

PCCBS Article Prize: Michelle Tusan, “Genocide, Famine and Refugees on Film: Humanitarianism and the First World War” in *Past & Present*, 237 (November 2017) 197–235.

Michelle Tusan’s article “Genocide, Famine and Refugees on Film: Humanitarianism and the First World War” brings fascinating research on the early history of the use of film in humanitarian campaigns together with a subtle understanding of shifting Anglo-American political and humanitarian sensibilities between 1919 and 1923. Through a nuanced reading of various films commissioned or used by British humanitarian organisations in their efforts to raise funds and elicit support for relief efforts in Armenia, the Greek/Turkish borderlands, and Russia, Tusan astutely observes both the successes and mistakes made in the process of developing documentary film for humanitarian messaging. The article powerfully demonstrates the challenges that early documentary filmmakers faced in striking the balance between the power of film to, one hand, elicit sympathy and support of the victims of humanitarian crises and, on the other, evoke a sense of the hopelessness and futility of aid in the face of the overpowering forces arrayed against victims. The article further helps to explain the shift in public perceptions and understandings of the limits of British power and the intractability of humanitarian crises after the First World War. Tusan shows how humanitarian efforts became focused on the mobilisation and provision of relief for those suffering, rather than on seeking justice for, and amends by, those responsible for perpetrating humanitarian crises. She perceptively demonstrates how the construction of humanitarian disasters in these early films detached both the suffering of the afflicted and immediate alleviation of that suffering from the wider political causes of these crises. The article resonates with the contemporary global refugee crisis, but these connections are never forced nor anachronistic.