and (to a lesser extent) Jennifer Pitts has placed the *Histoire des deux Indes* in a canon of anti-imperial Enlightenment writings.^[1] The *Centre international d'étude du XVIIIe siècle* is currently publishing a critical edition of the text, of which half of the collaborators on this volume are on the editorial team.^[2] The introduction to this book is an essential summary of the current state of the field of Raynal historiography, and it makes clear just how much scholarly work went into the reestablishment of Raynal as an omnipresent figure in studies of the French Enlightenment today. As the editors readily note, the *Histoire des deux Indes* is not an easily approachable text. In order to render it legible to modern readers, generations of scholars worked to explain its most challenging interpretive aspects: its plagiarism of other sources, the identities of its many authors, and its frequently ambiguous and contradictory arguments. Over time, the editors show, this allowed scholars to reinterpret the *Histoire* as a multi-author, collaborative *oeuvre* like the *Encyclopédie*, a similarity further enforced by the knowledge of Denis Diderot's considerable involvement in certain editions of the text.

As the present volume is a work of multiple authors, like the *Histoire des deux Indes* itself, it too contains certain conceptual contradictions and ambiguities. However, Courtney and Mander note that the contributions to their volume are united largely by two overarching (and deeply contemporary) themes. The first pertains to Raynal's status as an icon—or potentially, a forebear—of modern global historians. The editors see Raynal's *oeuvre* as "arguably the first example of global history" (pp. 7-8), a theme that is explored at length by one of the finest contributions in the volume, by Sylvana Tomaselli (in part one). Tomaselli explores whether the *Histoire* contains a unified, "stadial history" (p. 78) of humankind's emergence from the state of nature, like many of its Enlightenment contemporaries—and her answer is flatly no. She astutely notes that the authors of the *Histoire*, in striving to present a unified—but in practice, highly fractured—narrative of the expansion of global empires "encounter[ed], knowingly or not, the difficulties facing present-day writers of world histories" (p. 84). The editors point out

that many of the criticisms of Raynal's work could have just as easily been levied against modern global historians accused of privileging "synthesis" above argument, such as Felicity Nussbaum and C.A. Bayly (pp. 8-10).^[3]

The second key theme uniting the contributions is the concept of the "social network" (pp. 10) and its uses in understanding knowledge production and patterns of sociability in the Enlightenment. The editors are highly conscious of recent critiques by David A. Bell of the "overuse" of the concept of the digital-age "network," and how this metaphor, like global history itself, often elucidates connections without ever fully exploring their meaning.^[4] The concerns of the digital age indeed loom large throughout the volume, especially in Daniel Gordon's contribution (also in part one), which suggests that, in the *Histoire's* plurality of authors—some of whom were readers of the text in the first place—one can detect "certain qualities that we associate today with open-source knowledge creation, best known through Wikipedia" (p. 115). Although the use of contemporary tech jargon throughout the book is at times distracting, many of the contributions throughout elucidate clearly how Raynal and his co-authors relied upon works by other authors and transnational correspondents in order to glean information about foreign empires. As a result, the essays in this volume will be of special value to book historians seeking to examine the sources used in constructing the *Histoire* and its range of eventual readers.

The remaining essays in this book are divided into three sections, the first of which is entitled "The theme of global exchange in the *Histoire des deux Indes*." In this section, Antonella Alimento's contribution is the only one in the volume to explore in detail Raynal's position in the history of French political economy. Alimento shows that Raynal was an avid reader of the works of the circle of the *intendant* Jacques Claude Marie Vincent de Gournay, most notably those of his disciple François Véron Duverger de Forbonnais. Raynal embraced Forbonnais' vision of France as a "monarchie commerçante" with a commitment to the values of "liberté et concurrence" (pp. 60-61), and Alimento illuminates how this theme pervaded Raynal's economic writings, particularly on the issue of monopoly and the *Compagnie des Indes*.^[5] The remaining contributions in this section (with the exception of Sylvana Tomaselli's, discussed above), are all implicitly joined by their position on whether the *Histoire* was an "anti-colonial" text. Stéphane Pujol's essay begins with a discussion of Raynal's vision of commerce. Based largely on Montesquieu, Pujol posits that Raynal had a "vision civilisatrice du commerce" (p. 25) that could serve to reinforce humankind's natural sociability. By grounding imperial expansion in trade and reciprocity, rather than conquest and brutality, Raynal argued that empire itself could be rehabilitated in a kind of "mission civilisatrice de la colonisation" (p. 32). In a similar vein, Christian Donath, positioning himself against scholars like Muthu and Pitts, argues that the *Histoire* is unquestionably a text with an imperial agenda, albeit one that sought to legitimize for colonial projects through a disavowal of violence, force, and coercion. Peter Jimack's article points to a different kind of ambiguity in Raynal's imperial thought. Throughout the text, Jimack notes, Raynal and his co-authors frequently use plants as symbols to depict the behavior of natural and social man. In their taxonomy, sugar became a valorized symbol of energy, work, and civilization—a surprising choice, Jimack readily admits, given the book's otherwise strongly anti-slavery position. In varying degrees, each of these contributions thus questions the anti-colonial commitments of Raynal and his co-authors, in line with arguments made elsewhere by Anthony Strugnell.^[6]

These essays lie in tension with the approaches from two others in the same section. Daniel Droixhe's contribution offers a reply to critics of Raynal who insist on the text's innate Eurocentrism by insisting on Raynal's appreciation of the art and cultural practices of indigenous and enslaved peoples, although the veracity and cultural politics of these representations is of course open to debate. Daniel Gordon's more in-depth study similarly insists on the culturally relativistic and anti-imperial aspects of the *Histoire*. For Raynal, "civilization" itself was a problematic concept--a skepticism placed in prominent and visible areas of the text. Raynal's vision of commerce, according to Gordon, is far from the *doux commerce* vision of Montesquieu *pace* Albert O. Hirschman, a theme noted by other scholars of Raynal such as Anoush Fraser Terjanian.^[7] In contrast with the interpretation offered by Pujol, Gordon suggests that Raynal believed commerce could frequently be used as a stepping stone to empire and domination. But for the strongly anti-colonial Raynal, all "colonialism degrades the colonising agent as well as the colonised" (p. 111).

The second section is entitled "Mediating networks: the making and marketing of the *Histoire des deux Indes*." Kenta Ohji's remarkable essay demonstrates that research for the *Histoire* began with Raynal's earlier writings (the *Mémoires historiques*, *Ecole militaire*, and *Histoire des guerres*), all of which examined the military and diplomatic politics of modern Europe. Her convincing demonstration that Raynal saw intra-European diplomacy and global commerce as twin "phénomènes caractéristiques de l'histoire moderne" (p. 127) offers good advice for today's European historians: global and national contexts are not mutually exclusive. Gilles Bancarel's essay balances an examination of Raynal's library and academic sources in writing the *Histoire* with reflections on the use of images--including the image of Raynal himself--as "outil[s] pédagogique[s]" (p. 147) within the text and for promoting the text to readers. Gianluigi Goggi's contribution is one of the most solidly bibliographic in the entire volume, as he examines the material differences between two versions of the 1774 edition of the *Histoire*--one printed in France, and the other in The Hague (although both, naturally, bore the imprint of the latter).

Other essays in this section are devoted to the theme of imperial legends and myth. The essay by Ida Federica Pugliese explores the contemporary rivalry between Raynal and the Scottish historian William Robertson, focusing on the ways these two historians discussed the Spanish conquest of the Americas and what has been termed the *leyenda negra*, or "black legend" of Spanish brutality. Robertson, she suggests, came to a more favorable assessment of Spanish imperial power because he read sources like Bartolomé de Las Casas's *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* with a more critical, scholarly eye than Raynal did. In this respect, Pugliese comes to the exact *opposite* conclusion as the author of the following essay, Susanne Greilich. By exploring changes in Raynal's use of evidence about the Spanish conquest of the Americas over time--including its use of biographical information about the Aztec emperor Cuauhtémoc, Hernán Cortés, and Las Casas himself--Greilich argues that Raynal's ideas about Spain became more favorable with each progressive edition, perhaps reflecting the increasing importance of Spain as a geopolitical ally for France over the publishing life of the *Histoire*. The final essay in this section by Ursula Haskins Gonthier explores Raynal's portrayal of Amerindians. In contrast to the negative, "barbarian" portrayals presented in the war journal of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, one of Raynal's principal textual sources on this matter, Raynal celebrates the Amerindians for their "natural independence and dislike of authority" (pp. 189, 192). Gonthier convincingly places this discrepancy in the context of the aftermath of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). Raynal, she argues, was working to create an *ex post facto*

“legend” of an idyllic French Canada lost to the true barbarians--the English (pp. 195-196). Her contribution thus shows the link between the development of a French nationalism defined by opposition to a barbarian, English “other” and narratives of French postcolonial nostalgia from the eighteenth century onward.[8]

The final section of the volume, “The *Histoire des deux Indes* and its network of readers,” is primarily devoted to exploring the international scope of Raynal’s readership. Frederik Thomasson examines how Swedish readers read Raynal within the context of their own changing political landscape after 1772, and similarly, how Raynal wrote about Sweden’s “age of liberty” (1719-1772) in light of “what constitutional change could mean for France” (p. 202). Reinier Salverda’s essay explores Raynal and Diderot’s connections to Holland and the traceable proliferation of their writings. Based on purchase records, he examines how Dutch colonial reformers read and used Raynal in their arguments, and how colonists reacted against Raynal’s abolitionism. Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink expands on this theme of colonist reaction to the text by exploring Thomas Paine’s *Letter to the abbé Raynal* (1782), which attacked him for his negative and often inaccurate views on the American Revolution. Lüsebrink situates Paine alongside many Hispanic South American writers in a genre of critiques of the *Histoire* emanating from “sociétés coloniales elles-mêmes” (p. 236). Jennifer Tsien’s remarkable article, like Gonthier’s, explores Raynal’s treatment of another French colony relegated to the sphere of myth after the Seven Years’ War: Louisiana. Tsien shows that Raynal’s account of Louisiana is peppered with references to how “delusion” (p. 250), “excessive enthusiasm” (p. 251), and “fanaticism” (p. 254) led French officials and colonists astray in development of the colonial project--with the implication being that imagination, delusion, and blind faith in “the very institutions of monarchy and religion” (p. 255) were similarly bound for failure. In another highly bibliographic contribution, Muriel Collart explores how Jean-Baptiste Robinet used passages lifted from the *Histoire* in order to write the geographical entries for his thirty-volume *Dictionnaire universel des sciences*.

The final two contributions in the volume explore Raynal through the eyes of later readers in the 1790s and in the early 1800s. Philippe Barthelet examines Joseph de Maistre’s counterrevolutionary take on Raynal as part of “les Lumières comme matrice de la Révolution française” (p. 279). However, alongside Maistre’s unsurprising detestation of Raynal’s secularism and irreligion, Barthelet shows that Maistre had a surprising affinity for Raynal’s anti-slavery sentiments, if in a more moral and religious sense than in a material one (pp. 287-288). Lastly, Georges Dulac discusses the place of the *Histoire* in the library of the Protestant merchant Louis Médard. In his annotations and writings on the text, Médard, committed to carrying the principles of the Enlightenment into the nineteenth century, sought to defend Raynal against liberal and reactionary critics who accused him of plagiarism, ridiculed the author’s supposed 1791 abjuration of his Enlightenment principles, and said the text was a relic of a bygone era. The nineteenth century, as the editors pointed out in the introduction, saw the emergence of a “fossilisée” (p. 302) vision of Raynal that was to last for generations.

Although divergent in scholarly approaches and often as contradictory as the moving parts of its object of study, this volume is a welcome reminder that Raynal’s *Histoire des deux Indes* will continue to provoke lively debate in book history, intellectual history, and the history of European imperial ideologies.

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Christian Donath, "Apostles of the state: legitimate colonisation tactics in the *Histoire des deux Indes*"

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NOTES

[1] Yves Bénot, *Diderot: de l’athéisme à l’anticolonialisme* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1970); Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[2] Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, ed. Anthony Strugnell et al. (Ferney-Voltaire: Centre International d’études du XVIIIe siècle, 2010-).

[3] Felicity A. Nussbaum, ed., *The Global Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).

[4] David A. Bell, “This is What Happens When Historians Overuse the Idea of the Network,” *The New Republic*, October 25, 2013 (<https://newrepublic.com/article/114709/world-connecting-reviewed-historians-overuse-network-metaphor>).

[5] Similar to the argument made in Kenta Ohji, “Raynal, Necker et la Compagnie des Indes: quelques aspects inconnus de la genèse et de l’évolution de l’*Histoire des Deux Indes*” in Gilles Bancarel, ed., *Raynal et ses réseaux* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2011), pp. 105-181.

[6] Most recently, in Anthony Strugnell, “A view from afar: India in Raynal’s *Histoire des deux Indes*” in Simon Davies, Daniel Sanjiv Roberts, and Gabriel Sánchez Espinosa, eds., *India and Europe in the Global Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2014), pp. 15-27.

[7] Anoush Fraser Terjanian, *Commerce and its Discontents in Eighteenth-Century French Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[8] David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2001); Kate Marsh, *India in the French Imagination: Peripheral Voices, 1754-1815* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009); Kate Marsh and Nicola Frith,

eds., *France's Lost Empires: Fragmentation, Nostalgia, and la Fracture Colonial* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011).

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