

Whose Hunger?: Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid (Barrows Lectures)

Jenny Edkins

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An analytical look at the ways we define and respond to famine.

We see famine and look for the likely causes: poor food distribution, unstable regimes, caprices of weather. A technical problem, we tell ourselves, one that modern social and natural science will someday resolve. To the contrary, Jenny Edkins responds in this book: Famine in the contemporary world is not the antithesis of modernity but its symptom. A critical investigation of hunger, famine, and aid practices in international politics, Whose Hunger? shows how the forms and ideas of modernity frame our understanding of famineand, consequently, shape our responses.

Edkins examines Malthus and the origins of famine theory in notions of scarcity. Drawing on the work of Lacan, de Waal, Foucault, Zizek, and particularly Derrida, she considers Amartya Sen's entitlement approach, the Band Aid/Live Aid events, and food for work projects in Eritrea as examples of the technologization and repoliticization of famine. From the politics of famine to the practices of aid, from the theories of modernity to the complex emergencies of modern life, from the broad view to the telling detail, this searching book takes us closer than ever to a clear understanding of some of the worst ravages of our time.

Jenny Edkins is lecturer in the Department of International Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Borderlines Series, volume 17

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