

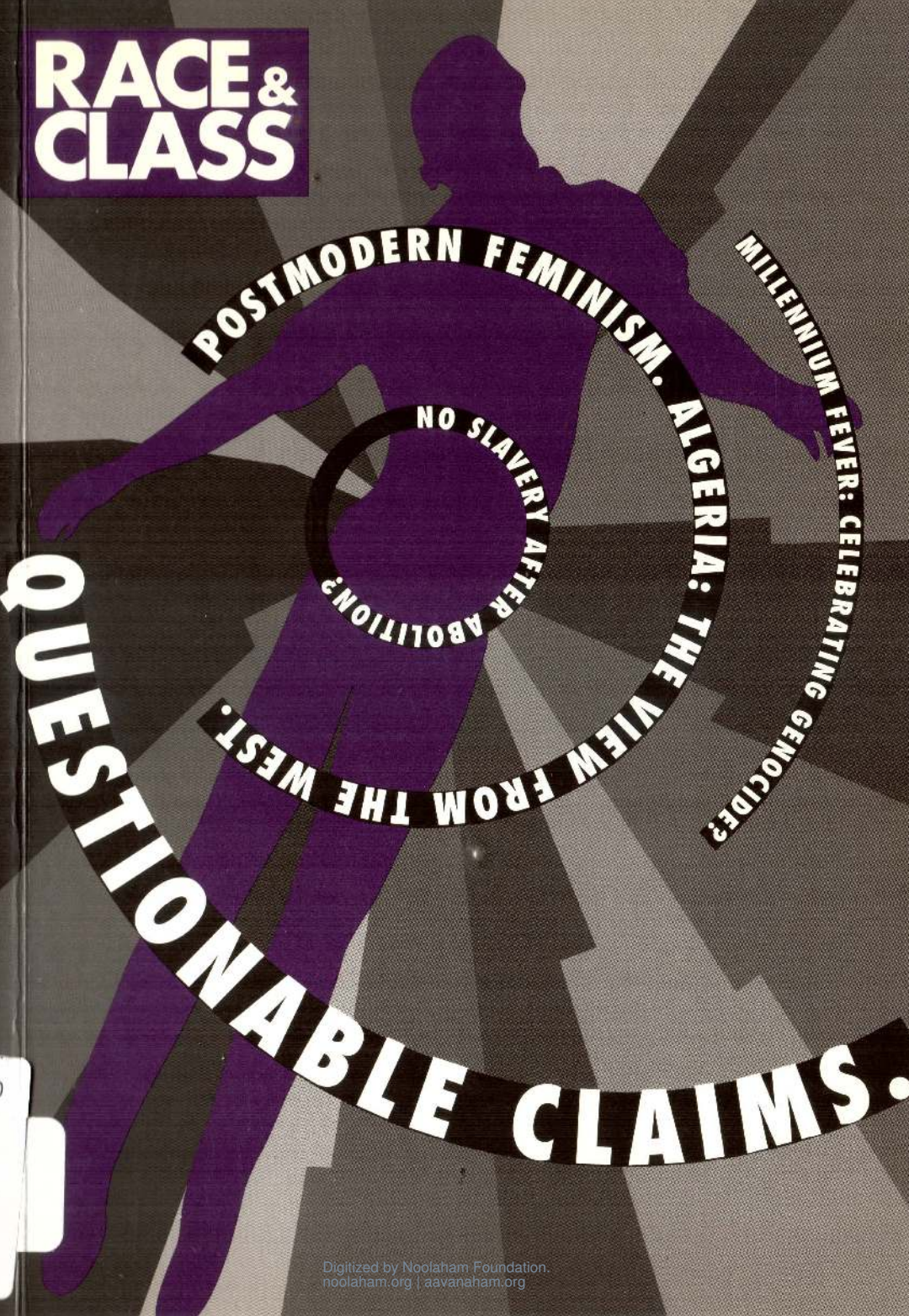
**RACE &
CLASS**

QUESTIONABLE CLAIMS.

POSTMODERN FEMINISM. ALGERIA: THE VIEW FROM THE WEST.

MILLENNIUM FEVER: CELEBRATING GENOCIDES?

NO SLAVERY AFTER ABOLITION?



Eqbal Ahmad 1932–1999

Eqbal was a multitude of men – scholar, activist, political analyst, teacher, diplomat, visionary – but, above all, a foot-soldier in the army of peoples everywhere. Others have written about Eqbal in Algeria, Eqbal in Pakistan, Eqbal in Palestine, Eqbal in Iran, Eqbal in the US Civil Rights Movement of the '60s and the anti-Vietnam war movement of the '60s and '70s. But little is known of how in 1973 Eqbal rode into Europe and, scouting through France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Britain, gathered to himself and to the Transnational Institute (TNI) in Amsterdam (which he set up as an independent wing of the Institute of Policy Studies in Washington) a clutch of organic intellectuals and activist groups, given to the fight against imperialism and the struggles of liberation movements, and gave them the where-withal and the fillip to pursue their commitments and broadcast their visions. And he brought them together in seasonal seminars and conferences to exchange views, ideas and programmes, and in *ad hoc* pressure groups to arraign and harry governments. In the process, he created a floating university which fostered a left culture free of petty sectarianism and an academic ethos free of self-aggrandisement. Into European considerations he brought a Third World dimension, into American considerations both European and Third World.

In *Race & Class*, Eqbal saw a journal of political intervention, which reflected the symbiosis between thinking and doing that he himself so uniquely exemplified, and promptly made it his responsibility, with TNI as its co-sponsor and me a fellow of TNI. His assistance came at a time when the Institute of Race Relations staff, having taken over the Institute and its periodical, *Race*, in the palace revolution of 1972, were unable to sustain either through lack of funds and contributors. Eqbal provided both to see us through our critical rebirth as *Race & Class* – and, then, as joint editor, took the journal to new heights in its special issues on Iran, Palestine and Lebanon, establishing thereby its reputation as the best Third World quarterly in the English-speaking world.

This journal is a monument to his memory.

A. Sivanandan

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Questionable claims: colonialism *redux*, feminist style

Not too long ago, I had occasion to chair a panel on 'sex work' in an international conference, the overall theme of which was global economic restructuring. Rejecting the projection of 'woman as passive victim' that they read into Marxist and radical feminist theories – capitalism and patriarchy, respectively, symbolising the oppressive forces – the panelists laid new ground for reconfiguring the entire phenomenon. Their approach, one that has tremendous appeal among feminists today, was to highlight the notion of women's consciousness and agency. With women's proclaimed agency arose a wholly different set of motifs: *jouissance*, desire, pleasure, negotiation. Appropriately enough, one paper was rendered like a performance on stage, mimicking the role of empowered actor that it had cast 'sex workers' into, transforming a willing audience into voyeurs who watched in rapt attention.

Woman as empowered agent

The presenters identified their research subjects as practitioners in New York, San Francisco and western Europe. Yet the moment they shifted from concrete description to a theoretical mode, that specificity immediately dissolved, with EuroAmerican women occupying the space of paradigmatic 'sex workers'. Ironically, the conference theme

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was global economic restructuring. I asked how their theory might be altered if 'Third World' women were part of the picture. Two of the three speakers quickly responded, to my pleasant surprise, by elaborating on the negative impact on 'Third World' women of World Bank/International Monetary Fund (WB/IMF) conditionalities, such as structural adjustment programmes that require the withdrawal of government subsidies from social services, public utilities, education, etc.

It was a relief to learn that the panelists understood how the resulting immiseration of women makes them especially vulnerable to the sex industry, particularly in the context of development schemes in which tourism figures heavily. To forge closer connections between globalisation and the sex industry, the presenters could well have proceeded to describe the literal 'border crossings' manoeuvred by traffickers for hundreds of thousands of girls and women transported from Asia or eastern Europe to western Europe.¹ Unfortunately, all such details counted for little because these proved irrelevant to their narrative. Their thesis, not to be sullied by these other pieces of information, was that 'sex work' is a form of emotional labour that is not necessarily exploitative, alienating or estranging, because of the ability of 'sex workers' to exert control over and manage their emotions. In a response that I found instructive, the third speaker, more frank, expressed her exasperation with the Marxist notion of class, explaining that she had deliberately left it out.

I use the above example to broach the key argument of this essay: that contemporary feminist theory has continued to relegate and consign 'Third World' women, women of colour in general and working-class women to the periphery of its concerns. In the instance cited, it is what might be labelled 'resistance and empowerment theory' that, paradoxically enough, accounts for this marginalisation. I am taking the position that, for the most part, white/western feminist claims to emancipate women (where such claims still exist) are questionable, in view of prevailing postmodern currents that enunciate a clear retreat from class analysis, political economy and a distrust of nationalist sentiments and notions of the nation state. I believe that such a retreat can only aggravate problems of exclusion that feminist theory since the late 1970s has tried to redress. Yet there are efforts calling for the reinstatement of the basic concepts of class and social relations of production that can suggest directions feminist theory might take in order to address a broader audience and target a wider range of interests than it does at present.

From academe to the 'New World Order'

If feminist academicians are inclined to depict women as empowered

agents posing resistance in multiple sites within the global order, social reality may warrant an altogether different analytical frame. In the face of Asia's current economic maelstrom, to take an example, it is women and girls who carry the heaviest burden of all, winding up eating less and getting battered more, among other routine misfortunes. According to Linda Tsao Yang, the American envoy to the Asian Development Bank in the Philippines, the financial troubles of Asia have resulted in women losing their jobs and pulling daughters out of school and even selling them to brothels.² In Indonesia, one study found that the number of street children aged 13 to 15 in the major city of Semarang has increased by 43 per cent since the crisis; 30 per cent of girls who took to the streets became prostitutes.

The practice of turning to prostitution for survival is reported to have become more frequent and, because the sex industry is supply-driven, the increase in young 'sex workers' has simply served to lower the usual rates for customers. In north-east Thailand, a woman sold her 15-year-old granddaughter into a brothel. Lamphan, the young girl, eventually escaped the Bangkok brothel-owner who locked her up, starved her and threatened to force her to eat her excrement. Back in her village, she fancied working in a sweatshop, a dream she apparently shares with innumerable jobless others for whom Asia's woes have made 'miserable factories . . . coveted places to work'.³

It might seem bizarre, if not risible, for anyone to contemplate these news items on the Asian crisis and its dire consequences for women (not to mention men) and, among the data therein, to seize upon Lamphan's courageous escape as the focal issue, extolling it as a rebellious individual act. Pursuing this line of thinking, one might not be totally off the mark to uncover a certain resourcefulness, though unpraiseworthy, in the grandmother's act of selling Lamphan; after all, hers was a decision purposively contrived to stave off family hunger. While this may smack of parody, it is, in fact, exactly the perspective one commonly finds in feminist writing today.

In a recent book, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: stories of Filipina workers*, Nicole Constable brings much-needed attention to the plight of Filipina domestic workers who comprise 150,000 'guest workers' in this newly reunified Chinese territory.⁴ Her account is rich and dense with the minutiae of the maids' day-to-day struggles in the hands of Chinese employers who are often prone to meting out harsh, racialised treatment. Drawing on Michel Foucault's disciplinary regimes, Constable outlines the ways in which various institutions (employment agencies, state policy, employers) manage, regulate and control the behaviour of these women through the deployment of a variety of disciplinary forms, physical and psychological. To the extent that she exposes the institutions profiting from the extraction of Filipina domestics' surplus labour, she does a commendable job.

However, this is not the task she set out to undertake. Proof of this is that she allots but a few pages to the history of labour migration in the Philippines, omitting any meaningful reference to the country's colonial history or to its neocolonial status, the backdrop for today's massive labour exodus; 4-6 million Filipinos out of a population of 70 million work overseas.

Although Constable states that 'Filipino migrant workers are the Philippines' largest source of foreign exchange',⁵ this is not quite the same as acknowledging that their remittances have fuelled consumerism and kept the economy above water – public knowledge in the country. Nor does the author evince deep interest in probing the reasons for such a situation. Further, even though she describes the operations and instruments of repressive institutions, she ultimately downplays their role. Finally (and from here springs the energy that unmistakably drives her work), she trains the spotlight on the quotidian – the everyday practices of 'resistance' that she perceives domestic helpers to engage in. As Constable herself declares (unlike the conference panelists, she rejects the passive victim/agent dichotomy): 'To regard these women simply as oppressed by those "with power" is to ignore the subtler and more complex forms of power, discipline, and resistance in their everyday lives.'⁶

With this in mind, Constable devotes the entire book to unravelling the precise mechanisms employed by domestic helpers in myriad acts of defiance and rebellion. The result is a book that explains how those normally purported to be without power are shown to be actually in possession of it. Demonstrations of this 'power' range from the use of subtle insider jokes, intelligible only to Filipino cohorts, to cajolery and chicanery, and to confrontation and quitting work. Constable interprets as acts of protest ('in a Gandhian sense') the Sunday gatherings of domestic workers in public spaces, acknowledging that the women themselves may view it as no more than their simple right to be there. On Sundays at fast-food restaurants, Filipinas relish the reversed role of being served instead of serving, even as McDonald's and other establishments 'do a roaring business' off them. Constable cites one woman who protested poor service at McDonald's by writing a letter to the newspaper, another by requesting extra catsup and napkins. Admittedly, unlike factory workers who loudly raise voices to protest, domestic workers 'whisper admonitions to compatriots . . . imploring them to work harder, to complain less, and to behave better. Their everyday forms of resistance are geared toward surviving their situation with their sense of humanity intact.'⁷

The author acknowledges the discursive character of most of these acts of resistance, herself doubting their efficacy in making changes either in the conditions of work or in mitigating power relations. But she is determined to disprove the idea that women are passive victims,

a notion ostensibly stemming from systemic explanations of gender subordination, although this is not made explicit. She accepts the possibility that deferential behaviour may, indeed, signify nothing more than accommodation; that, despite all this resistance, relations between predominantly Chinese employers and Filipina domestics have remained the same, and that domestic work persists as a degrading and dehumanising occupation. Nevertheless, in the final chapter, entitled 'Pleasure and power', she concludes:

we can begin to see how Filipina domestic workers derive pleasure, or at least some satisfaction, from attempts to organize their work better and maximize their productivity, to get along better with employers, and to 'professionalize' their image, even at the cost of becoming ever more obedient and hardworking. Their work, after all, is what allows them to remain in Hong Kong, a wealthy and cosmopolitan place that excites their imaginations while extracting their labor.⁸

In this passage, Constable indubitably wants the reader to view Filipina domestics as endowed with human agency – individual agency, more specifically. Because she has allowed existing social relations to define the parameters of her conceptual framework, she seems unperturbed by the irony of seeing these women as deriving pleasure from maximising their productivity and performing in a more organised and 'professional' manner the precise activity that solidifies their exploitation. Blind to a social division of labour that is inherently unequal, she can speak of a seemingly neutral, depersonalised entity (a 'wealthy and cosmopolitan' Hong Kong) 'that excites their imaginations while extracting their labor', in the same breath – as though the two notions were equally benign. Given this stance, it is no surprise that one approving reviewer of Constable's book prescribed it as useful reading for Chinese employers of Filipina domestic helpers.⁹

Making sense of 'resistance' feminism

How does one fathom such a feminist scenario? In the case of the conference panelists, their 'empowerment' thesis functioned to exclude involuntary practitioners in the sex trade like Lamphan, the young Thai. Even their use of the term 'sex work', intended to denote occupational dignity and choice, suggests a libidinal economy, contrasting sharply with Filipino women's insistence on the label 'prostituted' women, which invokes political economy.¹⁰ But how could the panelists recite a litany of adversities besetting the 'other' and, the next instant, casually brush these aside? Perhaps blame can be laid on the persisting tendency of those in dominant positions to universalise

from the limits of their own experience. US women of colour repeatedly called attention to just this predilection in white, middle-class women in the '70s, a challenge that many have accepted and responded to. Elizabeth Spelman, noting this solipsism, remarks: 'For a feminist theory to end up focusing on one group of women without saying that that is what it is going to do is no mean feat.'¹¹

That the panelists were aware of structural adjustment at all is in itself already laudable since few, indeed, have this knowledge. But, continuing with Spelman and her critique of the 'ampersand problem', the additive response resorted to amounted to an empty rhetorical gesture, since it had no effect whatsoever on the theory ultimately arrived at. Still, these were theorists immersed in postmodern feminism, the politics of difference and its adjunct, the fierce drive against essentialism. So how did this bugbear, essentialism, slip in without notice? In a conference on global corporativism at a historical juncture when progressive thinking on the whole is in retreat, it is not difficult to detect in this political climate a weather warning, an advisory against colonialism *redux**, feminist style.

Constable's work, to be sure, is not exclusionary on the same grounds, but in the end it makes a mockery of Filipina domestics' predicament by fetishising their pragmatic 'make-do' coping skills and trivialising their mobilising activities. For instance, she maintains that their self-discipline (a form of power) tempers and limits their collective resistance, as in their demand that forced remittance be reduced but not revoked.¹² Constable's interest in the quotidian, because deprived of an explanatory framework that could raise essential questions about a hierarchically organised exploitative system, comes out as petty and patronising under scrutiny. Unlike the conference presenters, because of the nature of her subjects, Constable is denied the position of ignoring class issues outright. Even so, she attempts to discount poverty as a causal factor by asserting that many of these Filipina domestics do not hail from the poorest or least educated sector in Philippine society. On the whole, I believe it is fair to say that, in spite of her close, extended encounter with class-inscribed actors, Constable manages to elude the implications of a class-informed perspective that might have enabled her to imagine alternative forms of power and resistance, ones that do not promote and preserve subservience and servitude.

Escape from class and political economy

I have chosen to discuss 'sex work' and domestic work because their handling in both cases epitomises a widely practised way of dealing

* Literally 'restored' – editor's note.

with matters of class: confronting class-bound issues but, in effect, shunning them. Put another way, the theoretical frames utilised (most of which can be safely classified as belonging to the postmodern constellation) are those that carefully steer clear of the vaguest notions of surplus labour, so that, no matter how eloquently empirical data may speak of exploitation, the transcription winds up telling another story. Underpinning both examples is the notion that 'class' has come to be perceived as merely another form of identity or 'difference'.

David Harvey delineates the pitfalls of discussing difference or identity politics and 'otherness', both current fixations of postmodern feminism, in abstraction; that is, apart from the social division of labour or material circumstances.¹³ He illustrates this by bringing up two events that transpired at about the same time in 1991. The first was the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings and the sexual harassment issue that rapidly caught feminists' attention. The second was a fire that took place in the Imperial Foods chicken-processing plant in Hamlet, North Carolina, which killed twenty-five workers, eighteen of whom were women and twelve African American. The latter merited no equivalent response from feminists. Two things can be observed here: the privileging of cultural forms of oppression and a corollary, their detachment from the social relations of production, which are deemed less significant.

Feminist emphasis on empowerment and resistance, then, might be construed as a deceptive device that gives the illusion of an emancipatory agenda where there is none. For apathy to those of colour and less privilege, as shown by Harvey's example, is echoed in the lack of response to what has been described as the worst industrial fire in the history of capitalism. This was a fire that razed to the ground the Kader toy factory on the outskirts of Bangkok, Thailand on 10 May 1993, leaving 188 dead and 469 injured.¹⁴ Except for thirteen, all of the dead were young women, some only 13 years old. Three thousand workers were employed by the factory to produce stuffed toys and plastic dolls for children in the United States. Why the silence about the exploitation of girls?

Alertness to the tragedy that befell women and girl workers in the Thai toy factory – or to prostituted 'Third World' women, or to workers harbouring dreams of employment in nineteenth-century-style sweatshops – calls not only for a class analysis but also for a comprehension of the glaring inequalities that characterise international relations. The two are, of course, hardly separate issues. (Policies enacted in the North have caused the maldevelopment, that is the lopsided or distorted economic development, of nations of the South.) Unfortunately, few feminist theorists concern themselves with these issues. To begin to know how transnationals operate in conjunction with governments and international lending agencies

demands an overarching perspective, a grand narrative that is anathema to postmodernists. As a consequence of this rejection, academic discussions on transnationalism and transculture (trendy topics that elide the economic globalisation processes from which they arise) tend to omit, in my experience, any reference to the operations of predatory capitalism embodied by transnational corporations. Academics can indulge this omission because they consciously choose to talk about 'transculture' in purely aesthetic terms safely removed from the international political economy.

Conversations about transculture and transnational space in which I have participated are prone to conjure idealised projections: for instance, the prospect of instantaneous cultural/intellectual flows and exchanges, a possibility created by the high-tech knowledge industry. Excitement elicited by the image of people (exactly which people is never fully articulated) all over the world creating a novel, supposedly levelling or equalising 'transculture' via laptops is comprehensible, if somewhat naive. (A team-taught course on transculture in which I was involved took exactly this tack.) Almost inevitably, messier topics like overseas contract workers, whose bodies are catapulted into transnational space by dint of transnational corporate geopolitics, are either overlooked or administered the 'resistance and empowerment' manoeuvre.

Given the inclination to avoid issues implicating the political economy of the everyday lives of subordinated peoples, the discourse of globalisation has become a virtual stand-in for imperialism, the material consequences of which it effectively obscures and negates. At other times, it is the rhetoric of postcolonialism that serves this function. In any case, when imperialism is summoned, it appears in discursive form. Mridula Udayagiri cites Chandra Mohanty's critique of western colonialism which, though sharp, is centred solely on textual analysis, on how writings by western feminists silence and homogenise 'Third World' women.¹⁵

Doing her bit in the postmodern war against essentialism, Mohanty upbraids western feminists for casting 'Third World' women as a unitary category (to wit, poor) without agency (victims of political economy).¹⁶ What underpins her argument is identity or 'difference' politics which seeks to uncover the multifarious self-definitions (ones supposedly not generated by relations of production, thereby conveniently discarding the idea of a historical agent) available to women. While western imperialism needs to be critiqued, Mohanty's wish to rescue 'Third World' women from the status of victims of socioeconomic systems, together with her attempt to delete poverty as a unifying element for struggle, merely gloss over and conceal the imperialism she intends to put down. At best, imperialism becomes reduced to a form of discursive domination. I raised the issue of

homogenisation with Elizabeth Eviota, a Filipina feminist theorist, in a recent visit to Manila. ‘And what’s wrong with that?’ she asked, then added unequivocally, ‘“Third World” people *are* poor!’

An alternative to ‘essentialism’

Class, suffice it to say, has become a distrusted, essentialising category that prevents the development of a genuinely ‘radical democratic politics’.¹⁷ If class concepts are suspect (reductive), so are grand narratives that permit a comprehension of the global economic order (totalising). Another pernicious view is that the nation state is in decline and irrelevant, and all forms of nationalism retrograde. Yet these are the very analytical tools needed to allow us to comprehend our place in the world and to envision collective strategies for change. To delegitimise the nationalism of oppressed peoples and, worse, to deny the existence of nation states at a time when the struggle for national sovereignty (as in the Philippine instance) has become most critical, is hardly conducive to forging solidarity.

True, transnational corporations move about more freely than ever before and penetrate every corner of the globe in the pursuit of maximum profit, now handily supplied by ‘Third World’ women’s cheap subcontracted labour. But, as Ellen Meiksins Wood explains, the permeability of nation states (erroneously translated into a manifestation of their decline) is premised on the existence of national boundaries and state jurisdictions.¹⁸

It is the state that is principally responsible for establishing the conditions favourable for investment – political stability and cheap compliant labour, among others. The tautology that peripheral nation states are subservient to core nations (thus the porousness or permeability referred to) must be seen as accentuating tremendous power disparities rather than proving the nation state’s weakness or demise. For this reason, Meiksins Wood labels as ‘perverse’ the current emphasis on identity politics when state apparatuses retain pre-eminence as key sites of contestation.

Towards a reinstatement of class

To recapitulate: in the light of feminist theoretical trends, a decolonising project appears ever more taxing and can prove more arduous and frustrating than in previous decades. Fortunately, there is a growing intellectual counter-trend that is impelled by the need to grapple with increasing economic inequalities world-wide. In search of conceptual tools best suited to elucidate contemporary conditions, it is distinguished by its avowed aim to restore a transformative project.

Part of this counter-trend includes efforts to reinstate basic Marxist concepts that have been discredited by avant garde theoreticians, particularly after the collapse of socialist regimes and the accompanying loss of an alternative vision. Teresa Ebert unflinchingly presents what, to her, is the necessary element for social change – an understanding of ‘the basic structural reality of capitalism: the expropriation and exploitation of living labour (surplus value) in the production for profit’.¹⁹ For Barbara Epstein, it is the concept of alienation that must be recuperated.²⁰ She deploys the existence of basic human needs (against the postmodernist notion that everything is socially constructed) to call to task a social order that fails to meet them.

In an instructive and revealing debate over the culture/economy divide, Judith Butler and Nancy Fraser tussle over whether what counts as ‘material’ is always also ‘economic’.²¹ Butler maintains that capitalist discrimination against homosexuality is not ‘merely cultural’ but economic, because material, in its consequences. Fraser, deploying Weber as an antidote to economic reductionist versions of Marxism, distinguishes between injustices of recognition (under which homophobia falls) and those of distribution, which have to do with ‘economics’ or relations of production.²² In this way, she acknowledges the materiality of discrimination but preserves the realm of production as a distinctive domain.

In view of the blindspots connected with labour extraction discussed earlier, I think that it is reformulations of a more inclusive version of class that can prove most fruitful in redirecting feminist energies towards social transformation. I will conclude with two attempts, one by Alan Sears and Colin Mooers and the other by Sonya O. Rose.²³ I have selected these two because I think that they encapsulate two distinct, competing approaches to the same problem.

A historian, Rose argues against the exclusivity inscribed in the nineteenth-century model of the ‘quintessential worker’ around which she believes present-day versions continue to revolve. She un.masks this universal worker as a white man doing artisanal or skilled work in what is designated as the public (and male) domain. Finding this specific vision of the proletariat limiting to scholars’ views of what is interesting and important, she proposes Sartre’s metaphor of seriality in which class is ‘conceptualized as “effects”, as consequences of the structuring of inequality by racialized and gendered capitalisms’.²⁴ In this formulation, class breaks out of the physical boundaries of the workplace into ‘social space’ and, moreover, is also ‘formed discursively by cultural and symbolic processes that define a common project’.²⁵

Sears and Mooers, in contrast, begin their reconceptualisation with the assumption that the part played by human productive relations

in shaping social and political life must not be abandoned. 'Economy' is thus defined to include 'the multiplicity of processes through which people organize socially to transform nature to meet human needs'.²⁶ Formulated within a non-reductionist Marxist paradigm, it becomes possible now for 'class' to embrace the whole gamut of human activities conducted to sustain life: productive/nonproductive, employed/unemployed, full-time/part-time, etc. By this reckoning, nothing is untouched by class. Indeed, the everyday practices of resistance (now a familiar motif) that Rose hopes to illuminate through seriality will have a place carved out. Sears' and Mooers' inclusive construction of class begins with a grand narrative that can apprehend capitalist social relations where class struggles are not severed from non-class.

How the two differ is a matter of great significance, because from these divergences can be predicted contrasting outcomes. Where Sears and Mooers insist on the use of a totalising frame and on centre-staging an expanded rendition of production relations, Rose repudiates both in favour of an empiricism that valorises struggles in multiple sites. For Sears and Mooers, the linking of race, gender, class and other forms of oppression is only possible when these experiences are seen as grounded in a single totality grasped as the complex network of capitalist social relations.²⁷ With the loss of a totalising frame, the notion of where inequality springs from becomes vague, and indeterminacy results.

While Sears and Mooers wrote their piece before Rose, their work stands as a prefiguration of the pitfalls that accompany the rejection of a totalising frame in the formulation of Rose. Without the conception of a totality, Rose can only speak ambiguously of resistance, but is unable to specify to what. If the subject positions of contending parties are left unclear, so also is the basis for any kind of solidarity. Within this framework, indeterminacy (where relations cannot be presumed but need always to be discovered) and the fragmentation of experience may well be perceived as virtues.

Yet the real world of 'sex workers' and domestics, among others, warrants much more potent analytical instruments. Nuanced and multifaceted narrations of everyday oppositional acts by individual agents can prove enlightening and useful if analysed within a totality in which the potential for collective action can be sketched. Such potential can be delineated only when the current retreat from class perspectives is reversed and a commitment to social transformation renewed.

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- 26 Sears and Mooers, *op. cit.*, p.218.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 229.

LAWRENCE PHILLIPS

British slavery after abolition: the Pacific trade

In 1834, the same year that the Act abolishing slavery within the British empire received royal assent, the first indentured labourers from India were introduced into Mauritius, inaugurating a practice which supplied the needs of an entrenched colonial plantation network now bereft of its slaves. Indian coolies were later to be extensively imported into Natal, Trinidad and other Caribbean islands.¹ However, appalling as their working conditions often were, Indian labourers had a clear understanding of the contracts under which they were employed. Their conditions of work were negotiated and overseen by the British Indian government which could, and did, bring its influence to bear if abuses occurred. Under the terms of their contract, they were guaranteed repatriation once their periods of indenture were completed or, if greater opportunity presented itself – as was often the case – they could settle in the lands to which they had been brought as wage labourers.²

Of course, by twentieth-century standards the Indian coolie system was an institution of outrageous exploitation and only a small improvement over slavery itself. Yet the practice I wish to examine here lacked even these ‘protections’.³ Between 1864 and 1908, there existed a British-dominated ‘labour trade’ transporting indentured labourers from a number of the Melanesian islands of the south-west

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Pacific to the plantations of Queensland and Fiji.⁴ The terms of the contract typically involved an annual wage of £3 for Fiji and £6 for Queensland, including food and free repatriation to the labourer's home island. Superficially, these terms resemble the conditions negotiated for Indians. However, the Islanders had no internationally recognised government to negotiate on their behalf, nor to monitor the conditions under which they worked. The concept of 'contract' was not understood by the Islanders at that time nor, for many years, was the trouble taken to explain it in the 'recruits' own language. Indeed, in the absence of interpreters, few even understood the length of service proposed. Another characteristic of the trade that distinguished it markedly from the situation of the Indian coolie was head-payment. Recruiters, or 'blackbirders' as they came to be known in the local argot, received payment per head of 'labour' supplied to planters and were not above holding auctions to obtain a higher price. That these people had become a commodity with status akin to that of African slaves scarcely needs emphasising.⁵ Indeed, 'to the average merchant trading in the South Seas a speculation in Kanakas was no different from a speculation in pork, coconuts, or shrunken heads'.⁶ Yet, above all, there was the question of kidnapping. Despite a history of increasing regulation, to the very end the obtaining of 'recruits' by trickery, lying and outright force remained a feature of the 'trade'.⁷

Not surprisingly for a nation which prided itself on being the first to abolish slavery, there was always a sense of acute unease over the recruitment and use of Pacific Islanders in this way. Demand for the regulation of the traffic was an important argument advanced for the annexation of Fiji, and was a factor in the later annexation of the Solomon Islands and what became British New Guinea. In effect, Britain oversaw a practice nearing slavery that was used as a justification for imperial expansion, a means to open up the frontier lands of Queensland and New South Wales, and an issue to promote its credentials as a world policeman committed to the abolition of the international trade in slaves.

The contradictory nature of these aims is apparent from the funding problems experienced by the British Admiralty when abuses in the Pacific began to attract public notoriety. Since abolition, the Admiralty had maintained the West African slave patrol to prevent a resurgence of the African slave trade, and had sought international agreements to board and search ships of other states suspected of carrying slaves. The British navy and its officers took some pride in this role. As Philip Snow observes: 'British naval officers of the period were among the leading upholders of the morality of abolishing slavery. They were deeply sensitive to the need to improve the British standing in this – and in all respects – in the eyes of the other

powers.⁸ As early as 1863, the Admiralty had urged that this policing role should be extended to the labour trade of the Pacific.

‘However’, writes Edward Docker, ‘unlike Africa, the Pacific was of slight significance in Britain’s global strategy, and successive governments had declined to vote the necessary funds for bases and patrol ships’.⁹ Further, the courts found that the legislation which authorised this vigilance seemed to have limited applicability beyond Africa.¹⁰ Clearly, there is a marked dichotomy between moral intent and the economies of colonial administration and expansion. Despite the sense of obligation felt by the Admiralty, a request of the Colonial Office in 1863 that the Royal Navy be deployed to put down a Peruvian slave trade amongst the eastern Polynesian islands was rebuffed by the Foreign Office on the basis that ‘Great Britain has no power by Treaty to interfere with any but the African slave trade’.¹¹

The moral and legal imperative that drove the navy to seize almost 1,600 ships in the Atlantic between 1820 and 1870, freeing around 150,000 Africans destined for slavery, stands in marked contrast to the ambivalent attitude shown towards the recruitment of indentured labour as it was practised in the Pacific.¹² However, despite the promulgation of a moral right to prevent the trade, the British stance can equally be interpreted as bowing to the demands of commercial necessity. If low cost slave labour was not to be available to British colonies, it had to be denied to her commercial competitors. So, from the very beginning, the navy’s crusade was arguably tainted by commercial imperative. Yet by mid-century, this imperative had, it seemed, become the overriding concern of the imperial government. British attitudes had shifted from the early days of abolition when many influential supporters of the original Act had held high office and could count on majority support in the House of Commons. The generation that followed was more concerned with economic enrichment and imperial expansion.

Indeed, this shift in attitude has its origins in the very moment of abolition in 1834 with the introduction of coolie labourers from India to Mauritius. Similarly, ‘free’ West African labour continued to be brought over to the West Indies. By the late 1840s, neither Earl Grey, the secretary of state for the colonies, nor Merivale, at the Colonial Office, could pretend that such labour was in fact free, advancing the justification that the conditions under which such labourers were engaged would be ‘highly improper if applied to persons in a more advanced stage of civilisation’.¹³ As Parnaby observes, ‘Such an admission would not have been possible in the thirties’.¹⁴ However, when the French also evidenced such an attitude by purchasing African slaves from Arabs on the west coast of Africa to be ‘freed’ and set to work as immigrant labourers in Réunion in

1854, they drew swift condemnation from the British government despite similarities to its own system of Indian coolie and African 'free' labour.

* * *

Throughout the history of the Pacific labour trade, this confusion of high principle and the brute economic realities of colonisation characterised the slow movement towards formal regulation and eventual abolition. The first important case which brought this uneasy relationship to a broader public was that of HMS *Rosario*, commanded by George Palmer, and the recruiter *Daphne*. Compared to some other recruiting atrocities before and after the *Daphne* affair, the case itself seemed relatively innocuous. However, it was pivotal in provoking a public debate over the scope and inadequacy of existing legislation by focusing public and official attention on both the trade itself and imperial and colonial practice.

Palmer had, in 1869, been transferred from the West African slave patrol to command the *Rosario* under orders to investigate the operation of the Pacific labour trade. Alerted to his presence, most recruiting ships were at pains to avoid him. But while the *Rosario* lay anchored at Levuka in Fiji awaiting the arrival of the recruiters *Maria Christiana* and the *Anna*, both of whom had reputedly been involved in kidnapping abuses, the *Daphne* arrived with 100 Islanders aboard. Irregularities were apparent from the first.

Licensed by the Queensland government under the Labour Act of 1868 to procure fifty Islanders for that colony, the master, Daggett, and supercargo, Pritchard, had double that number on board and had decided to sail for Fiji in the hope of obtaining a higher price. They later argued that their 'passengers', from the Banks's Group (part of present-day Vanuatu), had all freely re-engaged for Fiji when the ship had called in at Tanna (Vanuatu). On inspection of the recruiting records required by the 1868 Act, numerous discrepancies became apparent and, when compared with the ship's log, it was found that the dates of the supposed re-engagement did not agree with the date of the ship's presence at Tanna. Palmer's inspection of the ship and its passengers immediately provoked comparison with his African experiences:

We found her a small schooner of forty-eight tons register, fitted up precisely like an African slaver, *minus* the irons, with 100 natives on board, who had been brought here from the New Hebrides [Vanuatu], having experienced the pleasure of a dead beat to windward for twenty-one days; they were stark naked, and had not even a mat to lie upon; the shelves were just the same as might be

knocked up for a lot of pigs, – no bunks or partitions of any sort being fitted, and yet the vessel had been inspected by a Government officer at Queensland!¹⁵

With no interpreter and unable to persuade any of the crew to speak, Palmer conducted a closer inspection of the recruiting records and log ashore which revealed still greater discrepancies, and the revelation that one Ross Lewin was involved financially with the venture.

Lewin had been notorious as a kidnapper since the earliest days of the labour trade to Queensland. In fact, he was the original recruiter for Robert Towns who initiated the trade in 1864 to provide cheap labourers for his cotton plantation in Queensland. Soon set up in business on his own account, his name had come to the attention of the bishop of Sydney who, speaking at a meeting presided over by the mayor of Sydney early in February 1869, publicly denounced Lewin's crimes. From thence they became known to Lord Granville, the secretary of state for the colonies.¹⁶ This was enough for Palmer. The involvement of Lewin, the discrepancies and the absence of an interpreter, 'determined me to seize the vessel and land her cargo of human beings at once, on the suspicion that the vessel, master, supercargo, and crew had been engaged, if not in active slaving, at least in a most irregular traffic, tending to promote and encourage the slave trade'.¹⁷ The reaction of the planter faction in Fiji and its sympathisers was incredulity and anger. However, Fiji was not yet a crown colony, so Palmer determined to take ship and crew under arrest for prosecution in Sydney.

What followed was characterised by Palmer as Dickensian farce: first he was forced to allow the crew to come and go from the ship after it had docked in Sydney, lest he lay himself open to an action for false imprisonment. Then, despite clear instructions from Sir William Manning, the colony's attorney-general, the crown solicitor seemed dilatory in interviewing the officers and crew and was not sanguine about the prospects of a successful prosecution.¹⁸ Finally, some two weeks after the *Daphne* had dropped anchor, the master and supercargo were arrested and taken before the water police magistrates and charged with having 'knowingly, wilfully, feloniously, and piratically received and conveyed certain persons . . . with a view to their being dealt with as slaves'.¹⁹ When the case came to court, however, it seemed that it was Palmer on trial as he was forced to sit at the back of the courtroom and hear himself and his actions characterised by counsel for the defence in the following terms:

It is monstrous, your Worships, that English vessels, whilst pursuing their lawful trade, cannot sail upon these seas in peace; the idea that they may at any moment be liable to capture by this Wilberforce of the Pacific is, I say, absurd and outrageous, and is

not to be tolerated for one moment; moreover, it is clearly proved that these native passengers were not slaves, nor intended to be dealt with as slaves, and therefore your Worships have no case to send before a jury.²⁰

Despite clear breaches of both the Queensland Labour Act and the Imperial Passenger Act, Daggett and Pritchard were acquitted; a consequence of the prosecution's strategy. To pursue a trial under the Slave Acts as Palmer desired, charges for these other breaches were not brought. Indeed, only in Queensland could a case have been brought under the Labour Acts of that colony. To add insult to injury, when the New South Wales Supreme Court in its Vice-Admiralty jurisdiction convened to decide whether Palmer had just cause to seize the *Daphne*, although it found that Palmer did have cause and granted a certificate exempting him from prosecution by Daggett, Pritchard and the ship's owners, he still had to find his own costs for the case. Indeed, the granting of the certificate was a near thing. The chief justice, Sir Alfred Stephen, observed in his judgement that people had a right to import labour and it was a legitimate trade regulated by the Queensland government.

Palmer was understandably outraged at this turn of events, and the later decision of the Admiralty to reimburse his costs in recognition of his diligence served little to assuage his ire. In 1870, he retired early from the navy and a year later published his memoirs of the *Rosario* cruise and subsequent legal actions under the title *Kidnapping in the South Seas* (1871). Laced with cutting irony, his description of the arrest and subsequent legal action supplemented with a description of numerous other abuses committed by recruiting ships brought his outrage to a wider audience.

Another factor that enhanced public awareness of the nature of recruiting and the failures of existing legislation to provide adequate regulation, was the coming to trial of an earlier incident concerning the recruiting vessel *Young Australian*. Palmer was briefed about this case before his departure from Sydney in the *Rosario*,²¹ and was later to include a description of the principal events in his book. Only four days after the *Rosario* had returned to Sydney, this long-delayed prosecution was finally brought to court. Yet, despite a trial by jury, this was another example of the failure to mete out sufficient punishment for abuses carried out by 'blackbirders'. On this occasion, it was less a failure of the courts than apparent capitulation to political pressure brought to bear by the planter faction.

In 1868, two Sydney businessmen, Eldred and Spence, had engaged the services of Captain Albert Hovell and chartered the trading vessel *Young Australia*, later re-registered in Fiji as the *Young Australian*. Refitted for labour recruiting, the ship embarked on a kidnapping

spree that was, in this case, to end in bloodshed. After calling at Paama, trouble broke out in the hold between recruits from Paama and Tanna. The hatches were battened down and rifles fired indiscriminately into the Islanders. Three Paama men were killed; two outright and the third, still twitching, was swiftly ‘tomahawked and then all three thrown into the sea’.²² On this occasion, a jury found the captain guilty of murder and he was sentenced to death. Yet:

After the trial, the counsel for the defence, Sir James Martin, wrote to the governor protesting that the Rotomah native [the key prosecution witness] was falsely sworn. The Rotomah Book was a translation of the New Testament only, and therefore the native did not understand the full significance of the oath taken on the English Bible. This was a legal quibble; but supported by a petition signed by 1,746 ‘respectable’ citizens of Sydney, and a charge that the case had been prejudiced beforehand by a letter in the *Sydney Morning Herald* from the secretary of the Presbyterian Missionary Society, it secured remission of the sentences.²³

Hovell’s sentence was commuted to life imprisonment (he was released some years later).

The *Young Australian* case demonstrated that the courts could be used to obtain convictions, even if the political will that would give convictions real teeth seemed wanting. Despite the 1,746 outraged ‘citizens of Sydney’ (presumably comprising wealthy planters, ship owners active in the trade and their sympathisers), both the *Daphne* and *Young Australian* cases did generate a great deal of public repugnance against the labour trade both in Britain and Australia. In Britain, reports about abuses within the trade had begun to appear in the *Leeds Mercury* and *The Times* on 19 and 21 April 1868, respectively. The reaction in the Australian press registered deep shock and abhorrence. In May 1869, *The Mudgee Liberal* commented:

That noble and generous England should pay twenty millions to emancipate the West Indian Slaves; that she should keep a squadron on the west coast of Africa, at an enormous amount in men and money; that gallant officers and noble-minded men should, in defiance of one of the worst climates on earth, unite all their energy and zeal for the suppression of the infamous slave trade, and yet find it being resuscitated in a British Colony, and carried on in British owned and registered vessels, is enough to make the blood boil with indignation. When the American civil war gave the death-blow to slavery in the Southern States of America, we imagined that the word *slave* was a word only to be used in connection with the past, little dreaming that Australia was to be disgraced by such a traffic.

However, it is as well to distinguish between the moral objection to the Pacific labour trade on the grounds that it is little removed from slavery, and objections solely to abuses against the persons of the Islanders in terms of violence or kidnapping rather than the trade as a whole. The distinction is important. Seen in this light, the moral stance taken by Captain Palmer – which seems to have been approved of by the Admiralty²⁴ – was not only restricted to the ethos of the Royal Navy as the extract from *The Mudgee Liberal* and other contemporary newspaper reports show.²⁵ This is in stark contrast to the ambivalent reaction of the governments of New South Wales, Queensland and Britain which, while officially deploring slavery, saw only a case for regulation, not abolition, of what was seen in official circles as a legitimate supply of cheap labour. Official confidence in both hemispheres in fact belies considerable behind-the-scenes anxiety over the question of slavery. Indeed, Earl Granville, secretary of state for the colonies, felt moved in April 1869 to write to governor Blackwell of Queensland to ensure that this trade resembled as far as possible that of the Indian indentured labourer:

It is for you . . . to use your utmost influence to secure that the immigrants receive, in relation to their employers, that special protection which immigrant labourers receive in other colonies . . . without which they must be at the mercy of those about them.²⁶

* * *

One consequence of the *Daphne* case was to demonstrate that the issue rested on a rather fine legal distinction as to what constituted slavery. This point was sufficient to trouble the New South Wales chief justice, Sir Alfred Stephen, who ruled in the *Daphne* case. In his judgement, he found that if there was any agreement limiting the term of service or providing for payment, there was no case to answer for slavery:

The fact however, proved incontestably before me, that such stipulations were generally understood to exist, and that in related instances, both in the Fiji islands and Queensland, native labourers have been taken back in pursuance of the stipulation, is all important to the question of *slavery*.²⁷

Despite his reluctance on strict legal grounds to grant Palmer a certificate absolving him from retaliatory prosecution, Stephen was moved to write to Lord Belmore, governor of New South Wales, of his concern that if slavery could not be proven in such cases, under what grounds would the ‘wickedness which this trading among the South Sea Islands doubtless has induced, the blood-shedding and drunken-

ness, and kidnapping and treachery, not to mention the after ill-treatment, which occasionally attend it' be punished in the courts?²⁸

Yet there persisted a marked reluctance to abolish the trade. It continued, after all, until 1908 to Queensland and 1911 to Fiji. Perhaps because abolition would undermine the distinction that was upheld between indentured labour and slavery, so necessary to the financial viability of so many colonies. It is as well to recall that the position of the Pacific Islander was far more exposed than that of the Indian or even that of the Chinese indentured labourer. The long history of abuse connected with the trade reflected, initially, an understandable ignorance amongst the Islanders, who had no idea how or to what they were binding themselves, with negotiations frequently conducted in sign language. Later, once a few had returned from the plantations to explain it all, the demand for labourers far outstripped those willing to leave their homes under the conditions offered. This, in turn, led to more abuse, trickery and kidnapping. The case for the gradual spread of understanding among the Islanders as contact with recruiters grew more frequent and labourers returned was always overstated in any event, since the recruiters were, of necessity, always moving onto islands where western contact had been minimal.

Those who were pressed into service effectively experienced a system of forced labour: slaves by any other name. If this was not conceded by the colonial and imperial governments, it was clearly recognised by the various missionary groups operating in the South Pacific, the Anti-Slavery Society and the Aborigines Protection Society, all of whom sustained an unremitting opposition to the trade throughout its history. Yet, after the *Daphne* case, no prosecution under the slavery statutes against a Pacific recruiter was ever brought in a British court. This was in part a consequence of the 1872 Act which provided an alternative framework of sanctions to bring kidnappers to book. However, soon after the *Daphne* case another attempt was made by Edward March, British consul to Fiji and Tonga, who seized the recruiter *Challenge* under the Slave Acts. A courageous act, considering that mere consuls were not among the class of public officials in whom the power to seize vessels under the Slave Acts was vested. March then attempted to have charges brought against the master, Alexander Longmuir.

The case was again brought before the authorities at Sydney and, once more, a prosecution under the Slave Acts was deemed unlikely to succeed. The attorney-general, Sir James Martin, wrote to Lord Belmore repeating Sir Alfred Stephen's views on the Slave Acts and the labour trade first expressed in the *Daphne* case:

That the captain of the vessel was engaged in the forcible abduction of natives from their homes with a view to their being taken to and

left on other islands or places against their will is very evident, but that the persons so seized and taken with a view to their being dealt with as slaves is not proved in any way, and unless there is some proof the 5 Geo. IV. c. 113 does not apply. It is because of the non-applicability of the Act to a case of mere abduction or kidnapping, that the home Government are about to submit a bill to Parliament . . .²⁹

As a consequence, the prosecution did not proceed under the Slave Acts and Longmuir could only be convicted of assault and sentenced to three years imprisonment. However, this remedial action to punish the consequences of the trade rather than the trade itself did little to prevent further abuses by recruiters, even after the legislation heralded here – the Kidnapping Act, 1872 – received royal assent.

The *Daphne* affair raised one question above all else: how does one define slavery? Palmer raised this question with Williams, the crown solicitor, in response to demands for proof: ‘Owing to my inability to ascertain what is understood in these seas as to the meaning of the term “slave”, as distinguished from the same term when applied to the trade on the coast of Africa, I am not prepared to bring forward any *further* proof that the natives landed by me from the *Daphne* were to be “dealt with as slaves”.’³⁰ The degree of proof to which Palmer is responding emphasises the distance between the restricted legal definition and the meaning of the term as commonly accepted. Under the Slave Acts, Belmore observed when writing to the Earl of Kimberley, ‘the term “slave” within the meaning of the laws relating to the slave trade, applies to a person whom it is intended to deal with as such *in a country whose laws recognize slavery as a legal institution*’.³¹ Under such a definition, it is not hard to understand how a system of quasi-slavery could coexist – if uneasily – with high moral promulgations against slavery. Yet this was not the only view that was expressed. As noted above, Sir Alfred Stephen’s view was that a charge of slavery was excluded in the *Daphne* case because the existence of a contract demonstrated intent as to execution and the status of the subject so indentured. These two legal definitions work together: the presence of a contract excludes the possibility of a recognition of slavery by that country since the former would not be necessary if that were the case, even if the conditions to which the labourer is bound differ little from actual slavery. Yet the broad moral definition of slavery, adhered to by Palmer and apparently sanctioned by the Admiralty via the West African slave patrol, would probably condemn the Pacific labour recruiter as readily as an African slaver. The paradox is that many of the principal actors involved with regulating the trade in the 1870s and subsequently shared this broader view of the meaning of slavery but, come their official duties, glibly

stood by a narrow legal definition by resolutely refusing any change in the law.

An examination of the voluminous official correspondence generated by the *Daphne* shows these contrary views often seemed to be held in good faith, leading to acute discomfort as the case failed to secure a conviction. The expectation seems to have been that legislation to extend the legal definition of slavery would be forthcoming. Sir William Manning, the attorney-general for New South Wales who acted as counsel for Palmer without charge for his services, even minuted his own struggle with the moral case against slavery and the cause of 'justice' for those accused:

However desirable it may be to put down or place under proper control a system of so-called emigration which is likely to degenerate, and probably has sometimes degenerated, into a practice approaching a slave trade, and perhaps actually amounting to it, yet it is certain that if resort be had to the courts of justice for the punishment of offenders, the rules of law on the subject of evidence must be rigidly observed. If the nature of the case renders such proof at once impossible or difficult, and morally unnecessary to sound justice, the course must be to make special provisions by legislative enactment. As the law stands, I cannot propose to the Court, nor would the Court receive, evidence otherwise than in accordance with the established rules of law.³²

* * *

In September 1871, John Coleridge Patteson, Anglican bishop of Melanesia, was killed on the island of Nukapu in revenge, it seemed, for the kidnapping of Islanders by a recruiting vessel which had been painted white in imitation of the bishop's vessel, to fool the Islanders into a false sense of security. (One of the crew members would go ashore, dressed as a missionary, and explain to the Islanders that the bishop was on board and requested that they come to see him. Once on board, they were locked in the hold and kidnapped.) The public and official outcry over Patteson's death was immediate. He had been an outspoken critic of the labour trade and was an instant martyr to the cause. This provided the final impetus for long delayed imperial legislation.

So what of the much heralded Kidnapping Act of 1872, later known as the Pacific Islanders Protection Act? Unsurprisingly, it did not provide for the extension of the Slave Acts to the Pacific Islands, perhaps the most straightforward and comprehensive option available. In effect, the political will to make this provision had already been tested by Palmer's seizure of the *Daphne*. The 1872 Act was

specific: kidnapping of Pacific Islanders was made an offence (answering Stephen's criticism that the Slave Acts could not deal with acts of simple kidnapping) and ships engaged in such matters could now be seized. In the Lords, some additional clauses were added, requiring all vessels engaged in recruiting to be licensed and from the masters of such vessels a bond of £500 against kidnapping.³³ And that was it. There was an attempt by Admiral Erskine to move an amendment to end the trade which was supported by other members of the Aborigines Protection Society, but this was defeated.

Again regulation, not abolition. What seems implicit in this reluctance to extend the Slave Acts beyond the west African coast seems to be a recognition that, with the correct evidence, it was likely that sooner or later a jury would convict a labour recruiter and effectively put an end to the trade. 'While in some ways the Imperial Government thought of the Pacific island labor trade in terms of a slave trade', writes Parnaby, 'in one way it saw a difference – the slave trade was an evil to be suppressed; the Pacific island labor trade, like Indian coolie immigration, it was thought, could be of great benefit if properly regulated.'³⁴ Abuses were never eradicated. Recruiters could sail under a flag of convenience, supplying the German and French colonies with labourers, and there remained a marked reluctance to accept evidence from the Islanders themselves which was not remedied by the 1872 Act. Nonetheless, the Act was a veritable public relations triumph, offered as a sop to sate the general revulsion at a series of cases including that of the *Daphne* and culminating in Bishop Patteson's death. Public meetings convened in most of the Australian colonial capitals, other public meetings in country districts and resolutions in various assemblies and conferences both in Britain and Australia had convinced the Colonial Office to act.³⁵

The Act was seen as a clean break. The view of later commentators was that it marked a clear differential between what became known as the 'old' labour trade and the 'new'. The view of Hugh Romilly, deputy commissioner for the western Pacific and acting special commissioner for New Guinea was perhaps typical. In his memoirs published in 1886, he could blissfully ignore the trade after 1872 with the assurance that it was now utterly benign: 'The old labour trade, as it was commonly called, or "Blackbirding", as some people termed it, is nominally a thing of the past. Of the present labour trade I have nothing whatever to say.'³⁶ Such was the confidence of the imperial government that the 'old trade' could now retrospectively be recognised as a full-blown slave trade. Thus, in the Queen's Speech of 1872:

The slave trade and practices scarcely to be distinguished from slave trading, still pursued in more than one quarter of the world,

continue to attract the attention of my Government. In the South Sea Islands the name of the British Empire is even now dishonoured by the connexion of some of my subjects with these nefarious practices; and in one of them the murder of an exemplary prelate has cast fresh light upon some of their harmful consequences. A Bill will be presented to you for the purpose of facilitating the trial of offences of this class in Australia, and endeavours will be made to increase, in other forms, the means of counteraction.³⁷

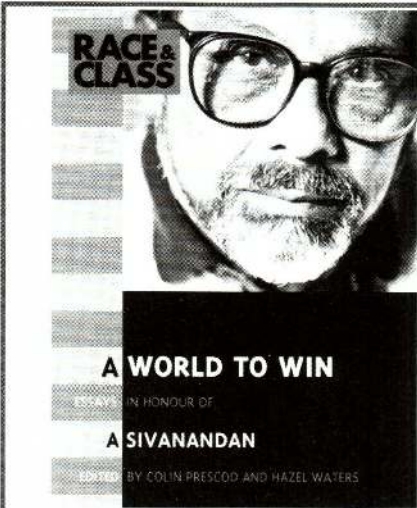
Yet the trade which was carried on after 1872 was little changed. Over the years, the regulations became more stringent, but the fundamental difference between the situation of Indian indentured labourers and the Pacific Islanders remained. No home government oversaw their contracts, treatment or the consequences to their home islands. The trade contributed substantially to the depopulation of many islands, cultural patterns were disrupted and sometimes irreparably destroyed by this social upheaval. And, to stress once again, the abuse of Islanders by some recruiters remained a characteristic of the trade. In effect, the British government and its colonies in the Pacific knowingly oversaw a trade which, by the moral force of Britain's own anti-slavery laws, would struggle to justify itself as legitimate. The *Daphne* case was pivotal – a great, if little recognised, opportunity to prevent the years of misery and cultural destruction which followed.

References

- 1 For a full treatment of the early years of indentured labour from India, see Mary Cumpston's *Indians Overseas in British Territories, 1834–1854* (London, 1953).
- 2 The consequences of this mass importation of labourers by colonial governments bequeathed considerable social problems to newly independent nations. In Fiji, where Indian indentured labourers were imported until 1920, their descendants account for 43 per cent of the island's population yet the constitution enshrines native Fijians' political ascendancy. See Donald Denoon, ed., *Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge, CUP, 1997), pp. 415–19.
- 3 Edward Wybergh Docker, *The Blackbirders: the recruiting of South Seas labour for Queensland, 1863–1907* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1970), p. 276.
- 4 An outbreak of undisguised slavery occurred between 1862 and 1864 from mainly eastern Polynesian islands to supply workers for Peruvian plantations and guano mines which provoked an international outcry. See H. E. Maude's excellent study, *Slavers in Paradise: the Peruvian labour trade in Polynesia, 1862–1864* (Suva, Fiji, Institute of Pacific Studies, 1981).
- 5 Recruiting agents would even advertise. This from a Queensland newspaper, 29 April 1867, reprinted in the *Colonial Intelligencer*, May 1870: 'Henry Ross Lewin . . . begs to inform his friends and the public that he intends immediately visiting the South Sea Islands and will be happy to receive orders for the importation of natives to work on cotton and sugar plantations . . . Terms £7 each man.' Quoted in O. W. Parnaby, *Britain and the Labor Trade in the Southwest Pacific* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1964), note p. 57.

- 6 Docker, op. cit., p. 53. 'Kanaka' simply means 'man' in a number of Polynesian dialects. Later it was used by westerners to distinguish whites from Islanders and much resented accordingly.
- 7 For example, the *William Manson*, commanded by Captain William Voss, which sailed in the final years of the Queensland trade in 1894, was prosecuted for just such abuses. The captain asserted that he had done 'no more than was common to all labour vessels'.
- 8 Philip A. Snow, introduction to Captain George Palmer, *Kidnapping in the South Seas* (Folkestone and London, Dawsons, 1971), p. x.
- 9 Docker, op. cit., p. 52.
- 10 Acts 5 Geo. IV. c. 113 of 1834 and Art. 4 of 6 & 7 Vict. c. 98 of 1839 (Slave Trade Consolidation Act).
- 11 FO to CO, 25 August 1863. CO 201/528. Quoted in Parnaby, op. cit., p. 15.
- 12 James Walvin, *Black Ivory: a history of British slavery* (London, Fontana Press, 1993), p. 9.
- 13 Quoted by G. R. Mellor, *British Imperial Trusteeship 1783-1850* (London, 1951), p. 271.
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RACE & CLASS

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ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF
A SIVANANDAN
EDITED BY COLIN PRESCOD AND HAZEL WATERS

Contributors include: Aijaz Ahmad ■ Yasmin Alibhai-Brown ■ Melissa Benn ■ Timothy Brennan ■ Jan Carew ■ Neil Lazarus ■ Nancy Murray ■ Mike Marqusee ■ Cedric Robinson and others.

RACE & CLASS

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FABIAN TOMPSETT

1606 and all that: the Virginian conquest

The Columbian quincentenary is not so much a remembrance of times past as a reconstruction of times present. For, whereas Europe's medieval kings took legitimacy and authority from God's ordinance, the mesh of supra-national and super powers and transnational conglomerates who arrange our destinies today, needs a more sophisticated array of techniques to proclaim the inevitability of current hierarchies of power and the rightfulness of its versions of progress.¹

In 1992, attempts to celebrate the quincentenary of Columbus and his 'sailing of the ocean blue' were met by widespread opposition. In the US, an official commission was set up but foundered amid charges of corruption. Sponsors backed out when faced with the alternative Columbus movement in which various individuals, groups and coalitions emerged to turn the original meanings of the official celebrations inside out and reveal 500 years of resistance. While the official celebrations were sponsored to the tune of \$87 million, thousands of people throughout the US came together to protest about Columbus Day. The celebrations were seen as a not-so-veiled proclamation of white supremacist thinking. This was not only challenged on the streets, but also served to stimulate a reappraisal of the Columbus legacy – which was shown to be rooted in slavery, religious oppression and the genesis of racism.

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Race & Class

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By rights, we should not be troubled by centenaries celebrating the 1606 voyage of the Virginia invaders until 2006. However, with the Millennium Dome in Greenwich just over the Thames from their departure point, Blackwall Stairs, it should come as little surprise that 'Virginia fever' is creeping across Blackwall. Here it becomes the selling point for a new estate of Barratt's houses. There it becomes integrated into a historic tableau proposed for the walls of Stoneyard Lane sports centre. The Millennium has served to accelerate a process which seems to have learnt nothing from the Columbus experience. As much as these icons of white supremacy are promoted, so they stimulate a more reasoned response which challenges an orthodoxy that restricts non-Europeans to the passive acceptance of the so-called 'inevitability' of European civilisation, religion and progress. The Disney film *Pocohontas* offers a romanticised account of the kidnapping of a Native American girl. She becomes a Christian and marries an Englishman, only to meet a tragic early death before the consequences of her action could be realised. Yet what was this marriage in the face of the mercantile zeal of the London Virginia Company in depriving the Native Americans of their land as it set up its tobacco plantations? The romance has no substance. It merely provides a sugar coating to the shocking history of the Virginia invaders.

* * *

But what was the nature of the enterprise? As its name indicates, it was born of the City of London (with connections in Plymouth and Bristol). Its goal was to start a colony in North America. The first charter of 10 April 1606 specified its aim as the 'propagating of Christian religion to such people as yet live in darknesse and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worshippe of God' so that it 'may in tyme bring the infidels and salvages living in those parts to humane civilitie and to a settled and quiet government'.² In the *Articles, Instructions and Orders* issued on 20 November 1606, a month before departure, this religious zeal and the forcible nature of the propagation was underlined by James I:

whereby they may be the sooner drawne to the true knowledge of God and the obedience of us, our heirs and successors under such paines and punishments as shal be inflicted by the several presidents and councils of the said several colonists, or the most part of them, within their precincts on such as shall offend therein or doe the contrary.³

Rather than simply offering Christianity as a possibility to be considered by the Native Americans, the founding charter shows that the exercise was as much about the political subordination of the Native

Americans as about enrolling them in the Anglican church – if, indeed, there was any difference.

We can see this piety more in perspective if we turn the pages of Richard Hakluyt's book *The Principal, Navigations, Voyages and Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589). Here Hakluyt, a founder member of the Virginia Company, collated a mass of information for Queen Elizabeth so that she could 'by God's assistance, in short space, work many great and unlooked for effects, increase her dominions, enrich her coffers, and reduce many Pagans to the faith of Christ'.⁴ It was a very practical piety. The benefits were to be reaped in this world rather than deferred to a celestial experience in the after-life. Hakluyt had been an enthusiastic supporter of Raleigh's earlier settlement in Virginia. However, his stress was on the possibilities for establishing plantations which could produce oils, wines, spices, sugar etc., rather than the search for gold which, for Raleigh, supplanted any need to seek out other commodities.

But Hakluyt's more sophisticated imperialist conception was not immediately shared by the collection of gentlemen, soldiers and artisans who formed the first group of 105 invaders. Rather than preparing for the future by growing food, priority was given to the search for gold. Indeed, when Captain Newport sailed back to London in August 1607, he took back seven barrels of ore – which proved to be valueless. In 1608, he returned to Virginia with 115 more invaders, including two goldsmiths, two refiners and a jeweller. Most of these settlers' heads were filled with 'golden inventions' rather than an understanding of the conditions which were developing in the colony. There was no gold or silver to be found in Virginia. Death was to be the more likely reward for their endeavours.

Things had not been going well. The settlers had not discovered the rich pickings they had hoped for. They felt stranded, with inadequate provisions and subject to all manner of disease. 'There were never Englishmen left in a forreigne country in such miserie as wee were in this new discovered Virginia', wrote George Percy of that first year.⁵ The colony only survived thanks to the help of the Powhatans, the Native Americans who inhabited that part of North America. Even so, during the first two decades of the colony at least 6,000 invaders, four-fifths of the colonists, died.

This extraordinary death rate has attracted the attention of historians. There was a prevailing inertia, a reluctance to grow food which, despite the military discipline of John Smith who had assumed command of the colony, paved the way for the starving time. In *The Conquest of Paradise*, Kirkpatrick Sale has suggested that this can only be understood as a consequence of transplanting urbanised Europeans into the American wilderness, producing 'bewilderment, dislocation, and disorientation, a sense of being out of place,

imprisoned in a hostile environment full of hostile strangers with none of the promised wealth or ease, where none of the familiar rules and assumptions obtain, where none of the attributes by which one has achieved self-definition – matters of one's birth, trade, learning, experience or competence – seem to apply'.⁶ He supports this argument with research done by Karen Ordahl Kupperman who compared the reported symptoms of the early Jamestown colonists with those of American prisoners of war held in Korea and Japan.

But it is necessary to put this psychological process in the context of the economic and social realities of the colony: it was set up as a profit-making business. Although gold-fever may have been what induced many invaders to make the trip, long-term occupation was what the company hoped to achieve. When John Smith assumed command from the ineffective Edward Wingfield, it was as much to protect the investment of the company as to save the lives of his fellow men. The brutality of his regime attests to this. As the settlers were committed to working for the company for seven years, Smith's job was to keep them alive as a human resource. In effect, he turned the settlement into a labour camp.

The system of indentured servitude was taken from the cities of Europe, where apprentices agreed to work for their master for seven years before being admitted to the master's trade. In the colonial setting, however, there were none of the social forces which kept abuse of the system in check. As James C. Ballagh has pointed out, the system deteriorated and 'tended to pass into a property relation which asserted a control of varying extent over the bodies and liberties of their person during service as if they were things'.⁷ In this, it paved the way for slavery. Indeed, one of the complaints emerging from the colony was that those running the company were trying to reduce the settlers to slaves, by keeping them in bondage beyond the stipulated term.

Labour conditions were draconian, the settlers were driven to work in gangs with severe punishment for minor infractions: for missing Sunday service in church, the punishment was to 'lye neck and heels that night' and be a 'slave' for a week. On the third offence, the culprit was to be a slave for a year and a day. Should an invader try to leave the colony to join the Native Americans, the sentence was death. This, however, did not prevent John Smith from selling Henry Spelman as a slave to the Native Americans in exchange for some real estate.

Yet, at the same time, the working week was not excessive. Edmund Morgan has pointed out that the bulk of the invaders were either gentlemen, their servants or soldiers (there were no women).⁸ They were not used to agricultural labour. The Virginia Company had advised the colonists to prevent the Native Americans from

seeing any of their number who became sick, and only to let the colonists' crack shots fire guns in the presence of Native Americans. This all supports Morgan's thesis that the colonists had originally naively hoped that the Native Americans would regard them as gods stepped down from heaven, as in stories of the Spanish conquests further south. Failing that, the Native Americans were at least expected to sell the colonists corn, once they had established a market. But the Native Americans were little interested in a commodity economy. While they might be prepared to sell land, which involved no effort, they were disinclined to expend their working day on producing a surplus to sell to the Europeans. The terrible conditions of the colony stemmed from the colonists' disinclination to support themselves by their own efforts.

In these circumstances it may come as no surprise that the Native Americans were not exactly queuing up to join the Anglican church and to share such miseries. But, rather than abandon its arrogance, the London Virginia Company drew up a new set of instructions for Sir Thomas Gates who was dispatched in 1609 to take charge of the colony. Section 7 confirmed the conversion of the natives as 'the most pious and noble end of the plantation'. To this end, he was instructed to kidnap 'some convenient number of their children to be brought up in your language and manners'.⁹ It was also suggested that he might

remove from them their Iniocasockes or priests by a suspence of them all and taking them prisoners for they are so wrapped up in the fogge and miserie of their iniquity and so tirrorified with their continuall tirrorany, chained under the bond of deathe unto the divell that while they live amoung them to poison and infecte their mindes, you shall never make any progres into this glorious worke, nor have any civil peace or concurre with them. And in case of necessity or conveniency, we pronounce it not crueltie nor breach of charity to deale more sharply with them and to proceed even to dache with these murderers of soules and sacrificers of God's images to the devill.¹⁰

The twentieth century edition suggests that 'dache' should be read as 'death'. Perhaps when the original copy was drafted, there was reluctance to express such an outrageous order unequivocally.

Section 19 instructed Gates to demand tribute from the Native Americans who should acknowledge no other lord but King James, and suggested that they be put to work in the deforestation of the land, 'reducing them to labore and trade seinge for the rest onely they shall enjoy their houses, and the rest of their travell quietly and many other commodities and blessings of which they are yet insensible'. Section 21 was more devious: 'If you make friendship

with any of these nations, as you must doe, choose to doe it with those that are farthest from you and enemies unto those amonge whom you dwell, for you shall have least occasion to have differences with them and by that means a suerer league of amity.'

Despite these instructions, Gates hardly found himself in a position to wage a total war on the Native Americans. Rather, he thought it more appropriate to evacuate the remnants of the colony. Indeed, they had already embarked on board ship when Thomas De La Warr unfortunately arrived, so they returned together to the Jamestown settlement. The Virginia invaders were now ready to institute a genocidal war against the Native Americans. Kirkpatrick Sale calls this the first Anglo-Powhatan war. The invaders attacked a series of Powhatan towns, Kecoughan, Waraskoyak, Nansamund, Chickahominy, Appomattuk and Paspahugh, wreaking havoc. In 1611, De La Warr was replaced by Sir Thomas Dale, who brought more men and weapons and took the invasion further upstream, attacking what was probably the headquarters of Wahunseneka, the Powhatan chief. The war ended in 1614. During the war, one of the children taken captive was Pocohontas, and John Rolfe's petition to Dale to permit the marriage reflects the attitude of the invaders, for he describes his bride as 'one whose education hath been so rude, her manners barbarous, her generation cursed'.

* * *

Despite Rolfe's marriage and the parading of Pocohontas in London, the overall stance of the colonists and the London Virginia Company was one of unremitting racism. This fact is perhaps best illustrated in Robert A. Williams's *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought*. Williams identifies Sir Edward Coke and Sir John Popham as authors of the 1606 charter. He then discusses the Virginia Council's debate about whether 'some form of writing that in way of justification of our plantation might be conceived and pass into many hands'.¹¹ The debate centred on whether a pre-emptive rebuttal of potential criticism of the colonising enterprise were required, whether such criticism was to come from those who supported the so-called Alexander Donation, under which the Pope gave jurisdiction of North America to the Spanish Crown, or from those who might question the whole enterprise in principle. The Council decided not to issue any justification.

Nevertheless, in 1608 in his capacity as Lord Chief Justice, Coke presided over *Calvin's Case* in the court of common pleas. It concerned whether a Scotsman could take a case to an English court and was most germane to debates which had been going on in parliament, to which both Coke and Francis Bacon had made major contributions

in favour of unionism. However, in his discussion of the case, Coke distinguished between aliens who were friends and those who were enemies. The latter might be either temporary, where a state of war existed with their mother country, or perpetual:

All infidels are in law *perpetui inimici*, perpetual enemies (for the law presumes not that they will be converted, that being *remota potentia*, a remote possibility) for between them, as with devils, whose subjects they be, and the Christian, there is perpetual hostility, and can be no peace.¹²

By placing this judgement on record, Coke achieved two things. He created a legal basis on which the London Virginia Company could protect itself from accusations of mass murder, since it was engaged in a 'just war'. At the same time, it revealed that the whole project would have set out with the conscious intention of subjugating the Native American population, and that the charter of the London Virginia Company, authored by Coke and Popham, was nothing short of a warrant for genocide. The origins of the first Anglo-Powhatan war are thus located in an act of institutional racism, rooted in religious bigotry acted out in an English court, rather than in some unfortunate inability of the Virginia invaders to 'get on' with the Native Americans. When the first group of invaders set sail, they were the advance guard. With the departure of Gates, open war was declared.

As befits warfare, propaganda was required. Here Alderman Robert Johnson helped by writing *Nova Britannia*, a pamphlet advertising the colony, published in 1609.¹³ It described Powhatan territory as 'inhabited with wild and savage people that live and lie up and down in troups like heards of deere in a forest' living with no law but nature. They are described as being 'generally very loving and gentle, and doe entertaine and relieve our people with great kinnesse'. The same pamphlet was defensive against those who saw simple self-enrichment lying behind the veneer of religious conversion: 'As far as supplanting the savages, we have no such intention: our intrusion into their possessions shall tend to their greater good and no way their hurt, unlesse as unbridled beastes, they prove it to themselves.' In other words, unless the Powhatan resisted the erasure of their culture and their assimilation as third-class subjects of King James. Indeed, the pamphlet took on apocalyptic proportions:

To which purpose we may verily beleeve that God hath reserved in this last age of the world, an infinite number of these lost and scattered sheepe, to be wonne and recovered by our means: of whom so many as obstinately refuse to unite themselves to us, or shall maligne or disturbe our plantation, our chattell or whatever

belonging to us, they shall be held and reputed recusant withstanding their own good: and shall be dealt with as enemies of the commonwealth of their country.¹⁴

The Powhatan resistance to such English arrogance sparked off more denunciations. In *Good Newes from Virginia* (1613), the protestant minister Alexander Whittaker accepted that the Native Americans acknowledged a 'great good God' but then suggested that they feared the devil and were slaves to their priests, whom he compared to English witches. Between 100,000 and 200,000 people (over 80 per cent of them women) were brought to trial as witches in the protestant states of northern Europe between 1500 and 1700. Most were tortured into confession and the great majority were burnt to death. By drawing this parallel, Whittaker linked the zealous imposition of religious conformity in Europe with the genocide in North America.

In 1622 came the second Anglo-Powhatan war, usually presented as commencing with a surprise Powhatan attack on the Virginia invaders. Indeed, if we accept the stereotype of the Native American as an unthinking savage predisposed to indulge in violence, we can accept this version. However, Robert A. Williams presents facts which suggest that the new Powhatan monarch, Opechanacanough, had become all too well aware of what was in store for the Powhatan, and chose to make a pre-emptive strike against the invaders before their reinforcements arrived. Williams uncovers the way in which Opechanacanough persuaded the new governor, George Yeardley, that any future land grants had to be ratified by Opechanacanough. This ran counter to what Coke had stipulated in *Calvin's Case*, that, upon the invasion of an infidel country by a Christian power, all previous laws and jurisdictions were abrogated. This came to the attention of the London Virginia Company in *Barkham's Case*.¹⁵ In Williams's words:

The company sat as a court in *Barkham's case*, exercising Crown-created jurisdictional powers over lands within its royal grant. Barkham's petition for confirmation of his deed presented, in essence, the first significant legal case that directly addressed the legal question of the American Indian's rights and status in the lands of America under English colonial Law.¹⁶

The company voided Yeardley's concession to Opechanacanough as dishonourable and prejudicial, in that it acknowledged a sovereignty in that 'heathen infidel'. As Williams points out: 'The presumption of a lack of sovereignty in the infidel emperor thus contained its own imperatives for conquest, for conquest was the only method left for effectuating the king's sovereignty over a savage who

would not yield his dominion.¹⁷ Shortly after these deliberations, news arrived in London that, on 22 March 1622, Opechancanough had launched a surprise attack on the invaders, killing 350 out of 1,240 colonists. The Virginia Company was quick to publish an account of this 'massacre', an invidious racist attack upon the Powhatan which was steeped in the Calvinist theology of predestination and of a spiritual elect. The 'massacre' was greeted as being for the good of the plantation, as now the Virginia Company had an excuse for wiping out the Powhatan and building its towns on grounds already cleared for Powhatan villages.¹⁸

The London Virginia Company issued orders to step up the genocide, calling for 'a perpetuall warre without peace or truce' to 'roote out from being any longer a people, so cursed a nation, ungratefull to all benefitte, and incapable of all goodnesse'. Four expeditionary forces were sent out under governor Yeardley, which proceeded to kill all Native Americans of whatever age or sex. More Native Americans were killed in that year than in all previous years put together.

The result of the war was that the London Virginia Company could seize more land to cater for its expanding drug industry: tobacco. Nevertheless, this did the company little good. Back in London, it was already in the grip of a three-way dispute. Sir Thomas Smith, a city businessman, was supplanted as treasurer by Edwin Sandys, when his faction fell out with rivals grouped around Robert Rich, the Earl of Warwick. Sir Thomas Smith was a man of great influence, having also been governor of the East India Company for a number of years. The Earl of Warwick was a pioneer of piracy and the slave trade; indeed, it was on one of his ships, the *Treasurer*, that one of the first Africans arrived in Virginia, taken as booty from a Portugese vessel. Both Smith's and Rich's factions were court factions, whereas Sandys, who ousted Smith, was a noted parliamentarian and headed a group of smaller investors.

Sandys was assisted by Nicholas Ferrar who wrote a pamphlet, unpublished until 1990, which vigorously attacked Sir Thomas Smith.¹⁹ Ferrar claimed that, rather than allowing the indentured servants their freedom after the allotted period, usually seven years, Smith wanted to keep them in perpetual servitude. He further maintained that Smith had instituted martial laws from which came 'moast horrid cruelties'. He particularly referred to the enslavement of Pollanders (Poles) who, instead of being freed after indenture, were sold to Woodall, the surgeon of the East India Company, who likewise 'as if they had been beasts turned them over to Lord de La Warr'. Ferrar also charged that a separate company had been set up to trade with the settlement, with Smith and his son-in-law Robert Johnson, author of *Nova Britannia*, splitting the proceeds.

The dispute ended with the closing of the London Virginia Company. Some Anglo-American writers have looked back to it as one of the origins of American democracy. Others have championed the royalist cause of Smith and the Earl of Warwick, building a mythology around cavaliers who sought refuge in Virginia during the Commonwealth and were the first to welcome Charles II back at the restoration. But the company had been a resounding failure, despite the installation of a lottery to revive its flagging fortunes.

Yet the war of genocide, coupled with the cultivation of tobacco, ushered in a new economic period for the fledgling community. Tobacco required land and labour. The former had been bought with the blood of the Powhatan but, having extinguished them from their territory, labour was now a problem. When the period of indenture had elapsed, the servant became 'free' and could claim a portion of land to work on his own account. Not only were more workers needed to replace the freed indentured labourers, but, as these former servants became established, their profits from growing tobacco and their desire to expand production created a new market: for slaves. During the 1620s, more English colonies were opening up, both on the mainland and among the Caribbean islands. They were all hungry for labour.

At first, white servants were brought from across Europe. Christian demi-slaves, they were largely recruited through fraud and violence. There were hired agents called 'Spirits' in England and 'Newlanders' in Germany. Children were enticed with sweets, adults with rum. The gullible were told stories of pots of gold waiting for them in Virginia, Maryland or Pennsylvania. There were depots where the servants were held captive in such places as Bristol and Wapping. The agents visited correctional institutions and orphanages in their search for recruits. Prisoners of war were also sent into servitude – the survivors of the Cromwellian massacre of Drogheda, the defeated at the battles of Sedgemoor and Dunbar. 50,000 indentured servants were shipped to the American colonies in this period, with the bulk going to Virginia and Maryland.

But this constant supply of labour had limitations. The period of indenture was set at seven years by biblical precedent, and reducing Europeans to perpetual slavery could well have had unacceptable political consequences both in the colonies and in England. Another source of labour was needed. So, the protestant English resorted to African slavery, copying the Spanish and Portuguese model which they professed to despise. With twenty African slaves for the price of one English servant, religious and humanitarian scruples could easily wither and die. Like the Poles before them, the Africans were, above all, vulnerable. Given that an industry was already set up trading in European servants, it was easy to adjust this to the far more profitable

triangular trade, exporting finished goods (including guns and alcohol) to Africa, slaves from there to the Americas, whence tobacco, spices and then sugar to Europe.

Thus, perpetual African slavery developed in the colonies. In 1661, Virginia extended African servitude to life and, in 1670, the legislature decreed: 'All servants not being Christians imported into this country by shipping shall be slaves for life.' In 1682, this was extended to refer also to those 'who and whose parentage and native country are not Christian at the time of their first purchase', whether or not they subsequently converted to Christianity.

* * *

There has been a long standing discussion of how the institution of African slavery emerged in the New World setting. Some writers, such as Winthrop D. Jordan, have striven to develop a dialectical approach towards slavery and racial prejudice. Rather than locating one as the cause of the other, he has suggested that 'both may have been equally cause and effect, constantly reacting upon each other, dynamically joining hands to hustle the Negro down the road to complete degradation'.²⁰ This is also the viewpoint espoused by Lerone Bennett in his *The Shaping of Black America*. However, Williams's extensive work, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought* requires that this view be somewhat modified. Williams locates the discourses of the Virginia Company in the context of an evolving western European legal discourse that emerged from the Church in the middle ages. Here the centrality of Christianity went unchallenged, although there were disputes over the extent to which Christian authority derived from the Pope, the Church or could be exercised by king or emperor.

As the first European power to colonise the Americas, Catholic Spain had been the centre for debate on the moral and legal implications of imperialism and enslaving the Native Americans. The cruelties of Spanish slavery had been fuel for anti-Spanish propaganda while England was at war with Spain. The readiness of Sir Francis Drake to participate in the slave trade, on the one hand, and then, on the other, to ally himself during the 1570s with the Cimarron community of Panama, largely composed of African slaves who had liberated themselves, indicates that, although he may have had few scruples, he had not internalised a view of Africans as inferior.

Racism was not and is not a 'natural' attitude. It has its genesis in a process whereby the religious bigotry of Elizabethan England was converted into Anglo-American racism. The Virginia invaders provided the social crucible for this transformation. But this was not an accidental transformation: it was consciously espoused and

institutionalised by the businessmen who ran the London Virginia Company. Originally it had been hoped to enslave the Native Americans. When this proved impossible, attempts to reduce European indentured servants to the state of perpetual slaves created problems in London. However, Coke's dictum that 'All infidels are in law *perpetui inimici*, perpetual enemies' created a legal premise for the transformation of African indentured servitude into perpetual slavery.

It is disturbing when a local 'community group' wants to express its pride in the very enterprise with which English racism was launched to invade North America. Yet this is what has happened in Blackwall. Blackwall is one of the two wards in the Isle of Dogs in East London. The other, Millwall, attracted international notoriety in 1993 with the election of Derek Beackon as the first British National Party councillor. Now *The Islander*, a local 'community' newspaper in Millwall, has 'revealed' that the Jamaican slave-owner Robert Milligan is 'Father of the Isle of Dogs' because of his role in building the West India Docks, now the site of Canary Wharf. It wants to celebrate its bicentenary on 12 July 2000. Like the Columbian quincentenary, the Millennium provides a focus for reactionary and Eurocentric supremacist historification. But that, in turn, will lead also to a reassertion of the centuries of resistance against the 'progress' that the Millennium is being used to celebrate.

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FOUZI SLISLI

The western media and the Algerian crisis

In the Name of Allah, the Clement, the Merciful

And if two groups of believers fight each other, reconcile them. If one of them assaults the other still, then fight the aggressor till they comply with the law of Allah. If they comply, then reconcile them with justice and be equitable. Allah loves those who are equitable. Believers are brothers to each other. Establish agreement among your brothers, and fear Allah, so that we grant you mercy.

The Koran (49/9–10)

The impregnation of modern liberal political culture with oversimplified stereotypes and prejudice against Islam provided the cover for the Algerian military junta to exterminate impoverished categories of its own people for economic and political ends. It is not my intention here to analyse the complexity of Algerian society or chart its mutations in the last few years, nor do I claim to explain the escalation of violence in Algeria over the last few years. My concern is, rather, the extent to which international public opinion has contributed to this escalation and how far anti-Islamic prejudice, rampant in international media and western public opinion between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s, provided both alibi and justification for the military repression that was unleashed on the Algerians during that same period. The most recent developments on the Algerian political

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scene, from the early resignation of president Zeroual to the present, are, however, outside the scope of this analysis.

Since 1992, the beginning of the Algerian crisis, formal political analysis and the international community have regarded the conflict as a civil war between 'Islamic militant groups' and secular government forces. This stance has, to a considerable extent, failed to comprehend the plight of the Algerians. It revealed recalcitrant corners of western political culture that resist exposition and debate, and did not remain neutral in relation to the Algerian crisis.

The origins of the conflict are multiple. One hundred and thirty years of French colonisation resulted in the murder of millions of the indigenous population. During this period, pre-colonial systems of authority were destroyed and replaced with military institutions, while the local economy was wiped out by European imports. The seizure of power after independence by the Front de Libération National (FLN) merely perpetuated the military institutions left by the French. The organisation of the FLN government (referred to during the 1980s as '*Houkoumat Mickey*', i.e., Mickey Mouse government) into clans of interests relying on a small francophone elite ultimately resulted in the marginalisation of the Arabic-speaking population, widespread corruption, increasing inequality and bureaucracy.

The suicidal economic policies of the FLN reduced Algeria's exports to its natural resources in oil, the price of which fell from \$40 a barrel in 1979 to \$12 a barrel in 1988, resulting in a 40 per cent loss of revenue in less than a decade. In October 1988, riots broke out throughout the country and the army was deployed on the streets.

Faced with social unrest, the FLN found itself compelled to open up the political arena and allow popular participation in the running of the country. The 1989 constitution ended one-party rule, allowed the formation of political parties and scheduled local and legislative elections to take place over a two-year period. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), created in February 1989, won the local elections, the first round of the legislative elections, and was set to win the second round, had the army not intervened in 1992 to cancel the elections and ban the FIS.

Liberal political culture and Muslims

Modern liberal political culture is suffused with a flawed and prejudiced terminology that subverts the ground on which accurate political analysis can take place. Take the term 'terrorism', for example. The discrepancies between the categories of people to whom the term 'terrorist' is applied show that there is sharp discrimination against certain populations on this planet and an appalling

poverty of political analysis, if not complicity. Palestinian acts of violence, for example, are always 'terrorist acts', yet one rarely hears of the daily confiscation of their land, as well as their ghettoisation by the Israelis. As for the colonisation of Palestine, the land the Palestinians owned and which they have been working for the past fifteen hundred years, no one dares take it into consideration any longer.

'Terrorism', though, is rarely used of the daily Israeli violence against Palestinians. The degenerate and heinous murders of thirty-six Palestinians by the American settler Baruch Goldstein while they were praying at the mosque has never been deemed a 'terrorist act'. World media, political analysts and policy-makers joined in the chorus to repeat the Israeli-American version of events: 'an irresponsible act of a mentally disturbed Israeli settler'.¹

The same discrepancy is applied to many other parts of the Muslim world and the parameters are quite clear. Insurgent movements in countries where the regimes are structured more around western corporate interests than around the interests of their own people, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Tunisia and Israel, are invariably 'terrorist groups'. But when it is a question of insurgent movements in countries that threaten western interests or the American pro-Israeli lobby through their uncompromising attitudes toward Israel's colonisation, such as Iran, Syria, Iraq and Libya, the reference is to 'dissident groups', 'insurgents' or 'pro-democracy rebels'. The issue here is not whether one group of nations is 'better' than another, or one group of insurgents 'better' than another. It is not even the incapacity of modern liberal political culture to analyse objectively the most dangerous and volatile issues of today's world but, rather, that the consistency in entertaining and developing this incapacity, its efficiency in justifying injustice and discouraging serious enquiry points to its purposive use.

Before the appearance of political Islam as a global phenomenon over the past two decades, the label 'terrorist' was attributed, in the Muslim world, to governments or groups that had socialist and popular perspectives, such as Egypt under Nasser, Libya under Gaddafi, the Baathist parties of Iraq and Syria and, finally, Arafat and the PLO. At that time, the CIA was training the 'Muslim Brothers' in Saudi Arabia and the 'Mujaheddin' in Afghanistan to counteract Arab nationalism and its alleged links to Moscow. Over the past two decades, however, Islam has replaced communism as a 'global threat' in western foreign policy and public opinion.

'Islamic extremism', 'fundamentalism', 'Muslim fanatics', 'Islamic radicalism': these are some of the registers in which a number of contemporary conflicts tend to be classified. The Algerian crisis has too often been summarised under these headings. In themselves, these registers are poorly equipped to provide us with an accurate

account of the events in Algeria. In their self-sufficiency, they bring forward their own explanations to substitute for facts on the ground. Hence, 'The [French language] debate on Algeria dismisses what makes the foundation of the Algerian identity, which is Arab, Berber and Muslim . . . Islamists are not extra-terrestrials dressed in green.'²

According to Esposito, ignorance, chauvinism, and stereotyping 'blind even the best-intentioned when dealing with the Arab-Muslim world'.³ The bad press that Islam has in the West; the betrayal of Muslims by the western Christian world in Bosnia, Chechnya and Palestine; the plundering of their nations by rulers sustained against the will of the people with western money and western guns; the wide currency of Orientalist and racist stereotypes dating as far back as the Crusades, as well as the treatment of Muslims in the West⁴ are all hard realities that, unfortunately, allow us to infer that only a small minority in the West remains well-intentioned when it comes to Islam and Muslims.

This 'well-intentioned' minority goes beyond stereotype and is more attentive to historical and socio-economic considerations. The rise of political Islam over the last two decades is explained by the legacy of colonialism, the failure of the postcolonial state, which is seen as a mere perpetuation of colonial rule, and western imperialism. The role that this leaves Islam to play, however, is not far removed from the one assigned to it by the 'prejudiced majority'.⁵ At most, this perspective sees in Islam an effective mode of resistance to western cultural and economic hegemony and a mobilising ideology for some political movements. In this sense, the role Islam plays in the project of Islamist movements becomes merely the politicisation of religion or the religious interpretation of politics.⁶ Reliance on a western Christian conception of religion, with its distinction between religion and politics, still presents an obstacle to an accurate and objective understanding of the Islamic tradition. Esposito explains:

Modern, post-Enlightenment secular language and categories of thought often prejudice and distort understanding and judgement. The modern notion of religion as a system of personal belief makes an Islam that is comprehensive in scope, in which religion is integral to politics and society, 'abnormal' insofar as it departs from an accepted 'modern' secular form, and nonsensical. Thus, Islam becomes incomprehensible, irrational, extremist, threatening.⁷

With some exceptions, then, the fact that Islam engenders a political and social dimension, which serious study as well as the history of the Islamic civilisation can easily illustrate, has not been recognised.⁸ Consequently, Muslims are still denied the right to elaborate any political or social programmes on the basis of their

religion, and this (let us remember) by the most sympathetic of observers, and after both capitalist and communist models have failed to comprehend the realities of these nations on the ground.⁹ The phenomenal popular support for Islamist movements remains only partly explained and the repercussions that this has for western societies remain unexplored. Generally speaking, such is the moderate and serious assessment of political Islam in the West. It is well intentioned and sympathetic, but its seriousness still objects to dealing with Islam as a project of civilisation. In society at large, these views remain marginal and they have no influence on policy-makers or general public opinion.

French intellectuals that have been working on the Arab or Muslim world for the last twenty years are denied the right of citation. Their works are not known or at best are used as an ideological alibi. Politicians prefer to listen to media thinkers who work on nothing and have an opinion on everything.¹⁰

Assessments of Islam and Islamism by the majority of what constitutes public opinion in the West are frightening. The poverty of modern liberal political analysis and the dark corners of its psychology are most apparent here. Stereotypes are propagated by fractions of the most 'enlightened' classes, such as Bernard Lewis in 'The roots of Muslim rage',¹¹ Daniel Pipes in 'The Muslims are coming! The Muslims are coming!'¹² and 'Dealing with Middle Eastern conspiracy theories'.¹³ According to Bernard Lewis, Islamic projects are merely an expression of Muslims' 'resentment and rage'. These, he says, are rooted in 'feelings of humiliation – a growing awareness, among the heirs of an old, proud and dominant civilisation, of having been overtaken, overborne, and overwhelmed by those whom they regard as their inferiors'.¹⁴ Similarly, Pipes advances the view that Muslim radicalism is the result of feelings of envy and magical thinking. Here Islam is, at best, a family curse that lives on: Muslims are to be condemned just for being Muslims.

The most frightening aspect of this enterprise is the ease with which it has been institutionalised, normalised and diffused among all classes of western society. Policy-makers rely heavily on these analyses. A former NATO general secretary spoke of Islam as the new communism.¹⁵ Dan Quayle, vice-president in the Bush administration, grouped Islamic fundamentalism with fascism and communism.¹⁶ Articulate versions of these analyses are diffused among the middle classes in the serious press, and cruder versions among the lower classes through the tabloid media.¹⁷ When a member of the British public was asked on a popular television quiz show to name a 'dangerous race' (as in sports), he innocently answered 'the Muslims'.

The weakness of these arguments is that the far-too-obvious facts that they try in vain to conceal suggest another source of Muslim resentment and anger. The failure of Muslim postcolonial, pro-western states, the role that western corporate interests play in this process, western support for oppressive regimes (the Shah's Iran, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait), the colonisation of Palestine and the US role in it, are reasons far too concrete to be discarded for the 'clash of civilisations' argument that Lewis, Pipes, Huntington and their like, try to propagate. The part that colonialism and imperialism play in the impoverishment of Muslim societies is an objective phenomenon that can be easily detected in the daily existence of Muslims. An accurate assessment should not discard the legitimate reasons behind Muslim discontent.

Selective, and therefore biased, analysis adds to our ignorance rather than to our knowledge, narrows our perspective rather than broadening our understanding, reinforces the problem rather than opening a way to new solutions. It contributes to a climate in which, like the attitude towards communism in the McCarthy era, not to be simply dismissive of Islamic activism is viewed as being biased or sympathetic towards the enemy.¹⁸

But, however misleading the views of Lewis, Pipes, et al, may be, we would be wrong to ignore their influence. Daniel Pipes is editor of the *Middle East Quarterly*, a journal he began in 1991 to 'promote', in Sadowsky's words, 'American interests in the Middle East'¹⁹ and which has served to foster the failure of western public opinion to understand the rise of political Islam. The systematic effort utilised to achieve this failure points to a refusal of western policy-makers and business classes to face their own contribution to the crisis of the Muslim world. This is the main source of hostility between Muslims and the West. Muslims' attempts to improve the basic material conditions of their existence clash with western lobbies and interest groups that refuse to surrender privileges acquired in colonial times, or in exchange for favours granted to local rulers at the expense of their Muslim populations. The views expounded by Pipes and Lewis help to sustain a consistent level of ignorance in western public opinion and a hostility that, in turn, justifies acts of aggression to protect those privileges.

Blind stereotyping, then, does not subvert accuracy and rational analysis alone. There is a systematic effort in the West to divert the public's attention from the facts, as well as reinforce its ignorance. By the same token, the demonisation of a particular group or nation serves to infect the public with hatred for that group. Acts of aggression towards such groups (for example, the Muslims in France

or the US aggression against Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998), acts of dispossession (as of the Palestinians and the Muslims of Bosnia) are normalised and legitimised, misinformation providing the alibi that guarantees impunity. In this sense, general public opinion in the West is consciously or unconsciously woven into the global warfare against Muslims.

Misinformation on Algeria

In relation to Algeria, there are at least three discernible instances when western stereotyping and misinformation took precedence over the reality on the ground, contributing actively to the escalation of the crisis. The consequences in all three instances were devastating. In the first instance, it hijacked the Algerian crisis from its proper context, making early, rational evaluation of the crisis nearly impossible. In the second, western propaganda provided a false framework of analysis that distracted attention from the massive repression the Algerian population was subjected to between 1992 and 1994. And in the third, the junta in Algiers built, on the basis of western stereotypes, a deliberate campaign of misinformation to pressure the West for financial aid and prepare Algeria for the market economy, by eliminating the impoverished classes of its society.

Considering Algeria's economic importance to the West, it is hardly surprising that the crisis was quickly and hastily classified within the registers described above. The corrupt FLN government was a major business partner with the West, France in particular, trading national resources for personal favours since independence in 1962. The French government was even secretly allowed to keep, sixteen years after independence, a nuclear base in the desert to carry out, among other things, *open-air* chemical tests.²⁰ Algeria has also been providing 30 per cent of Europe's natural gas since the field was privatised in 1994 to finance the war against 'Islamic terrorism'. With the preservation of the embargo on Iraq, Algerian reserves in oil and gas have become even more important.

Anti-Islamic stereotypes were substituted for political analysis as soon as the Islamic Salvation Front started symbolising an alternative to power in Algeria, in 1989. It was not merely the occasional intrusion of recalcitrant prejudices and hatred for Islam into political analysis but, rather, the hijacking of the debate on Algeria into these registers. The context and specific characteristics of the Algerian Islamist movement and its aspirations were considered by the bulk of international public opinion as not worth dwelling upon.

Before the conflict even began, the international community showed overt hostility to the idea of an Islamic party governing

Algeria. Two months before the local elections that the FIS was set to win, in June 1990, *Le Point* had the following headline: 'Islamism in Algeria: the holy war at our doorstep' (30 April). The victory of the Islamic Salvation Front played havoc with French public opinion.²¹ Some referred to a 'violent shock' (*L'Express*, 22 June 1990), others to an 'electroshock' (*Le Point*, 18 June). The ex-minister of interior affairs, Raymond Marcellin, called on the French authorities to increase the frontier police force from 5,000 to 15,000 (*Le Quotidien de Paris*, 15 June). *L'Événement du Jeudi* hurled insults at the leader of the FIS, M. Abassi Madani, saying he should be ashamed to drive a Mercedes because he was a Muslim (21 June). *Le Point* called him 'the man that scares France'. Madani, it added, 'intends to make of Algeria a bastion for a pure and hard Islam' (18 June). *Le Nouvel Economiste* bluntly asked that 'France do all it can [sic] to prevent the FIS from winning the legislative elections' (22 June). And, in case the FIS did win, *Le Figaro* (13 June) debated whether the French army should intervene to put the FLN back in power. One wonders why the Algerian local elections did not take place in France instead.

These frenzied calls were clear incitements to the Algerian authorities to move against the will of the population. When, finally, the Algerian army did stop the democratic process by force, western propaganda had already erected a solid wall behind which questions of legality were buried. Liberals of all convictions expressed relief at this illegal act. Western policy-makers took positions in the conflict without any consideration as to their legality. The US deputy secretary of state, Robert Pelletreau, declared that the United States 'had no desire to see an Islamic revolution taking power in Algeria. And the FLN had many times reassured us that this will not happen.'²² French former prime minister Alain Juppé declared that the accession of the FIS to power was 'neither in the interest of Algeria nor in the interest of France'.²³

The attitude of the media and public opinion, during this initial phase of the crisis, did not allow any consideration to be given to the phenomenal popular base of the FIS, estimated in millions. The Orientalist conception of Islamic movements as orthodox parties, except that their leaders were 'mad Muslims', fostered the impression that the whole problem would be over once those leaders were arrested, killed or neutralised. At most, thirty people would be killed and things would fall back into order; a simple process of saving democracy from a 'bunch of fanatics'. In reality, things were different. Seventy per cent of the population of Algeria were under twenty-five, the majority of them poor, unemployed and with no prospects for a decent life. The FIS was more than a political party for them. It was a congregation of the poor and oppressed and, the Islamic tradition contributing, it was run like a big house where everybody participated.

Charitable networks were organised around targeted categories: collection of donations for the needy, visits to the sick in hospitals, assistance in arranging funerals. Such activities were indispensable to enabling groups with limited economic resources to function collectively . . . Activists eventually reorganised life in the quarters to the smallest detail. They took charge of road repairs, cleaned apartment buildings, and collected the garbage. As in Egypt, the ‘brothers’ provided tutoring for university students.²⁴

The frenzied reaction of the media prevented rational consideration of the specific nature of the FIS and its relationship with its electoral base. The loose boundaries between the leadership and the base would have readily illustrated that the army’s war on the FIS amounted in principle to a war on the Algerian nation. Such contextual details would have highlighted the necessity of debate and of an accurate exposition of the characteristics of Algerian Islamism that went beyond the profusion of stereotypes. It would have made all those wholehearted liberals think twice before mobilising international public opinion in favour of the army barons, the only group of Algerians they have ever known, taking power by force.

The ‘reality’ that racist stereotypes and misinformation provided was much more convenient. It demonised the Islamists, allowed an army coup in the name of ‘saving democracy’, preserved Algeria as a French backyard and, at the same time, offered to curb the demographic excess of Algeria.²⁵ Any attempts to expose this ‘reality’ rendered one suspect of sympathising with the enemy. The Algerian journalist Ghania Mouffok illustrates how little currency rational analysis had in the face of western propaganda:

For having written, after the banning of the FIS, that this movement was still in existence, that the camps were an absurdity which only reinforced it, for having tried to give testimony to what was happening not in the heads of its leaders but among its base, we have been quickly accused of being sympathisers of this party and we were attacked by the majority of our colleagues.²⁶

After the military coup and the banning of the FIS, the international community was in agreement that the country was in ‘safe hands’ and forgot about Algeria. In the meantime, the Algerian army waged a war against its people. Between 1992 and 1994, massive repression of FIS followers and sympathisers was carried on by the military, unheeded by the international community. Many were simply kidnapped from their houses, rounded up on the basis of pre-established lists, or taken indiscriminately when leaving mosques after prayers. An aerial bridge was established to transport the estimated 17,000 people from the military base of Boufarik to the

newly built concentration camps in the deep desert. The few who came before the military court in Bechar for 'publication of tracts and manufacture of cassettes' were freed provisionally for absence of evidence, 'which brought them back to the camp'. They would be tried and acquitted a year later, but were nonetheless not released.²⁷

While the Algerian army was waging war on its people, western public opinion listened only to the voices that promoted its colonial myths. A number of francophone intellectuals were presented as 'voices from Algeria' by the media or commissioned to write books on the 'tyranny of Islam' and the universality of western secular culture. Worth mentioning here are Rachid Boujedra's *FIS de la Haine*²⁸ and Khalida Messaoudi's *Une Algérienne Debout*.²⁹ Some of these intellectuals had taken strong positions against the FLN government in the past, but fear and hatred of Islam united them with their rulers once more. Jacqueline Kaye has clearly exposed, in her studies of the Maghreb, how the background of these writers is 'one of deep alienation from the language, religion and culture of the mass of their fellow country people'. 'Strange alliances are thus . . . formed between intellectuals who conspire with Western myths and the ruling groups whom they have previously anathematised or despised.'³⁰

It took the hijacking of an Air France plane in January 1995 for the world to realise that 'another war of Algeria' was unfolding. The 40,000 people who died in the next three years were, with the exception of a few foreigners, faceless and nameless. And again, instead of attempting to understand the situation with some accuracy, western public opinion preferred to cling to its fears and paranoia. A new disoriented frenzy in the media resulted in the usual profusion of stereotypes and the usual poverty of information and weakness of analysis delivered to the populace.

Selling the West its own lies

From 1994, the junta in Algiers systematically utilised misinformation stemming from western hatred and fear of Islam. Understanding what had currency in western public opinion, the junta manufactured it for western consumption. Through an arsenal of laws and decrees, the Algerian junta started by ensuring its monopoly over the production and diffusion of all information of a political nature. A circular of 4 June 1994 prohibited the Algerian press from publishing anything on the political situation except the communiqués given to it by the security services. The same circular also ordered the press to refer to the FIS as the 'ex-FIS', as if the ban had stopped it from existing. A communiqué of 5 February 1996 ordered the creation within the ministry of interior affairs of 'a unit of communication responsible

for mediation with the media in matters of information and for the elaboration and diffusion of official communiqués having to do with security'.³¹ From that date, this unit alone was authorised to diffuse security information through the exclusive channel of the official agency, Algérie Press Service (APS).

'Ex-FIS' is also how *Le Monde* chose to refer to the FIS. Foreign media do not have correspondents in Algeria any more, and the army was very selective when it came to granting visas to foreign journalists. The only agency that still has an office in Algiers is Agence France Press (AFP). Its journalists were subject to the state-of-emergency censorship in Algeria, and the agency as a whole was subject to the constraints imposed on the public services in France. To put it crudely, AFP was not allowed to transmit any information considered damaging to the army barons or French interests.

In the middle of this black-out, a comprehensive circuit of misinformation was installed by the military junta, feeding directly upon western prejudice and hatred of Islam. Information was first produced by the security services in Algeria, passed through the Algerian press and the AFP, then reproduced by the western media and sometimes (re)translated back to the Algerian press, to give it the credentials and authority of the western press.

The information black-out left the junta as the sole source of information on the crisis, its discourse a mixture of clichés and lies bluntly aimed at reproducing the western discourse of Islamophobia. The coup that robbed the FIS of electoral victory was justified by the assumptions, so common in the western press between 1989 and 1992, that the FIS did not believe in democracy, that it was intending, once in office, to abolish it and establish an Islamic/fundamentalist state directly threatening to the West. Once the FIS was prevented from that, it split into two principal groups: the GIA (split from the FIS) practising 'radical terrorism' and the AIS (still the armed wing of the FIS) practising 'moderate terrorism'. Ex-President Zeroual, who was presented as 'moderate' and 'pro-dialogue' claimed to be trying everything he could to initiate dialogue and find a peaceful solution. Blaming the failure on a lack of response from the 'terrorists', he joined the camp of the hard-liners in the army and declared war on terrorism (killing one thousand terrorists a week). As a reaction to this, the 'terrorists' were supposed to have declared war on France by putting bombs in French metro stations, on Christianity by slaughtering eight French monks in Algeria, and on women and babies, by dismembering the former and incinerating the latter in ovens. At this point, negotiating with Islamists is out of the question, the mass extermination that the junta has been carrying on for years is justified and its demands for economic aid find support.

Governments under internal pressure from Islamic opposition groups appeal to the Occident's fear of fundamentalism to give weight to their demands for economic aid and to evade the challenges of democratisation.³²

In actual fact, the FIS showed itself, on many occasions, ready to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. In August 1994, the leadership of the Front addressed a formal letter to Liamine Zeroual requesting the release of the FIS leadership from prison and the cooperation of political parties in the creation of a neutral commission that would transit the country to new elections and the installation of a legitimate government. In exchange, the FIS offered to call for a unilateral cease-fire.³³ In 1995, the eight major political parties in Algeria, including the FIS, the Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS) and the FLN,³⁴ met in Rome and signed the 'Platform for a National Reconciliation', calling for a rejection of violence and a peaceful settlement. The army barons ignored both attempts.

Again, over the last few years, a number of Algerians who defected from the security services have given testimonies that implicate the Algerian government in the bombing campaign that hit the Paris metro stations (formerly attributed to the Islamists) and in the murder of the seven Italian seamen in Jijel (formerly attributed to the Islamists as well).³⁵ As to the 'war against Christianity' and the murder of the French monks in 1996 (formerly attributed to the Islamists), it has been recently established that this was the result of internal feuds between the French security services and the Algérien Sécurité Militaire.³⁶

It is no coincidence that the violence in Algeria claimed only the impoverished sections of society. The horrific and spectacular massacres – staged for specific effect on the international community? – of whole village communities in the second half of 1997 took place literally a few hundred metres away from the strongest military barracks in the Mittija region, south of Algiers. If the Islamists could have moved that easily, the junta would have been overthrown long ago.

The connections are not hard to establish. One of the major consequences of FLN economic policies since independence has been the marginalisation of agriculture. Algeria in the 1970s and 1980s was producing less than under French colonisation. Consequently, the Mittija, although one of the most fertile regions in Algeria, was not exploited. So, poor immigrant communities from the countryside established small villages there, on the very outskirts of Algiers. But, with recent moves towards a market economy, the Mittija region has become attractive to foreign investors. Hence the need to empty it of its human element. The motives behind the massacres of Bentalha

(450 dead, slaughtered or hacked down), of Raïs (over 350 dead in the same manner), were political in the sense that they loaded another horror on to the backs of the Islamists and economic in the sense that they helped both to extract foreign aid from the West and to help empty the Mittija region of its inhabitants for the foreign investor.

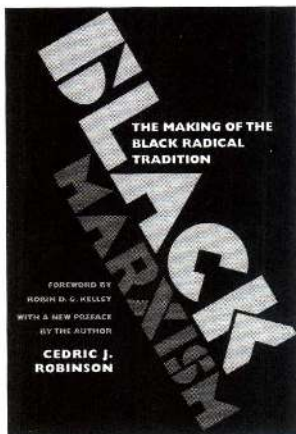
From the beginning of the crisis in 1992, the Algerian military government acquired one of the worst human rights records on earth. The security services practised the most barbaric crimes, from forking eyeballs to making people sit on broken bottles; mass rape of the old, the young, males and females in front of their families, and the extermination of whole villages. An estimated 12,000 people disappeared after security forces arrested them. Another 17,000 have been sent to concentration camps in the deep desert and an estimated 120,000 people are dead. In reaching this gruesome level of cruelty and horror, the Islamophobia of international public opinion has been of no little service.

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- 1 After the Hebron massacre, an American reporter in Palestine was asked by his office in Washington whether 'an Arab terrorist attack was being prepared' to avenge what they referred to as 'murders'. See Robert Fisk, '*Comment Distinguer un "Terrorist" d'un "Déséquilibré"*', Kenneth Brown and Hannah Davis Taieb, eds., *Être Journaliste en Méditerranée* (An *Hors-Série* publication of *Méditerranéennes*, 1995), pp. 131–7.
- 2 Interview with Benjamin Stora, *Le Monde* (19 February 1997).
- 3 John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: myth or reality?* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 191.
- 4 In France, the Muslim population *en bloc* is held suspect and constantly watched by the authorities: 'Confusion is thus entertained between terrorism, Islamism and simple believers, a confusion that is sought and maintained in a country where immigrants, Maghrebins in the first place, are designated scapegoats.' Alain Gresh, '*Fantômes Occidentaux et Dictatures Arabes*', *Le Monde Diplomatique* (December 1993).
- 5 The original idea for this classification of western assessments of Islam and Islamism comes from Jacqueline Kaye's insightful essay 'Islam, Islamism and Women in the Maghreb,' *The Bulletin of Francophone Africa* (Autumn 1992), pp. 2–13. She accurately points out that postcolonial conceptions of the development of the state in Muslim countries have either considered traditional structures and culture (Islam included) as obstacles to development, or blamed colonialism and imperialism for everything, seeing in Islam merely a mode of cultural resistance that will eventually fade away once autonomy is achieved. In neither of these views, Kaye observes, 'does Islam have any authentic role in the post-colonial state and neither offers us a way of dealing with the phenomenal rise of Islamic populism' (pp. 4–5).
- 6 See, for example, Meriem Verges, 'Genesis of a Mobilisation: The Young Activists of Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front,' in J. Benin and J. Stork, eds, *Political Islam* (London, I. B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 292–309: 'The FIS is not a religious movement, strictly speaking. Rooted in the social discontent that has been expressed in urban

- violence since 1985, the FIS gives political form to an emergent social movement . . . It uses religious rhetoric to translate social discontent into political terms' (p. 293). Similarly in '*Les Désarrois d'une Jeunesse sans avenir: avoir vingt ans en Algérie*', *Le Monde Diplomatique* (November 1995): 'The art of the preacher [note the use of Christian terminology] consists in identifying social problems, by redefining the situation in religious terms and translating it in political terms.'
- 7 Esposito, op. cit., pp. 230–1.
 - 8 Consider the following by Paul B. Rich: 'the Islamic fundamentalists lack a basic drive for state building', the reason for which is that their 'cause rests on cultural and religious rather than secular foundations and is concerned with resisting what is often termed the Western "cultural invasion" of the Islamic world', in 'Insurgency, revolution and the crises of the Algerian state', Paul B. Rich and Richard Stubbs, eds, *The Counter-Insurgent State: guerrilla warfare and state building in the twentieth century* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), p. 113.
 - 9 It is not my concern here to assess contemporary Islamist movements, but western assessments of them. I simply want to show that the tendency to dismiss as political immaturity these movements' efforts (or any effort) to elaborate political and civilisational programmes on the basis of the Islamic religion, is a lazy, unfounded, Orientalist perspective. It wrongly assumes that all religions are the same and that what is valid for Christianity is valid for the rest. It falls very short of understanding the emergence of political Islam as a global phenomenon and unjustly denies the Muslims the right or, as Malek Bennabi put it, the 'duty' to adjust to the modern world. (Malek Bennabi, *Vocation de L'Islam* (Paris, Editions de Seuil, 1954), p. 149).
 - 10 Stora, *Le Monde*, op. cit.
 - 11 *Atlantic Monthly* (Vol. 226, no. 3, September 1990). This third-rate piece was given originally as the prestigious 'Jefferson Lecture' of 1990; the highest honour accorded by the United States government to a scholar.
 - 12 *National Review* (19 November 1990), pp. 28–31.
 - 13 *Orbis* (Vol. 36, Winter 1992), pp. 41–6. There is a large corpus of dubious scholarship on Islam and Muslims that benefits from widespread acclaim in the West. See, for example, Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of civilisation' *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993); Michael Youssef, *Revolt Against Modernity: Muslim zealots and the West* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985). For a refutation of these claims, see Yahya Sadowsky, 'The new Orientalism and the democracy debate' in *Political Islam*, op. cit., pp. 33–50.
 - 14 Lewis, op. cit., p. 59.
 - 15 Quoted in Esposito, op. cit., p. vii.
 - 16 *Ibid*, p. 189.
 - 17 'Don't look for moderates in the Islamic revolution', *International Herald Tribune* (4 January 1995); 'A holy war heads our way', *Reader's Digest* (January 1995); 'Focus: Islamic terror: global suicide squad', *Sunday Telegraph* (1 January 1995).
 - 18 Esposito, op. cit., p. 195.
 - 19 Sadowsky, op. cit., p. 48, n. 43.
 - 20 See '*Quand la France testait des armes chimiques en Algérie*', *Le Nouvel Observateur* (23–9 October 1997).
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 - 23 *L'Express* (20 January 1994).
 - 24 Verges, op. cit., p. 295.
 - 25 Europe, especially France, Spain and Italy, has incessantly expressed 'concern' about the demographic expansion in the Maghreb.

- 26 Ghania Moufouk 'Reporter Algérien, témoin objectif', *Être Journaliste en Méditerranée*, op. cit., p. 36.
- 27 When families went to enquire about what happened to their children and relatives, the army asked them to prove that they were in the camp. Some of the prisoners were sentenced to death for 'terrorist acts' committed while they were in the camps and were unscrupulously executed. See Abdelkader Bakir, '*Dans les camps d'internement*', *Le Monde Diplomatique* (March 1996).
- 28 R. Boujedra, *FIS de la Haine* (Paris, Denoel, 1992).
- 29 Khalida Messaoudi, *Une Algérienne Debout* (Paris, Flammarion, 1995). Besides the fact that Messaoudi has been appointed deputy by the generals and given residency in the most prestigious state residence 'Club des Pins', François Burgat has the following testimony for us: 'I remember one day during a debate, where . . . she heated the room up. The audience had their throats knotted while she talked about Sonia, killed for having refused to wear the Hijab [veil]. At this moment a young girl stood up with tears in her eyes. It took us a while to understand what she was saying. She was indignant: 'Enough! Sonia was my friend, and she was killed by her fiancé because she did not want him. And it has nothing to do with the hijab.'" Interview with François Burgat, *L'Express* (15 July 1995).
- 30 Kaye, op. cit., p. 5. See also her *The Ambiguous Compromise* (London, Routledge, 1990).
- 31 See Ghania Mouffok, '*Attentat contre la liberté de la presse*', *Le Monde Diplomatique* (March 1996).
- 32 Annual report of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (May 1994).
- 33 See Ahmed Rouadjia, '*L'Armée et les Islamistes: le compromis impossible*', *Esprit* (January 1995).
- 34 These three parties represented between them 80 per cent of the vote.
- 35 See, among numerous other reports, '*Interrogations sur l'origine des attentats de Paris*', *Le Monde* (11 November 1997); '*Algeria's cut-throat regime exposed*', *The Observer* (16 November 1997). It is true that the French ministry of the interior expressed 'reservations' about these allegations (the Paris bombing), but this is to be expected, given the French government's involvement with the junta. The Algerian government denied these allegations, too. But how reliable are the generals of Algiers to tell the truth? As to the Italian seamen, how could the Islamists enter one of the most heavily guarded ports in Algeria, cross several checkpoints, kill the Italian crew and run away with tons of merchandise unseen? On the other hand, the fact that the Algerian army aimlessly delayed the ship's departure looks suspect from the start.
- 36 See Patrick Denaud, *Algérie, le FIS: sa direction parle* (Paris, l'Harmattan, 1997).



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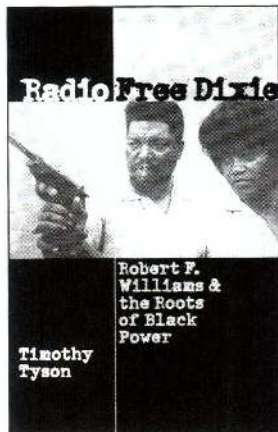
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Commentary

US

The politics of globalisation

Globalisation is a new stage of capitalism in its development of a single world economic system. This process is driven by the revolution in knowledge-intensive modes of production, and is manifested in both world speculative finance and the internationalisation of production. Its political consequences can be seen in the policies of neo-liberalism, the construction of a global superstructure responsible for the market and a redefinition of the role of the state.

In his book, *Promoting Polyarchy*, William Robinson describes the formation of a new hegemonic bloc that has emerged to lead the process of globalisation, consisting of various economic and political forces that have become the dominant sector of the ruling class throughout the developed world.¹ Its politics and policies are conditioned by the new global structure of accumulation and production. This historic bloc is composed of the transnational corporations and financial institutions, supranational economic planning agencies, major forces in the dominant political parties, media conglomerates and technocratic elites in the Third World.

The new integrated circuits of world production and finance are possible because information technologies allow the centralisation of decision-making along with a geographic decentralisation of production, resulting in world mobility for investments, markets and production, which leads globalists to harmonise a wide range of fiscal, monetary and industrial policies across national borders. Therefore,

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it is the logic of global, rather than national, accumulation that guides the political and economic behaviour of the ruling bloc.

In the US, the globalist ruling bloc has three main factions: neo-liberal structuralists, free-market conservatives and liberal regulationists. Their debates dominate Washington and do not correspond to the familiar political categories of the industrial era. Internationally, there tend to be European, Japanese and American visions of globalisation. These political variations have their roots in different historical experiences, but do not represent a struggle for national hegemony. Rather, they reflect a debate within the transnational bourgeoisie over how best to construct a global system.

The globalists consolidated ideologically in the early 1980s under the policy of the Washington consensus. Developed to deal with the debt crisis in Latin America and Mexico, its main principles were privatisation, free trade, high interest rates and a sharply diminished role for the state in national economic activity and social services. This became the policy mantra of the Reagan revolution and a siren call for the new Democrats. However, the Asian crisis has exposed important contradictions and major splits in the globalist camp. Foremost is the question of how best to structure the new world economy, with the debate centring on IMF policies and funding.

The structuralists

The leading globalist faction is that of the neoliberal structuralists, which includes figures such as president Bill Clinton, George Bush, Newt Gingrich, World Bank president James Wolfensohn, IMF managing director Michel Camdessus, most transnationals and many major financial institutions. Internationally, Tony Blair and Britain's 'new' Labour Party have closely aligned themselves with the Clinton administration's approach to the current debates. What distinguishes the members of this bloc is their adherence to neoliberal political and economic policies, their concern to build a stable and regulated environment for global accumulation and their effort to protect world financial institutions from ruin and failure. They have had important success in rapidly developing major international agreements such as NAFTA and GATT, establishing the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and expanding the powers of the IMF and World Bank. These efforts are building a new legal and economic superstructure for the world economy, paralleling the nation-building stage of early capitalism which constructed an integrated national market with common laws, taxes, currency and political consolidation around a common state. Globalisation is repeating the process, but on a world scale.

David Rothkope, managing director of Kissinger Associates and a senior official of the Department of Commerce during Clinton's first term, put it well:

The global market place is being institutionalized through the creation of a series of multilateral entities that establish common rules for international commerce. If capital is to flow freely, disclosure rules must be the same, settlement procedures consistent, and redress transparent . . . In many ways business is the primary engine driving globalization.²

More succinct was former WTO secretary-general Renato Ruggerio: 'We are writing the constitution of a single world economy.'³

What worries the neoliberal structuralists is that this economy will spin out of control. Every day, over a trillion dollars electronically rocket through the currency markets. For globalists, the size and speed of speculative activity needs to be regulated and better managed. As George Soros has noted, 'Markets can move like a wrecking ball, knocking over one economy after another. The swings cannot be avoided altogether, but they need to be brought under control.'⁴ That fear was brought home by the Asian crash, and so exposed developing splits within the hegemonic bloc. Propelled by the speed-of-light devaluation of Asian currency and the tidal wave of bankruptcies, the IMF stepped in to expand control over international monetary policies. The \$120 billion bail-out of international finance in Asia, followed by more support to Russia and \$42 billion to Brazil, is being used to alter the way markets and governments operate. This has sparked opposition by free-market conservatives to the structural bail-out, and reawakened opposition by the liberals to IMF social policies. The debate is also taking place among mainstream globalists, exemplified by the growing differences between the World Bank and IMF. Much of the discussion has focused on the stricter regulation of financial institutions, better market supervision of risk management practices, and how to respond to the social fall-out resulting from IMF policies.

One early flashpoint of the battle came in Congress over further US funding for the IMF. Republican opposition to the funding surprised and angered the corporate community which made its demands clear in a letter addressed to the House of Representatives, in which the National Association of Manufacturers, the US Chamber of Commerce, and the Business Roundtable banded together to pronounce IMF funding vital for the American economy.

Transnationals are a major interest within the neoliberal sector and clearly want a stable and structured economic environment for their investments. Furthermore, the IMF has used the Asian crisis to demand that Third World countries open up their national economies

to greater penetration from global corporations. Transnationals have not only been able to seize former state assets through privatisation, but the bankruptcy of nationally based companies has resulted in a huge transfer of power to global corporations. Following the Asian crash, American and European corporations launched corporate take-overs which totalled \$31 billion; a fourfold increase over 1997. In Thailand, where 1998 saw 12,201 companies collapse, foreign investments surged to \$7.6 billion. The buying spree included banks, steel mills, supermarket chains and other assets. As Singapore economist Divyang Shah stated, 'This is the best time to buy . . . It's a fire sale.'⁵

Differences among the global structuralists began to surface in the World Bank's 1997 report, *The State in a Changing World*. The Bank questioned the promotion of the 'minimalist state' and argued for a larger governmental role in protecting and correcting markets. The report sought to move 'attention from the sterile debate of state and market to the more fundamental crisis of state effectiveness'.⁶ While still insisting on free market policies, the report emphasised that 'liberalization is not the same as deregulation' and argued that the state's purpose was 'safeguarding the health of the financial system'.⁷ In the Bank's 1998/99 report, *Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries*, it criticised particular features of IMF policies. Targeted were the IMF's rapid push for total financial liberalisation, the need to control short-term investments and greater aid for the poor. But, as the *Washington Post* pointed out: 'The differences here are more of tactics than strategy.'⁸ The debate is not over free trade, open markets or long-term foreign investments. Rather, it centres on how best to protect the global financial system.

Advocating only moderate policy adjustments, the main defenders of the Washington consensus have been Camdessus, Blair and President Clinton's point men, former secretary of treasury Robert Rubin and his under-secretary Lawrence Summers. In an important speech to the Institute of International Bankers (IIB), Camdessus set the stage correctly by greeting his colleagues as 'citizens of the same globalized financial village'.⁹ The IIB is the policy and lobbying organisation of 200 international banks with branches in the US, and the audience Camdessus chose for explaining the IMF's new ideas. These amounted to little more than a generalised set of standards that would entail greater surveillance and transparency of capital flows, and a move towards longer investments rather than unstable short-term loans. To underline his support of the free market, Camdessus also declared: 'It is noteworthy to observe that in spite of the nostalgia for state intervention . . . the immense majority of the world community wants to achieve these objectives not through controls or an onerous set of state regulations . . . after all the markets are about

liberty and responsibility.¹⁰ Although Camdessus does not propose state supervision, he does want to craft new regulations to be administered by supranational bodies like the IMF and within the financial community itself.

In fact, globalists grouped around the IMF argue that the crisis is cause for greater control of the state by finance capital. Italian treasury minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi called for the IMF's Interim Committee to become the 'embryo' of an economic government for the world. The Interim Committee, which Ciampi chairs, includes finance ministers from twenty-four major countries. The Committee, says Ciampi, should 'become the main channel of communication between the international financial community and national decision-makers' because the crisis makes it 'necessary to reinforce the instruments for intervention by international financial institutions'.¹¹ The IMF would thus become a policy instrument which circumvented any national political dialogue over economic policy. Structuralists don't want to abandon the state, but use it to better protect their interests.

Other mainstream globalists like Wolfensohn, Henry Kissinger and Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs seem more concerned with cleaning up the political and social fall-out from the crisis. Wolfensohn has recently expressed concern about the large numbers of people thrown into poverty by IMF policies. Yet in 1998, in negotiations over debt relief with the Mozambique government, Wolfensohn demanded a quintupling of patient fees for public health services and the privatisation of the municipal water works. His recent change of heart appears motivated more by the riots in Indonesia than any real concern for the poor.

The situation in Indonesia and the resignation of Suharto certainly alarmed Henry Kissinger, who, in the *New York Post*, expressed the fear that 'the indiscriminate globalism of the 1990s may generate a worldwide assault on the very concept of free financial markets' in the same manner that early capitalism 'spawned Marxism'.¹² Upset over the political explosions sweeping Indonesia, Kissinger complained that the 'IMF has utterly failed to grasp the political impact of its actions' because of its 'excessive emphasis on economics', and argued that states should provide a 'social safety net and curb market excesses by regulation'.¹³ Yet, although critical of the IMF, none of these leaders questions the basic tenets of the Washington consensus or its economic orthodoxy. Rather, social entitlements are understood as necessary concessions for achieving political stability so as to continue on the road to globalisation.

While the globalist bloc is an international elite, there are senior, middle and junior partners. The most senior and cohesive sector is comprised of American neoliberals, and their version of the free

market dominates globalisation. Although published before the Asian crash, Rothkope provides an excellent insight into what he calls 'exporting the American model'.

Americans should not shy away from doing that which is so clearly in their economic, political, and security interests and so clearly in the interests of the world at large. The United States should not hesitate to promote its values . . . of all the nations in the history of the world theirs is the most just, the most tolerant, the most willing to constantly reassess and improve itself, and the best model for the future . . . Good and evil, better and worse, coexist in this world. There are absolutes, and there are political, economic, and moral costs associated with failing to recognize this fact.¹⁴

Free-market conservatives

The free-market conservatives are perhaps the most ideologically driven sector within the globalists. Representing this trend are former secretary of state George Schultz, former Citibank chief executive and speculative guru Walter Wriston, former treasury secretary and international speculator William Simon, Reagan-era economists Lawrence Kudlow and Martin Feldstein, president of the Heritage Foundation Edwin Feulner and Ian Vasquez of the Cato Institute.

Conservatives want to rule a global market free of government regulatory obligations. The only valid rules are those established by the financial community itself. Some sectors, deeply influenced by Milton Friedman, see any bureaucratic central planning as interference in the pure functioning of the market. In Kudlow's words, 'IMF statism is no better than Soviet statism'.¹⁵ Conservatives argue that the market needs to carry its own risks and firms must be allowed to fail without being saved by international agencies. It is within this process that 'creative destruction' occurs. Money is freed from bad management and goes to those who know how to invest better. Bankruptcy, or the destructive side of capitalism, is necessary to free capital to be used to create new wealth. For free-market conservatives, the Asian crash was the golden highway to future accumulation.

Kudlow articulates this viewpoint with insightful honesty: 'Capitalism without bankruptcy is like Heaven without Hell.'¹⁶ This Marat Sade model of creative economics exposes the arrogance of speculators towards the world's poor. That Heaven for the rich is based on Hell for the poor is of no concern to Kudlow. Schultz and Simon, old friends of Kudlow from the Reagan administration, are so deeply committed to the ideology of free markets that both have made calls to abolish the IMF. Feldstein, too, decries IMF central planning because it has gone far beyond the role that it played in the 1980s and

'has imposed programs requiring governments to reform their financial institutions and to make substantial changes in their economic structure and political behavior'.¹⁷ For, as often argued by Wriston, the power to change government policies is best left to international financiers, not bureaucratic agencies. Celebrating speculative might, Wriston stated: 'Money is asserting its control over government, disciplining irresponsible policies, and taking away free lunches everywhere . . . If your economic policies are lousy, the market will punish you instantly. I'm in favor of this kind of economic democracy.'¹⁸ B. J. Habibie, Indonesia's president, must have been listening to Wriston about the 'free lunches'. In Autumn 1998, he went on national radio to tell his people not to eat two days a week, thus saving \$1.4 billion per month on rice imports – money which then could be used to pay off Indonesia's debt to foreign speculators. Welcome to democracy in the new world order.

Underlying unregulated free-market ideology are fundamental economic interests. Of the \$1.6 trillion invested daily in currency markets, an overwhelming 66 per cent (by some estimates, 80 per cent) is held for seven days or less. Only 1 per cent of all speculative transactions stay put for a year or longer. Huge profits are made possible because this instability and quick movement of money results in rapid fluctuations of currency values. If you are on the right side of the fluctuation, you can make billions. This has created a sizeable sector of free-market conservatives. As pointed out by Paul Volcker, former governor of the Federal Reserve: 'The biggest concern today is the growing constituency for instability.'¹⁹ Kissinger pointed to the same danger in the *New York Post*: 'Hedge funds, the trading departments of international banks and institutional investors possess the reach, power, and resources to profit from market swings in either direction, and even to bring them about. It is market stability that they find uncongenial.'²⁰

Instability goes to the very heart of the structural architecture of financial trading. In the words of Chicago Mercantile Exchange trader Yra Harris:

No trader ever made a profit out of a static market. Volatility is the key to wealth. As long as the market is moving up or down, there is the chance of making money. The markets are deliberately designed to encourage volatility.²¹

For structuralists, the tremendous growth of the markets now makes this volatility rather too dangerous, and so they want to redesign parts of the architecture. But free-market conservatives want to play the game as it exists, for changing the rules would only interfere with the pace and motion of accumulation.

Representing transnational banks and investors is the Institute of International Finance (IIF). The IIF was created in 1983 and has 300 members in fifty-six countries, among which are the largest international banks and investment firms. The IIF acts as a policy centre, lobbyist, researcher and consultant for its members, a virtual political wing for international finance. When Camdessus and Rubin cautiously suggested that there might be a 'role for the private sector in sharing the burden of adjustment',²² the IIF threatened that private investors might flee if they were forced to help countries overcome the financial crisis. According to the *Australian Financial Review*, the IIF was 'bristling at the attempt by the "official sector" to "bail in" private financiers into international financial rescues'.²³ IIF chairman John Bond made it clear that financial institutions oppose any regulatory commitments on the grounds that 'the best path to attaining private sector participation in assisting countries to resolve financial crisis involves a case-by-case approach . . . based on intensified dialogue and voluntary approaches which take advantage of the dynamics of the marketplace'.²⁴ This approach gives IIF members a free hand in negotiating concessions from Third World countries, while avoiding any restraints on their own economic power.

But when it comes to responsibility to banks and investors, the IIF wants a new set of strict regulations obligating governments to full financial transparency. IIF policy requires, in Bond's words, 'data . . . from governments of emerging market economies, including detailed reporting on reserves, capital movements, bank deposits, holding of securities and derivatives . . . [plus] the composition and disposition of reserves and other foreign currency assets held by central banks'.²⁵ To help ensure compliance, Bond added that 'how well governments perform in the release of data should be used by credit rating agencies' to judge the economic health of a country.²⁶ These ratings help determine interest rates on international loans and are therefore an important tool in controlling the spending and monetary policies of governments.

The IIF does not subscribe to the same extreme free-market dogma as Schmidt and Simon. Rather, it understands the importance of maintaining the IMF and using it to facilitate a secure environment for financial markets. In fact, the IIF plans its annual conference to coincide with the IMF's annual meeting in Washington. IIF influence on Camdessus became evident when he reiterated the IIF policy line on transparency:

If I had only one thing to aim for, I would fight for [that]. Because if the Thais and the [South] Koreans . . . had respected the need to give us a weekly report on the state of their currency reserves and a monthly report on their short-term debt, we might have been

able to convince them to change policy earlier . . . I believe that in the coming world, transparency will be the most crucial virtue.²⁷

Financial globalists do not oppose all regulation, only regulations they have to obey. Supranational institutions in the 'official sector' like the IMF are there to help regulate governments, not the free market. In fact, the IIF has proposed a Private Sector Advisory Council to work with the IMF as a financial watchdog in a 'power sharing arrangement'.²⁸ Transnational finance wants to maintain volatility, but operate with a free hand to look over everyone's financial information, the better to navigate the ups and downs of the market. The most insightful free-market conservatives understand that the IMF is important to achieving this end.

Liberal regulationists

Since the Asian crash and Russian debacle, the liberal regulationists have been growing in importance. Liberals support free markets and privatisation, and see direct foreign investment as the surest road to growth and necessary for Third World economies. But, with expanding poverty, they have come to question attacks on labour, cuts in social services and governments' abdication from regulating the free market. Liberals still support all the basic features of the new global structure, but want to use these structures to tame the most destructive features of the free market. They have a modified neoliberal approach which clearly recognises the vast inequalities created by unregulated capitalism, and fear the political upheavals that may result. As the crisis in Asia spread to Russia and Brazil, some mainstream globalists like Kissinger and Wolfensohn began to share some of the concerns of the liberals. But it is the liberals who have actually questioned the Washington consensus as the best way forward for constructing a global economy. This has led to calling for economic policy changes such as lower interest rates, restrictions on short-term capital and social safety nets.

The liberal wing of the globalists includes a significant faction of the Democratic Party, with spokespersons such as Congressmen Dick Gephardt and Dave Bonior, former secretary of labour Robert Reich, plus a growing number of influential economists and concerned business figures. Important on the international stage are economists and professionals working in UN agencies such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development and the social democratic parties in Europe.

Liberals have fought for better labour standards and environmental protection in the growing number of international agreements. They have also sought to slow down capital mobility, using different regulatory devices to help protect national economies. At times, their

opposition has been substantial, as reflected in the vote against NAFTA and its fast-track extension. For example, under Gephart and Bonior's leadership, 75 per cent of all Democratic members of Congress voted against NAFTA. But the liberal leadership has agreed to support the IMF bail-out because, according to Bonior, they obtained concessions on labour and environmental standards which allow people to organise, bargain collectively, take on sweatshops and child labour, and set up watch-dog groups composed of business, government and labour. Critical support from liberals is not new; Gephart voted for fast-track legislation under Bush and also for the WTO. More progressive members of Congress, Bernie Sanders (Vt), Dennis Kucinich (Oh), and Cynthia McKinney (Ga), have voted no to further funding for the IMF.

Another important voice on the liberal wing is Joseph Stiglitz, senior vice-president and chief economist of the World Bank and former chair of the US Council of Economic Advisors. In a speech delivered in Helsinki in April 1998, Stiglitz launched a major criticism of the Washington consensus, calling it 'incomplete and misleading'. Although a firm supporter of free trade and privatisation, Stiglitz argued that 'government has an important role in responding to market failures . . . and in appropriate regulation, industrial policy, social protection and welfare'. He criticised IMF policy in Russia for pushing inefficient and corrupt privatisation without competition, and pointed out that China, by avoiding the Washington consensus, had become 'the greatest success story of the last two decades'. Stiglitz called for a post-Washington consensus that would expand the role of government to providing universal education, transferring technology to the public sphere, and enabling 'increases in living standards . . . improved health . . . and a healthy environment'. He has also challenged the IMF's policy of enforcing high interest rates, which has led to the bankruptcy of nationally based business and deepened the depression in Asia.²⁹

The IMF's chief economist, Michael Mussa, attacked Stiglitz, saying that 'those who argue that monetary policy should have been eased rather than tightened in those countries are smoking something that is not entirely legal'.³⁰ Stiglitz fired back that Mussa 'hasn't looked at the econometric evidence . . . looking at this approach not from an ideological perspective but looking at it from the way anyone who is serious about economics would look at it . . . you'll see that Mr Mussa is wrong'.³¹ But Stiglitz's ideas seem to reflect a growing trend. Former World Bank staffer Veena Siddharth stated, 'His speaking out is just the tip of the iceberg. A lot of people at the Bank are worried about the effects of IMF policies on poor people.'

Currency speculator George Soros has also been busy criticising the IMF. In an article in the *Financial Times*, Soros noted that the

prevailing system of 'international lending is fundamentally flawed yet the IMF regards its mission to preserve the system'.³² Soros also understands how his fellow speculators threaten to destroy the very system that has created their wealth. In *The Alchemy of Finance*, he pointed out that 'Instability is cumulative, so that the eventual breakdown of freely floating exchange is ensured'.³³ Hence, the private sector should not be in charge of allocating international credit because its goals are to maximise profits not maintain macro-economic stability. Soros' solution is to create a new International Credit Insurance Corporation that would guarantee loans by setting a ceiling on the amounts insured. Speculative investments beyond insured amounts would be lost through failures, rather than saved by IMF bail-outs. Further regulation would, no doubt 'outrage the financial community' but, in his view, 'The main enemy of the open [democratic] society is no longer the communist but the capitalist threat'.³⁴

There are a number of important economists who share Soros' concerns and link economic balance to political stability. Stephen Roach, the chief economist of Morgan Stanley Dean Whitter, fears the 'slash-and-burn restructuring strategies of American business' and predicts 'some form of worker backlash as an inevitable by-product of an era that has squeezed labour and yet rewarded shareholders beyond their wildest dreams'.³⁵ Ricardo Hausman, chief economist of the Inter-American Development Bank, is concerned that: 'Emerging markets are not merely investment opportunities they are entire nations with families, firms, and political systems . . . if volatility remains unchecked a backlash will build against the market-oriented, democratic reforms'.³⁶ Perhaps this unease is why the *New Yorker* ran a major article praising Karl Marx and his insights into the problems of capitalism.³⁷ It seems that, without the communist threat, liberals are finding Marx their best weapon against global speculation.

Even MIT economist Paul Krugman has distanced himself from the neoliberal structuralists. In a major article for *Fortune*, Krugman called for capital controls over foreign currency exchange. In particular, he praised the Chinese system of delinking internal interest rates from foreign currency markets to help protect their economy from international speculators. Said Krugman: 'It's a dirty word, capital controls, but we need them to get out of a bind'.³⁸ Delinking domestic and foreign rates would allow countries to expand investments through lower interest rates, while protecting their currencies from speculative freefalls. As the crisis grows, there have been a number of uncomfortable converts like Krugman, who says: 'Why did I become a radical? I didn't want to be. But we are in a trap'.³⁹

Krugman's stance is echoed by that of Japan's vice-finance minister Eisuke Sakakibara, known as 'Mr Yen' for his influence on currency policy. Sakakibara has criticised the Washington consensus as the 'blind application of the universal model on emerging economies',⁴⁰ and has publicly backed the controversial foreign exchange controls put in place in Malaysia by Mahathir Mohamed. As with Krugman, there is a self-confessional quality about his role in the Asian crisis:

Since I was personally involved in the process and agreed, although reluctantly, in the end to what was recommended I am in no position to criticise others for what has happened. But unlike managing director Michel Camdessus I can only say that if I am confronted with similar situations in the future I will probably handle them differently.⁴¹

Following words with action, the Tokyo-based Asian Development Bank has begun to promote itself as an alternative to the IMF. Its dean, Masaru Yoshitomi, attacked IMF policies as leading to 'the collapse of real economic activity', and stated that the ADB will seek to solve the Asian crisis outside Washington consensus policy.⁴²

There is, even, a renewed and growing Keynesian trend and not only among left liberals and progressives. As the neoliberal crisis deepens, this sector has found its voice in such books as *One World, Ready or Not* by *Rolling Stone* editor William Grider and *The Judas Economy* by former *Business Week* editors William Wolman and Anne Colamosca.⁴³ These voices go beyond the debates about interest rates and short versus long-term lending. Their analysis is focused on the structural crisis of over-production and the exploitation of labour. They target financial speculation as the most dangerous and destructive form of capital, at times even using Marxian anti-capitalist criticisms. Their solution is a global Keynesianism which calls for growth through higher living standards in the Third World, while protecting wage levels in the United States.

There is not space here to outline – even schematically – the growing and diverse oppositional movements to globalism or to analyse the anti-globalist stance of the reactionary populist Right. But, as globalism expands and begins to stumble on its own internal contradictions, world politics in the coming years will increasingly be defined by this developing struggle.

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Was fascism an ideology? British fascism reconsidered

That British fascism should be seen primarily as an ideology – as a set of ideas – rather than a form of political practice is the burden of two recent and influential articles on the subject. In the *Journal of Contemporary History*, Richard Thurlow examines Oswald Mosley and the attempted rebirth of British fascism after 1945. He suggests that the best way to see British fascism is as a vehicle for the expression of Mosley's thought. 'The fact that synthesis was such a core feature of Mosley's fascism meant that the development of his thought was pragmatic and flexible; fresh emphases could be developed according to new political realities, even though the central beliefs of the fascist myth remained intact.' Mosley's success or failure is interpreted in terms of the vitality of his ideas. In this way, Mosley was

A revolutionary whose ideas failed to register in the intellectual or cultural mainstream, even if he was a pioneer of the various syntheses of fascist, racial populist and democratic traditions which came to characterise forms of neo-fascism in Europe after 1945.¹

Philip Coupland, also in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, insists, more controversially, that British fascism should be seen as utopian. Drawing on the writings of such fascists as Louise Irvine and E. D. Randell, and other members of the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in the 1930s, Coupland emphasises the 'revolutionary' character

of British fascist thought, summed up by such BUF wisdom as the dictum that the BUF is 'revolutionary or it is nothing'. For Coupland, the BUF was 'part of the wider utopian politics and culture of the 1930s'. Although his argument may seem perverse, it claims to uphold 'the complexity of real life'. As he puts it, 'Perhaps by better understanding the danger of utopianism, we will be able to keep utopia on the map but humanity off the road to serfdom.'² In other words, those historians who have distinguished between the Left and the Right have been misguided.

For some time, theorists of generic fascism have argued that the only way to explain it is as a set of ideas. Thus Zeev Sternhell has argued that fascism emerged first in France in the 1880s and 1890s, born in the minds of intellectuals and artists such as Drumont, Peguy, Barrès and Maurras.³ These intellectuals, he suggests, absorbed and then synthesised socialism and nationalism and thus created a new ideology, 'a socialism without the proletariat', which duly became fascism. Sternhell stresses the right-wing elements in the thought of such thinkers of the Left as Proudhon and Sorel; and the left-wing elements in the thought of such right-wing figures as Drumont, Mussolini and Barrès. As a result, one of Sternhell's consistent themes is the meaninglessness of left-right distinctions. Fascism, he says, emerged on the Left while claiming to be anti-Left. It is commonly described as a right-wing phenomenon, but has no more in common with conservatism than with communism. Fascism, then, is '*ni droit ni gauche*', neither Right nor Left.⁴

Roger Griffin, another historian of generic fascism, also defines fascism 'positively', that is according to the myths which it has generated about itself. Moreover, Griffin argues that this emphasis on the positive beliefs of fascism is now the accepted way to understand fascism, the 'new consensus' in the field. The appropriate way to define liberalism would be from the perspective of a liberal; therefore, it follows that the appropriate way to define fascism is from the perspective of a fascist:

The premise to this approach . . . is to take fascist ideology at its face value, and to recognise the central role played in it by the myth of national rebirth to be brought about by finding a 'Third Way' between liberalism/capitalism and communism/socialism. One of the advantages of the new consensus is that it brings fascism in line with the way other major political 'isms' are approached in the human sciences by defining it as an ideology inferable from the claims made by its own protagonists.⁵

But I would claim that this is the wrong way to understand fascism. Political theorists would not recognise an account of the Holocaust written from the claims made by the perpetrators. Neither should we

accept a theory of fascism taken from the 'claims made by its own protagonists'. It is a strange theory which accepts the definition that historical figures offer to describe themselves without asking if they were right. It would make far more sense, given the particular history of fascism, to insist that fascist movements should be studied critically, in an antagonistic or even hostile manner. Taking Thurlow's example of fascism in the 1940s as a starting point, I argue against Coupland's notion that British fascism should be seen as utopian. If ever a political tradition deserves the title 'dystopian', then it is fascism. To use Coupland's own language, the fascist utopia is an *outopia*, it does not exist; but it is not a *eutopia*, it is not recognisably a 'good' place.⁶ In the 1930s, writers as diverse as Max Horkheimer and George Orwell re-read Jack London's book, *The Iron Heel*.⁷ They found in this first study of anti-proletarian reaction precisely a recipe for that worse society that fascism sought and seeks to create. And they were right. British fascism as a political force represented a synthesis of ideology and practice. The ideology was reactionary, the practice violent and racist.

It is wrong to see fascism simply as an ideology, this is not how it was experienced at the time. Rather, the best way to approach it is as a particular form of movement, possessing a certain ideology, in which the ideology and movement interact and contradict. What is proposed here is, in effect, an alternative method of analysing fascism, which relates the ideas to its behaviour as a political movement. Such a method does lead to a longer definition of fascism, which I have attempted to elaborate at length elsewhere⁸ but can be summarised as representing a unity of different themes: a) a dystopian ideology, in which the key element is radical elitism b) a political practice, conditioned by the desire to create a particular form of mass movement and c) the fascist contradiction: a situation in which the ideology and the movement work in different directions.

What is important is to see fascism historically, to ask, what did the British fascists do?

British fascism in the 1940s

There is a striking contrast between the British fascism which appears in the historical writings of Thurlow and Coupland and the fascism that was experienced at the time. Both authors write as if fascism was created simply to give its leaders the opportunity to express their ideas. Thurlow's account bristles with such phrases as: 'his intention was made clear from the outset'; 'the key to Mosley's postwar thought' and 'BUF ideas have been seen as one of the more impressive examples of fascist thought'.⁹ However, it is not true that the primary goal of each fascist was to elaborate an ideology, or even to develop

his own political creed. Rather, the first thing which each fascist attempted was to build a fascist party. In this way, the Union Movement, the child of Mosley's pre-war British Union of Fascists (BUF) began in each area as a book club or society or as a series of 'non-public' groups, which 'may or may not be identifiable at first glance'. Then Mosley or Alexander Raven Thomson would visit the groups and merge them to form a branch of the Union Movement. The Movement would begin public activities. Fascists would start to sell *Union* and put up slogans or graffiti on walls. Members of the Union Movement would hold their own meetings or heckle left-wing speakers. Finally, there would be a large rally. Mosley would speak, and announce that the movement was 'coming forward as a fully-fledged political party' which would stand candidates in elections and would have an open existence.¹⁰

These parties should not be understood simply as publishing houses or as other neutral sources of the printed word. They did not exist just to print programmes or sell books. Instead, they were a particular form of political structure: fascist political parties, with a strong leader, a language of racism, an emphasis on violence and a typical membership. Each party had its leader, the most important of whom was Oswald Mosley. Members of the Union Movement shared a religious devotion to him. When he was in detention, they arranged elaborate ceremonies on his birthday, at which they saluted his portrait and sang hymns to him. At a reunion dance in 1945, 'Mosley became the centre of a surging mob of hero-worshippers many of whom were on the edge of hysteria'. Mosley fascists wrote about their leader in tones of awe, using capitals to convey their devotion. For Jeffrey Hamm in the *British League Review*, 'Oswald Mosley has given us The Idea, and it is for us to build the Movement that will propagate that Idea'. Raven Thomson produced a book, *Mosley, What They Say, What They Said, What He Is*, designed to demonstrate that the leader was omnipotent, omniscient and infallible. At meetings, the congregation treated Mosley like a God who could be watched and adored. Trevor Grundy, then a young boy, has described the adulation of Mosley's audiences:

In his book, *Beyond The Pale*, Nicholas Mosley, Oswald's eldest son, said that he went to an East End pub with Mosley and Diana [Mosley] and experienced what it was like to walk into a room with his father and how some of Mosley's supporters touched him to gain strength or power. He was right. It was just like that. My mother used to touch him and she'd say afterwards at home: 'That will give me strength till next year'.¹¹

Richard Thurlow claims that the 'BUF, despite left-wing propaganda to the contrary displayed an unwillingness to use offensive

violence against the state and anti-fascists'.¹² This was certainly not true of the fascists of the 1940s, who positively revelled in the violent attacks they carried out against their opponents. In January 1946, fascists damaged bookshops in Bethnal Green, Whitechapel and Coventry while, four months later, a Jewish shop in Hampstead was attacked. Throughout the winter of 1946–7, fascists attempted to set fire to synagogues in Clapton, Dollis Hill, Bristol and Willesden. In May 1947, a group called the Ku Klux Klan sent hate mail to the Edgware MP, Mrs Ayrten Gould, to the editor of the local paper, the *Edgware Local*, and to Sir Hartley Shawcross, D. N. Pritt, Waldon Smithers and the Reverend Saul Amias. In July 1947, Liverpool fascists set fire to a Jewish cabinet factory and, one month later, an anonymous fascist sent threatening letters to C. H. Darke, the secretary of Hackney Trades Council. In September, members of the British League of Ex-Servicemen, shouting 'Hail Mosley', attempted to smash up a Communist meeting in Ridley Road, throwing bottles and fireworks and injuring three people. Also that month, a gang of fascists attacked three Jewish ex-servicemen in Kingsland Road, Hackney, and beat them with knuckle-dusters. In October 1947, three fascists, John Arthur Parker, Frederick William Mendham and Arthur Jordan, were each given twenty-eight days in prison for assaulting Jews. John Parker later told one of his victims, 'I am in charge of a defence squad in Hackney. I received orders to beat you up.' Two months later, Ivor Worth, a member of the British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women, was sentenced to eighteen months in jail for placing a bomb outside the London headquarters of a Zionist organisation. In March 1948, David Barrow was fined for waving a gun while he spoke at a fascist meeting and, in April, Victor Burgess, a Union Movement speaker, was bound over for twelve months, after he assaulted a man selling the anti-fascist paper *On Guard*.¹³

What was the dominant ideology of fascism? It can be agreed that there were points of fascist ideology which did mark off individual fascists from other members of society, but these were not only or typically the ideas, nationalism and socialism, let alone 'utopianism', which our theorists have fixed upon. Coupland suggests that a large number of fascists were straightforward socialists, including Arthur Beavan and Alexander Raven Thomson. And according to Thurlow, Mosley was 'a utopian visionary' who should be compared to 'other renegade socialists, such as de Man and Deat' and who 'reverted to his left-wing roots once fascism had failed'.¹⁴ In truth, Mosley's claimed socialist credentials from the 1920s are actually rather thin, amounting to a few speeches and one pamphlet, not more. The defining continuity in Mosley's career is between the social imperialist Tory of 1918 and the fascist of 1932 and beyond. The problem with locating Mosley as a figure of the Left becomes clear with Thurlow's

definition of socialism as a belief in 'expanded welfare provision from a strong state'. Under this, Mosley could be defined as a socialist, but so could any British politician, from whatever political tradition, active in the 1930s and 1940s.

As a group, the fascists put forward ideas that were the very opposite of socialism. The *Patriot* condemned the Beveridge Plan and the very idea of a National Health Service: 'Those responsible for the Plan abrogated to themselves all the attributes of a Dictatorship.' Beveridge was 'designed to fit into a master plan issuing in a totalitarian state'. Douglas Reed's paper, *London Tidings*, denounced the activities of the Labour government for taking money from the rich: 'those who by the wise application of their capital . . . made Great Britain what she was, are being systematically despoiled'. Fascist publications spent their every moment attacking the working-class movement. The *British League Review* described Communist Party members as 'sub-human oriental ape-men', while the Liberator Council, the Banking Reform League, the New Age Association, the Social Credit Party, the Social Credit Co-ordinating Committee and the Common Law Parliament all campaigned against local authorities who borrowed money to pay for public housing. *At Random*, the paper of the Modern Thought Discussion Group, warned that Communists were running British industry. 'Dare we say "it cannot happen here", when our vital mining industry is dominated by the avowed Communist Horner, who has threatened us with a coal stoppage, would we quarrel with Russia.'¹⁵ Mosley described unemployment benefit as the negation of 'British and all human progress'. The *Patriot* described workers as 'sub men anthropoid hooligans', while the Union of British Freedom paper, *Unity*, attacked transport strikers, and Major Douglas went further still. All trade unions, he suggested, were an 'alien culture', which had to be removed.¹⁶

If 'utopianism' is to have any meaning, it must refer to the desire to create a society in which there is more freedom or more equality. That, presumably, is the whole point of a *eutopia*: here is somewhere worse, while there is somewhere better. Fascism, however, based itself not on egalitarianism, but on a radical elitism, that is on the notion that certain human beings were intrinsically, genetically 'better' than others, who consequently could be treated as if they did not have the right to exist. Thurlow suggests that the Union Movement's 'most important original contribution to political life was its pioneer role in highlighting immigration as an increasingly important factor in British politics during the 1950s'. It was 'the first significant political organisation in Britain to attack the "coloured invasion"'.¹⁷ Such views should not be treated simply as fascist debating points, but as expressions of racism. The Union Movement, for example, revived the BUF chant of 'the yids, the yids, we've got to get rid of

the yids'. Supporters of the movement shouted 'Get out of it, you Jew bastard', or 'Go back to Belsen'. Fascist street-corner speakers spewed out a torrent of anti-Semitism. In December 1946, Victor Burgess of the Union of British Freedom called for Palestinian Jews to be publicly flogged while, in April 1947, a British League of Ex-Servicemen speaker claimed Britain was being run by a 'lying rotten Jewish dictatorship'.¹⁸ In June 1948, a fascist speaker suggested that 'Hitler did a good job against certain people' and in December another said that 'Jews are filthy, parasitic vermin, feeding on the political body of the country. The sooner we get rid of this lot the better. Hitler closed the doors of his gas chambers too soon.'¹⁹

Racism and elitism were not incidental to fascism, they were structured into the heart of fascist thinking. For Mosley after 1945, the great idea was 'Europe a Nation', proposed in his book, *The Alternative*. Europe was to be amalgamated into a single state protected by tariffs, and given the best parts of Africa to exploit, under apartheid conditions. Mosley's purpose was, as Mervyn Jones commented, 'to make each eager youngster envisage himself, suitably clad in khaki shorts and carrying a whip or revolver, striding magisterially across a vast plantation where countless black backs bend in rhythm'.²⁰ Meanwhile, the *British League Review* denounced what it described as 'the lie of racial equality'. *The Patriot* believed that Whites were naturally cleverer than Blacks, who could only be 'docile and useful citizens' if they were not allowed to leave Africa. The Union Movement demanded a 'Colour Bar' against 'Black parasites'. Arnold Leese's paper, *Gothic Ripples*, argued for what it described as the natural law: 'all is race'.²¹

The most commonly expressed fascist theme, and the characteristic form of fascist dystopianism, was anti-Semitism. Anyone who has had the misfortune to read pre-1958 British fascist literature at any length will acknowledge the overriding, even defining importance of anti-Jewish racism (since then, of course, anti-black racism has played this role). G. F. Green's paper, the *Independent Nationalist*, advertised the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, as did the *Social Creditor*, *London Tidings* and *Union*. *The Patriot* contented itself with the insistence that the *Protocols* were not a forgery; A. K. Chesterton also quoted them. The masthead of *Gothic Ripples* read, 'an occasional report on the Jewish question issued for the Jew-wise'. Leese claimed that there were up to 1,500,000 Jews in Britain and that they should be interned or deported to Madagascar. Fascist anti-Semitism was linked to the fascist response to capitalism. What was wrong with capital, according to the fascists, was its links with the world of finance. They argued that finance was usury and that usury was, in the Duke of Bedford's phrase, 'what the modern Jew has successfully taught the world'. If only the financiers could be liquidated in the interests of

industry, then all would be well. The National Workers Movement promised that it would introduce 'national money to be put at the disposal of all worthy enterprises at the lowest economic interest rates' and that the banks would be closed down. Fascist attacks on finance were predicated on absolute support for industrial capital. *London Tidings* wanted to prevent state supervision of industry: 'the government should have no thought of intervening in the national economic life except through the medium of common law'.²² The attacks on finance may have seemed to some readers to have been a form of anti-capitalism, but they were expressed by a movement which would have given all power into the hands of capital.

The positive ideal of British fascism in the 1940s was a society in which the many had no rights, and were the slaves of a few. Coupland uses typically euphemistic language to describe this stance:

Parties would be banned, and in place of a parliament elected on a territorial basis there would be an occupational franchise . . . A person's inclusion in the BUF's organic nation required at least a minimal conformity to a standard of conduct and would be experienced as 'liberty' for those who had internalised the fascist world view.

Thurlow is more sanguine, suggesting that Mosley was converted to democracy after 1945. 'The experience of internment and the defeat of Nazism led him to modify some of his ideas within a more democratic framework.'²³ But there was scant real evidence of a conversion to democracy. Fascists called their dictatorship a 'Leader state', or an 'aristocracy', arguing, in Captain R. Gordon-Canning's phrase, 'To hell with democracy'. Mosley believed that biology should be used to produce a new generation of 'Leaders', and he described this principle as 'Heredity' or 'Selection'. The Duke of Bedford wanted to see the abolition of parliament and all political opposition. The functions of government would be hived off to corporations, whose decisions could be validated by an occasional referendum. Alexander Ratcliffe contended that 'democracy has not benefited us, not one jot or tittle', while Leese insisted that his highest idea of society was 'some kind of Aristocracy', in which there was the maximum inequality: 'we always stood for recognition of the fact of inequality both of individuals and races'.²⁴

Did fascism have a mass character? Clearly it was not simply a party of the elites. In local areas, the Union Movement often received its greatest support from small owners and the self-employed. Among those who were members of the middle class, a very large number belonged to that small group, the 4 per cent or so of society that can best be described as a petty bourgeoisie and included shopkeepers,

small manufacturers, tradesmen – from ice-cream salesmen to coal merchants – printers, farmers, drapers and dealers.²⁵

Having discovered a nebulous BUF socialism, Coupland goes on to explain its success in terms of the presence of large numbers of workers or ex-Communists to be found among the fascists. ‘The utopianism of [these] fascists demonstrates a more distinctively socialist and industrial aspect, reflecting the life-world of urban and working-class Blackshirts.’²⁶ Judging from the period after 1945, the former Communists seem to be largely mythical. The only one who can be identified is Alexander Raven Thomson, and he had joined the Communist Party for only a few weeks, in the mid-1920s. Raven Thomson then moved to the Right, as a disciple for several years of Oswald Spengler, and it was from this right-wing background that he came to the BUF. Likewise, post-1945, only a very small number of working-class people joined fascist parties, mostly recruited from Mosley’s old hunting grounds in south Hackney and the East End. Arthur Harding followed the fascists before the war, his brother joined then, but Harding himself only joined as a retired worker after 1945. He felt that fascism was something to enjoy: ‘I wanted to get out of myself. There was that urge of excitement.’ Wyndham Rackham, arrested at a fascist meeting in February 1948, was a postal clerk. Margaret Hutchings, arrested in March 1948, worked as a dress finisher. A Mr Couch, another Oxford fascist, was a bank clerk, while Donald Temple, arrested in May 1948, was a painter. Francis Shaw, who led a physical attack on two Jewish boys in 1949, was employed as a railway maintenance worker. Brereton Greenhous and Barry Aitken, two members of the Union Movement who were fined for breaking the windows of the Russian embassy in 1950, were both clerks, as was M. J. Ryan, the member of the Union Movement charged with the responsibility for building its support amongst organised workers.²⁷

Would it be right to see a contradiction between the ideology and mass character of fascism in this period? Fascism claimed to stand for ‘British workers’, but attacked working-class people, their trade unions and their political organisation. *London Tidings* accused the unions of fomenting a general strike, which would be a prelude to a ‘Jewish’ take-over of Britain:

We think the ‘transport workers strike’ was the rehearsal for the second general strike . . . The ‘national strike’ would begin with the usual ‘grievances’, for the delusion of the strikers and public, but would in fact be a bid to overthrow this government and substitute another; and to inflict on the land the final leg-irons of dictatorship.

The Duke of Bedford argued that full employment was a danger to be avoided, while *London Tidings* gave an offensive account of ordinary workers: 'the work-shy factory hand who has little interest in life beyond "fags" and "the Pools"'. The *British League Review* attacked homeless families squatting in empty properties, demanding that the government prosecute the squatters: 'a government which allows its laws to be broken with impunity is opening the floodgates of anarchy'.²⁸

British fascism subordinated its plebeian members' concerns to its more important campaign against the Jews. At times, individual fascists would express their unhappiness at the way in which leading fascists refused to speak up for the interests of ordinary people. In January 1946, A. R. Hilliard, a member of the British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women asked why it was that the group did not campaign for ordinary servicemen, but spent its whole energy on anti-Semitism:

Hilliard thought they would do better if more was said about pensions for Ex-Servicemen and less about the Jews . . . Hamm replied to this by saying that if he were to drop his anti-Jewish propaganda, the communists would be more than ever entitled to say they had defeated him.²⁹

Hilliard soon dropped out of practical activity. At other times, the contradiction between the ideology and actions of fascism expressed itself in the opposite direction, as when prominent fascists were openly dismissive of the ordinary members who made up their rank and file. After a British League of Ex-Servicemen meeting in August 1947, for example, one fascist speaker told the journalist, T. Pocock: 'Don't get us wrong . . . We only appeal to the "caff boys" in these street meetings. It's no good talking to them about policy.'³⁰

Conclusion

What is needed is a new method of looking at fascism, in which the ideology is connected to practice, and in which both are taken into account and grasped together, in order to define the movement as a whole. The model suggested is provisional, but I do believe that the only way to build a sufficient theory of fascism is through employing the method here, linking any theoretical statements about the character of generic fascism to a historical analysis of what fascism actually did. In the process of outlining a theory of fascism which connects its ideology to its practice, the idea that fascism was utopian is rejected. The genuine utopians of the 1930s and 1940s were those who believed that a) society could be transformed and b) that the result of this

transformation would either be democratic equality; or, at the very least, greater control for the majority over their lives.

The fascists may have believed in change, but the change they believed in was radically dystopian, the achievement of a more elitist, less equal and less free society. There were plenty of utopians in the Britain of the 1930s and the 1940s, but neither the BUF or the Union Movement deserve to be named among them.

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The Pacific

Rapanui – our own place

Rapanui (Easter Island) or 'our own place', as the Islanders call it, is, contrary to popular stereotype, neither treeless nor unpopulated. It is inhabited by about 3,000 people, many of whom can trace their descent to ancestors who have shaped the place's cultural history, though rarely in circumstances of their own choosing, to borrow a phrase.

The population probably peaked at about 12,000 people in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. Then, owing in the first instance to violent inter-tribal warfare and later to European intervention, it sank to its lowest point – 110 persons – in 1877. Today, there is a slow but steady increase. A rocky, sub-tropical place, with strong winds and occasional cold snaps, Rapanui was never the stereotypic Polynesian paradise of white sands, lush plants and dramatic scenery. Rapanui's 166 hectares contain more introduced than local species in both plants and animals, because, from about 1871, the entire island was exploited as a sheep ranch. Grasses and eucalyptus trees introduced from Australia require annual firing for their propagation, and this is what gives Rapanui its sometimes barren appearance.

The colonial past

Although Oceania (Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia) occupies a third of the earth's surface and contains 20 per cent of the world's

languages, it accounts for only one per cent of the planet's population, at just over 5,000,000 people. This has resulted in the creation of so-called 'micro-states' such as Niue, with less than 2,000 inhabitants, and Nauru and Tuvalu, each with less than 10,000. Such diversity and distribution of settlement made the Oceanic, and particularly the Polynesian, peoples relatively easy to conquer in the nineteenth century – enabling the acquisition by imperial states of vast tracts of ocean space, but containing relatively few people. The twenty-three states and territories that now make up the contemporary Pacific demonstrate a wide spectrum of political status, from Rapanui, a province of Chile, to relatively large, independent states such as Papua New Guinea. Along the way, there are special statutes for the French territories, which provide them with a kind of home rule, to the situation of the Cook Islands and Niue whose citizens carry New Zealand passports, but who have elected assemblies for internal and, occasionally, foreign affairs. Eight of the territories are formally independent Pacific Island Countries which are sovereign nation states.

Owing to Rapanui's small size, few resources and distance from trade zones, it was not an attractive colonial possession. This did not prevent the Dutch from claiming it when they arrived in 1722, giving the place its outsider name of Easter Island, as they sighted the place on that day. Nearly half a century later, the Spanish also claimed it, only to forget it when the fantasy of a Spanish empire in the Pacific Islands dissolved, in the face of greater competition from France and Britain.

In 1862, South American slave raiders from Peru carried off a good portion of the population, which shortly after was missionised. Within a decade, the missionaries, at first in business partnership with the sole French trader on the island, Dutrou-Bornier, had utterly transformed the Rapanui social and physical landscape. Rather than being allowed to remain on the ancestral lands round the coast, the Rapanui were herded into one or two settlements. The few hundreds who survived the slave raids and subsequent disease were mainly shipped off to Catholic Church plantations in Mangareva and Tahiti, from which only a handful ever returned. The island itself, having been virtually cleared of people, was then repopulated by sheep and, eventually, other livestock.

For all his faults and reputed belligerence, Dutrou-Bornier was the only coloniser till then to understand the island's real agricultural potential. The fresh meat was for a growing Oceanic, especially Tahitian, market, as were the sub-tropical crops that Rapanui could produce. Out went tropical fantasies of pineapple and bananas; Bornier grew figs, grapes and other European delicacies that fetched high prices in Papeete.

He went on to recommend that France take over Rapanui as a colony, detailing the agricultural potential of the island and arguing that France would, through Rapanui, have a special position relative to the South American coast (despite its being some 3,600 km distant). He also argued that the South Americans should never be allowed to maltreat Polynesians again, as they had done during the Peruvian slave trade of 1862–3, and claimed that the Rapanui had a special affection for the French. His arguments fell on deaf ears and his petitions languish still in dusty archives. In 1876, his violence over-reached itself and he was killed by three Rapanui, acting in self defence.

Chile saves an ‘orphan’

After Bornier’s death, the commercial operation on the island – still jointly owned by a couple of traders in Tahiti, Bornier’s estate and the Catholic Church in partnership – continued to develop. The 1870s and 1880s saw various scientific expeditions visit Rapanui from the US, Britain and France, each taking one of the huge stone busts for which the island was becoming increasingly known. A German expedition arrived in 1882 and was disappointed to find the ‘primitives’ with their wares on display and priced in various currencies. A US expedition conducted the first archaeological dig on Rapanui in 1886, by dynamiting one of the temple platforms in the search for treasure. The results of this early research vandalism can still be seen today.

Each of the visiting powers, Britain, Germany and the US, saw strategic value in Rapanui but never took this further in the belief that it was already a French possession.

Only Captain Policarpo Toro Hurtado of the Chilean navy investigated the matter in more depth and discovered that France was not at all interested in Rapanui. Following careful diplomatic and commercial exchanges, Toro took possession of Rapanui for Chile on 9 September 1888, offering a bi-lingual treaty in Spanish and ‘Polynesian’ for local chiefs to sign. In the Spanish version, which has been widely published, it is an act of annexation: Rapanui became part of Chile and subject to Chilean law. In the ‘Polynesian’ version (really a bizarre kind of Tahitian as near as I and others who have seen it can make out), Chile became a ‘friend of the land (*hoa te henua*)’, implying some kind of protectorate status. Toro had argued for the Chilean take-over on a number of grounds: (mistakenly) that Rapanui would be able to supply tropical products to the fatherland, plus, of course, sheep and wool; that it would be a vantage point for guarding the Chilean coast (despite its vast distance), and that Rapanui should be ‘looked after’ by Chile, with its great ideals of

culture and democracy. In effect, Chile should join the family of nations by taking a colony – for Chilean nationalists, this meant real statehood.

While Toro emphasised the commercial potential of Rapanui, he did not reveal that he and his brother had plans to operate a colonisation scheme and the sheep ranch themselves as a family business. Neither were immediately successful – the Chilean families brought over for settlement either died or fled the isolation and strange ways of the island. And the ranch was abandoned in 1892 when the Toros' ship sank – a time also of revolution and financial crisis in the Chilean state.

Some years later, Enrique Merlet, a French-descended businessman living in Chile, acquired the sheep ranch interests and subsequently instituted a reign of terror to bring the Rapanui under control, which included fencing them into a small corner of the island. He attempted, too, to lay claim to ownership of the whole island in a court case which lasted more than a decade. Merlet also went into partnership with a Scottish company, Williamson Balfour, which had extensive interests in Chile. After Merlet had murdered the last king of Rapanui, Riro Rokoroko He Tau, in 1899, and threatened or murdered other Islanders, the three features most prominent in Rapanui life were set for the next sixty-six years.

First, although the Chilean navy despatched a ship to the island from time to time, the civilian government took no active interest in its possession. The Rapanui which Chile had claimed to protect and benefit was abandoned to a commercial concern which exploited the island purely for its wool resources. For much of the twentieth century, wool from Rapanui was clipped, classed, baled and shipped directly to the aptly named Exploiting Company of Easter Island (Compañía Explotadore de Isla de Pascua). Second, the Islanders were not permitted to leave their small settlement in the south-west corner, let alone the island itself. If they wanted to visit their ancestral lands, they had to apply for a pass for permission to do so. Third was the total domination of life on the island by 'the company'. The sole employer, it ran the only shop and demanded obedience in all areas of life. Not until late in the 1930s did the Chilean government begin grudgingly to provide the island with some meagre benefits. Even the Church, whose missionaries had left in 1871, did not return with a permanent priest till 1936.

Even when the commercial exploitation ceased and the Chilean navy took over the full-time administration of the island in 1953, the exploitation and repression continued. Indeed, for a period, they were, if anything, worse as there was now only one source of authority on the island, the Chilean-appointed naval governor. Before, Rapanui had sometimes attempted to play off company authority against that

of the Chilean administrator (a post established at the time of the first world war). Visitors to Rapanui who arrived on Chilean government transport were not permitted to tell the Rapanui about the outside world during their brief stays. They were not allowed to talk about prices or politics – such warnings are still filed in the archives of the Chilean navy in Valparaiso.

Modern times

But such an arbitrary and draconian system could not continue indefinitely. In 1965, a young Rapanui school teacher, who had been one of the first Islanders to be permitted an off-island education at the end of the previous decade, challenged the naval repression. In the end, under the Christian Democrat government of Eduardo Frei, Rapanui became a civil territory in 1966 and remains so today. So opened the modern era of regular air services, tourism and freedom of movement for the Rapanui throughout the island as well as away from it. And even during the bloody seventeen-year dictatorship of Pinochet, Rapanui remained relatively free – perhaps because of the general public affection it had by now inspired. Articles about Rapanui regularly appear in the Chilean press; tourism there is popular but by no means mass. Films, documentaries and even a Chilean TV soap have been made there.

In the last ten years, there have been two main planks in Chilean government policy towards Rapanui. First, and most noticeably during the dictatorship, Rapanui was characterised as a ‘trampoline’ from which Chile could project itself into the Pacific region and find new markets in Asia and Australia. When Chile was a pariah state, it used Rapanui to gain observer status in some Pacific and international forums. And, just as in the nineteenth century it was argued that Rapanui had strategic significance for Chile, so it still is today, with regular patrols from the Chilean navy. Yet practical implementation to give effect to this strategic importance has been minimal. After decades of plans and promises, Rapanui still has no safe anchorage, much less even a minimal port. Only the national police force has a sizeable contingent on Rapanui; the permanent naval presence consists of a rubber dinghy for rescue operations, the air force has no planes and the army no weapons for its few Islander conscripts. Naval proposals to erect a lighthouse on the island reflect Rapanui’s symbolic, rather than its practical, importance to Chile.

The other main feature of current Chilean government policy is that of ‘Chileanisation’, a locally badged version of the general colonial policy of assimilation, and which also encompasses the promotion of Rapanui language and culture. Prior to 1966, during the period of the military domination of the island, the local language

was not permitted in schools, it was banned in any official context (this was subsequently relaxed to its simply being discouraged); even hymns sung at Mass were only sung in Tahitian! Chileanisation responds to the accusation of abandonment that many Rapanui adults have hurled at the Chilean government over the years – many alive today can still remember the public floggings by the navy, the humiliations of daily discipline and the material poverty of the not too distant past. Today, the Chilean government finances a bureaucracy of more than one hundred Chilean public servants and some Rapanui ones. The present and previous governor were both highly educated Islanders; there is an almost daily airline service at peak summer times. Anyone with the money can have a direct dial telephone in their home, connected to the world by satellite. Television, which used to come on tapes from a station in Santiago, is now broadcast directly by satellite – and there is the internet. The Chilean government has also recently promised Rapanui its own television station. Cars and motorbikes abound; there is a local school, including a high school, a well-equipped (with telemedicine) hospital and institutions to care for children and old people. Commerce is open and free, with Rapanui owning virtually all the businesses for local supply and tourism, sometimes in partnership with Chileans. Some two-thirds of the land is still in government hands, though there have been a few small shifts to greater private ownership since the 1980s. And a 1998 law now permits Rapanui to apply for title to government-owned land.

The result of all the above is the complete transformation of a repressed backwater, with strong cultural and linguistic ties, to a well-connected tourist destination with Chilean speech and ways replacing local ones. Most marriages today take place between Rapanui and outsiders, mainly Chileans. Not surprisingly, despite the teaching of Rapanui language and folklore in the local school and the number of projects, spearheaded by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, to promote Rapanui literature, the language is in decline among the younger generation. One recent study showed that only about 25 per cent of children at the local school use Rapanui as their daily language. The home language of mixed couples is, of course, Spanish and as the children of these mixed marriages mature, their goals are to obtain qualifications which give them access to Chile and the world beyond. Knowing how to fish or to recount a Rapanui legend will not get you a job in Santiago or Sydney.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that, among the young, two classes and cultures are beginning to develop. There are still Rapanui who ride horses, wear fairly rough local clothing, are still able to catch shore fish and live off the land when they are not working in tourism. These mainly young men survive with very little cash. If there is any

population whose occasional labour is exploited, it is this group of itinerants, casually employed by commercial and tourism interests. But there are also developing very sophisticated young Rapanui, whose knowledge of the culture, language and history of the island is slight. Their skills are not those of riding, fishing, living off the land but lie in the Spanish language and Chilean culture. Their employment is in the public service or in managing tourism.

Present policies both give and take away. On the one hand, they offer an individual equality before the state and a chance in a larger, even world-wide, community. But, by their very existence, the advantages they offer, they draw that individual and consequently their group away from the local and towards the global. The grandparents of today's generation, whom I knew when I first did fieldwork on Rapanui from 1972–4, are very different from those who are running the island today. And the grandchildren of today's community leaders will be very different again. Perhaps by then, they will be signing up for the heritage and language classes to recover again that lost past.

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Note to Subscribers

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Book reviews

No One to Blame? In pursuit of justice in South Africa

By GEORGE BIZOS (Cape Town, David Philip and Bellville, Mayibuye Books, 1998) 246pp. R80.00.

Mother to Mother

By SINDIWE MAGONA (Cape Town, David Philip, 1998) 210 pp. R59.95.

'[That] the act, omission or offence to which the application relates is an act associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past . . .' and that 'the applicant has made a full disclosure of all relevant facts' – these two criteria were crucial to the amnesty application process legislated by South Africa's Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No 34 of 1995. That Act provided the framework for the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) into 'gross human rights abuses' committed during apartheid's years between 1960 and 1994; in addition to the committee hearing reports on human rights violations and the committee addressing questions of reparation and rehabilitation, the TRC included an Amnesty Committee empowered to grant – or to deny – amnesty to individuals who made application and whose representation met the above two criteria.

The TRC's final report was released in five volumes in October 1998, but the amnesty hearings continued into early 1999. In January

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1999, the committee hearing the application of Gideon Niewoudt for amnesty for the 'killing of Mr Steven Bantu Biko' announced its decision to deny the applicant's request, maintaining that 'Mr Biko's death did not occur as a result of achieving or contributing towards countering political opposition'. A month later, in February 1999, a second committee denied amnesty to four other officers involved in Biko's death, basing its decision on the grounds that his killing 'was not associated with a political objective', that the applicants had not made a 'full disclosure' and that the 'killing of Biko was wholly disproportionate to any possible objective pursued by the applicants'. As in the Niewoudt decision, it was determined that the 'attack on Biko had been actuated by ill-will or spite towards him'. In 1997, however, another of the many amnesty committees, this one meeting in Cape Town, did grant amnesty to the four young men who had admitted to and been convicted of the 1993 murder in Guguletu township of Amy Biehl, a Fulbright scholar from the United States who had been working throughout the previous year in South Africa. That committee determined that the young men's 'crime was related to a political objective' and that the applicants had made the required 'full disclosure of all the relevant facts'.

The transcripts of these hearings, like the amnesty decisions that resulted from them, tell powerful stories, but there is still much to be told and, indeed, other ways of telling such things. The death of Steve Biko in detention in 1977 is central to George Bizos's *No One to Blame? In pursuit of justice in South Africa*, an account by the celebrated lawyer of his inquiries over more than three decades of practice in South Africa into the 'cases of people who died at the hands of the state'. And it is the case of Amy Biehl that provides the grounds for the story in Sindiwe Magona's docu-fiction *Mother to Mother*, a narrative recounted in the voice of the mother of one of the perpetrators speaking to Mrs Biehl. 'My son killed your daughter', her story begins. 'People look at me as though I did it. The generous ones as though I made him do it. As though I could make that child do anything.'

George Bizos introduces *No One to Blame?* with the admonition that the 'book was at an advanced stage in 1995 when [he] began to have doubts whether completing it before the amnesty process was put into operation might present an incomplete picture of what had happened'. But following that same 'amnesty process', the title's question mark – for want of 'full disclosure' – would seem to remain, the 'picture of what happened' still 'incomplete'. 'No one to blame', the phrase is the leitmotif of the book, cited in chapter after chapter as the lawyer listens to the state's purported self-exculpatory explanations – always, in other words, 'no one to blame' – of multiple deaths, first in detention and subsequently by hit squads, a ubiquitous

'third force'. It is Bizos's question mark that is imperative, however, and insistently overrides that claim. The six chapters of *No One to Blame?* trace the transformation of the apartheid state's practices 'from deaths of political detainees to political assassinations'. 'From Ngudle to Timol' follows the inquests into the deaths of such activists as Looksmart Ngudle (1963), Suliman Salojee (1964), James Lankoe (1969), Imam Abdullah Haron (1969) and Ahmed Timol (1971); in each case according to the findings at the inquest, meticulously narrated by Bizos, there was 'no one to blame'. 'The passion of Biko' follows that discussion and the questioning persists, on another register still, for, according to Bizos, Biko's death 'robbed South Africa of one of its finest sons. He would surely have occupied a senior position in the government of a democratic South Africa'; and with regard to the question of 'damages' to be paid to the family, raised during the civil case, Bizos speculates: 'It would be interesting to ask Judge Frank Kirk-Cohen now what the earnings of Biko might have been in the new South Africa'. In another conversation, the question comes up of 'what portfolio would have been assigned to Biko in Mandela's government', at which 'one guest mused, "Might it not have been the other way round?"' Neil Hudson Aggett, a trade union activist, was the first white person to die in detention, in 1982. In the case of Simon Mndawe in 1983, it was the 'same old story. A detainee assaulted, his complaints ignored, medical treatment withheld, inadequate supervision. The result – death – followed by a farcical investigation by a colleague of those who had probably caused his death.' Then there is the evidence from Dr Jonathan Gluckman, who had 'performed autopsies on many people who had died in police custody'. And, finally, the case of the Cradock Four and the revelations from 'documents mistakenly left unshredded after 1990', concerning the activities of the death squads, and the government's doctrine of 'total onslaught' in the latter part of the 1980s, with its accompanying new vocabulary: 'neutralise', 'eliminate', or '*permanent uit die samelewing verwyder* (permanently remove from society)'. *No One to Blame?* calls for another vocabulary still, an interrogatory that still asks for answers, for a 'full disclosure.'

Mandisa, the mother of Mxolisi (the name means 'peacemaker'), asks another question – hypothetical, rhetorical, but no less real – of Mrs Biehl, Amy's mother: 'But, let me ask you something: what was she doing, vagabonding all over Guguletu, of all places taking her foot where she had no business? Where did she think she was going? Was she not blind to see there were no white people in this place?' What began as her next-to-last day in South Africa ended as Amy Biehl's last day in the country. The car in which she was driving some of her friends, 'comrades' they would say later, home to the township of Guguletu, was intercepted by chanting, toyi-toyi-ing

youths, recently exited from a political meeting in which they had been put, as one of them described it at the amnesty hearing, 'in high spirits' and so were 'highly politically motivated' by the slogans and speeches they had just heard. 'One settler, one bullet', they chanted. The car and its occupants were stoned and Amy, fleeing, was stabbed to death. 'Oh, why did she not stay out? Why did she not stay out?' Mandisa pleads. But *Mother to Mother* is also Mandisa's story, a tale of the 'forced removals' that had brought her as a child to Guguletu – a name which means 'our pride', but which the residents translated instead as Gugulabo ('their pride'). 'What was she doing here, your daughter? What made her come to this, of all places. Not an army of mad elephants would drag me here, if I were her.'

But something no less brutal than an army of mad elephants had indeed bullied and dragged Mandisa there, the bulldozers and police vehicles of the apartheid state, as it cleared the land for its own purposes. As Sindiwe Magona, in the author's preface, describes the story that is to follow:

are there lessons to be learned from knowing something of the other world? The reverse of such benevolent and nurturing entities as those that throw up the Amy Biehls, the Andrew Goodmans, and other young people of that quality? What was the world of this young woman's killers, the world of those, young as she was young, whose environment failed to nurture them in the higher ideals of humanity and who, instead, became lost creatures of malice and destruction?

Was there 'no one to blame'?

Mother to Mother's narrative moves, on the one hand, between the hours of the two days, 25 and 26 August 1993, the day of Amy Biehl's death, that is, and then the next day the apprehension of the son, the murderer, and, on the other, the longer historical trajectory, the story of apartheid's assault on the black people of South Africa, from forced removals to police repression, a tale that must include the deaths in detention and political assassinations described by George Bizos. There is much blame to be apportioned here, as well as amnesties to be granted and denied, and perhaps further, fuller disclosures yet, in the personal accounts of political processes, such as those rendered in the details of inquests in *No One to Blame?* and a mother's appeal in *Mother to Mother*.

George Bizos has continued to represent the families of the victims in the TRC's amnesty hearings, the Slovo daughters, for example, and the late Marius Schoon, as the murderers of Ruth First (Slovo) and Jeannette and Katryn Schoon apply for amnesty. And Peter and Linda Biehl, parents of Amy, now divide their time between their home in the United States and South Africa, where they have

established the Amy Biehl Foundation, to continue their daughter's work in the townships around Cape Town. The TRC's amnesty hearings concluded in March 1999; there remain still questions of reparation, and both the TRC and the current ANC government have rejected the idea of 'collective amnesties', anticipating now a new era of prosecuting the 'crimes against humanity' committed under apartheid rule. Someone to blame?

University of Texas at Austin

BARBARA HARLOW

The Great Deception: Anglo-American power and world order

By MARK CURTIS (London, Pluto Press, 1998) 260pp. £14.99.

'Why', asked Chancellor of the Exchequer Stafford Cripps of his colleagues in the 1945–51 Labour government, 'do we support reactionary, selfish and corrupt governments in the Middle East, instead of leaders who have the interests of their people at heart?' Well, in his latest book Mark Curtis provides the answer, and much more. His earlier volume, *The Ambiguities of Power* (1995) was essential reading and now he has followed it up with a timely study of the Anglo-American relationship and its part in the shaping of the post-1945 world. At a time when Tony Blair and New Labour are determined to proclaim their subordination to American foreign policy interests, this is particularly pertinent.

Britain and America, Curtis argues, have done most to shape the international order since 1945. They bear the greatest responsibility for creating and sustaining a situation where three-quarters of the world's population live in terrible poverty on an average income of two dollars a day, while a small greedy elite prospers. In the world the Anglo-American alliance has made, the richest fifth of the world's population account for 84.7 per cent of the world's GNP, while the poorest fifth have only 1.4 per cent. Quite staggeringly, the richest ten people in Britain have as much wealth for themselves as twenty-three of the poorest countries with a joint population of 174 million people. This has not happened by chance or accident, but is the outcome, the successful outcome, of policies deliberately pursued over the years with great determination and ruthlessness by successive British and American governments.

British governments, both Labour and Conservative, have, Curtis insists, implemented policies 'that are in effect quite consistently abhorrent'. Support for transnational corporations, the fostering of the arms trade, assistance for repressive and reactionary regimes, have been the norm. It was astonishing, he points out, that when Lynda Chalker, the former Conservative minister for overseas

development proclaimed that 'by common consent, the United Kingdom makes one of the most significant contributions to the alleviation of poverty in the developing world', her words were taken seriously by the media, rather than greeted with hysterical laughter. Much the same response is deserved by the pieties of her New Labour successor, Clare Short, who talks of alleviating world poverty while a member of a government wholeheartedly committed to the interests of big business.

Curtis's book is divided into four sections. The first is a general examination of the symmetries of British and American foreign policy since 1945. The second looks at Anglo-American control of the world economic order, at the creation of an international environment designed to allow the transnational corporations to exploit and profit to their greatest advantage. The huge success of this project is amply demonstrated by the fact that the aggregate sales of the world's ten largest companies exceed the aggregate GNP of the world's 100 smallest countries. Capital rides roughshod over the interests of the overwhelming majority of the world's population.

The third section examines Anglo-American efforts to control the Middle East and its oil resources. The danger here was never communism but, rather, that the region's wealth might be used for the benefit of its population. Successive British and American governments have been determined to prevent this, sustaining in power some of the most disgusting regimes, mostly notably the Saudi monarchy. Indeed, today, Saudi Arabia invests some 80 per cent of its oil revenues in the United States. While the mass of the region's population live in poverty, a corrupt elite that has squandered billions of dollars on its own personal consumption, is sustained in power by the West. King Fahd alone had a personal fortune estimated at \$28 billion. British politicians, both Conservative and Labour, have courted these people; in the infamous case of the senior Conservative cabinet minister, Jonathan Aitken, actually pimping for them!

The last section focuses on US manipulation of the United Nations and on Britain's disgraceful role in the Rwanda genocide. 'That Britain was a major obstacle to international action over Rwanda should come', he writes, 'as no surprise'. He is, of course, quite right.

One criticism however: Curtis insists that Britain is still 'a global power', that it has power and influence independent of its alliance with the United States. Certainly this was the case in the 1940s and 1950s and even, to some extent, in the 1960s, but it hardly seems the case today. He does not effectively sustain this proposition. Moreover this reader, at least, was left with the feeling that the conduct of British policy was made all the more contemptible by the enthusiasm with which British governments were, and still are, prepared to play jackal to the American predator.

The Great Deception is a powerful, compelling book that presents a convincing argument bolstered by archival research and declassified materials. It leaves the reader outraged at the hypocrisy and duplicity of British politicians and officials, at the reactionary nature of the policies they have followed. One can only look forward to a future book on Robin Cook and New Labour's foreign and defence policies.

Bath University

JOHN NEWSINGER

After Moruroa: France in the South Pacific

By NIC MACLELLAN and JEAN CHESNEAUX (Melbourne and New York, Ocean Press, 1998) 280pp. £12.95.

As the European Union moves towards the creation of a European defence force, can the various EU countries – most notably at odds over what action to take in the former Yugoslavia – really unite around a common European defence policy? Not only do the major European powers have their own particular histories of colonialism to contend with, but such histories inevitably give rise to modern rivalries as various EU nation states pursue different economic and foreign policy interests across the globe. The authors of *After Moruroa: France in the South Pacific* have done a brilliant job in relating France's colonial history in the South Pacific – from Louis Antoine de Bougainville's 1768 expedition to Tahiti and the voyages of the first navigators – to its global and economic interests in the region today. And it is Maclellan and Chesneaux's ability to weave between past and present which makes this book such an engaging read.

In charting France's presence in the South Pacific from the eighteenth century to the present day, where France claims sovereignty over New Caledonia, Wallis and Futana and French Polynesia, Maclellan and Chesneaux are at pains to stress that France never really decolonised its possessions. Indeed, the brutal suppression of independence movements, from the 1878 revolt of Chief Ataï in New Caledonia to the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front in the 1980s, is just one of the book's many, occasionally competing, themes. Other themes explored include the connection between French colonialism and nuclear testing and the cultural construction of the Pacific by French artists and writers, from the Marquis de Sade (who set his 1793 novel *Alvine et Valcourt* in Tahiti) to Paul Gauguin (who came to Polynesia seeking a sweet life in the House of Delight and broke his health and spirit in the process) and Jules Verne, who used the Pacific in novels such as *Around the World in 80 Days* and *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* as a 'symbol for the

human conquest of the planet and the mastery of space through technical conquest’.

Important though such narratives are, they do not constitute *After Moruroa*’s main theme: the passage from the early colonialism (from expeditions to annexations and the establishment of the penal colony in New Caledonia in 1863) to postcolonial forms of domination. Embedded in this key narrative is a description of the centrality that France’s need to retain sovereignty over its former colonies plays in French political life, the consideration of which adds substantially to an understanding of French nationalism and racism as it is played out today. After the creation of the *Union française* in 1946, France’s former colonies (renamed ‘overseas territories’ and ‘overseas departments’) were allowed to elect representatives to the National Assembly and the Senate but were governed from France through the ‘DOM-TOM system’ which ensured constitutional and economic dependence on the French state. It is easy to laugh at the ludicrous patriotism of Le Pen, but the belligerence of the far Right reflects the culture of a nation which still insists that its territories in the South Pacific constitute ‘Franconesia’, an ‘extension of France at the opposite end of the planet’. And the emotional attachment to ‘Franconesia’ extends from right to left of the political spectrum, so that a Socialist activist could rant in 1987 (two years after French agents bombed the Greenpeace vessel *Rainbow Warrior*) that: ‘What we do here is of concern only to us; we have no reason to discuss it with you, and in any case, we are right because we speak the language of Descartes.’

Maclellan and Chesneaux’s major achievement is to show that this cultural arrogance does not denote the swan-song of a fading colonial power. A review of France’s present role in the South Pacific can only lead to the deeper conclusion that France is engaged in a ruthless plan to exercise control over its former colonies so as to maintain its role as a ‘medium-sized world power’. After Algeria gained independence in 1962, France transferred its nuclear test site from the Algerian Sahara to Moruroa atoll where the first atmospheric tests began in 1966, culminating in eight underground nuclear tests in 1996. Far from these being simple muscle-flexing exercises, France has shrewdly used its possession of an independent nuclear deterrent to ensure that it retained a seat on the UN Security Council and played a central role, alongside Germany, in shaping the EU. Now, as nuclear research cedes to space research, France’s presence in the South Pacific allows it to maintain its international stature in new ways. For example, its network of South Pacific research institutes, specialising in research into the exploitation of sea and atomic energy, the promotion of aquaculture and satellite monitoring, ensures that France is well placed to be at the cutting edge of a new colonial scramble to dominate the earth’s oceans and outer space.

Thus, the DOM-TOM system, far from being an attempt by a fading power to hold on to its territories, may well prove France's making as a twenty-first century world power. For only the US and Russia control more maritime territory than France whose DOM-TOM system ensures territorial sovereignty and a strategic military presence in the Caribbean and Indian Oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific. Just as the early navigators pirated the flora of the South Pacific, French scientists today are venturing into biopiracy. The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea established a maritime domain (marked by a radius of 200 nautical miles around each point), over which a state exercises sovereignty and maintains responsibility for exploration, exploitation, conservation and management of all ocean resources. Ironically, these Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) were meant to protect Third World states from the greed of western industrialised countries, but it is France which is reaping much of the benefit in the South Pacific. And the economic significance for France is that much of its Pacific EEZ is located in a rich tropical zone with abundant deposits of sea-bed nodules containing strategic metals such as cobalt, nickel, manganese and copper, vital to the new twenty-first century mining industries, not at the coal face this time but on the sea bed.

After Moruroa is an important book containing a vast amount of material – the accumulation of which at times mars the book's clarity. Nevertheless, the authors and Australian-based Ocean Press (which is distributed in Europe by Global Book Marketing) must be congratulated for throwing a powerful beam of light on a little-known aspect of French colonialism.

Institute of Race Relations

LIZ FEKETE

Other Kinds of Dreams: black women's organisations and the politics of transformation

By JULIA SUDBURY (London, Routledge, 1998), 282pp. £15.99.

Julia Sudbury's study of black women's organisation could not be more timely, particularly for the generation of black women whose politics were forged at the interface of the militant black consciousness and the emergent feminism of the 1970s. Her painstaking research into this fertile, yet arcane, history provides conclusive evidence of the centrality of black women's activism to the struggles and achievements of black communities here in Britain over the past thirty years. It also provides a critical insight into the complex and often contradictory character of those struggles against an ever-present backdrop

of entrenched institutional racism, oppressive gender relations and endemic class exploitation.

The resonance of *Other Kinds of Dreams* lies both in its fearless ability to name our demons and the realism with which it confronts them. With the skill of one who appears genuinely at ease with her subject, Sudbury has succeeded in laying bare the at once painful, yet exhilarating, processes that helped shape black women's multifarious responses to 'gendered racism and racialised sexism'. Her analysis of the uniquely British context in which the validity of those responses has been tried and tested is as thorough as it is unflinching.

Using the diverse experiences of women of Asian and African descent who have been active agents in the quest for a practice that would transcend narrow definitions of black womanhood, she interrogates every facet of that experience. Her scrutiny of contemporary theories of racism, racialisation and feminism combines with an incisive analysis of the politics of difference and identity to pose fundamental questions about competing definitions of blackness, unity and community activism. In doing so, she challenges us to rethink many of the alliances and coalitions on which black struggles for social transformation have been founded. As she unpacks the socio-economic barriers and political contradictions with which black women have contended, she leads us towards a radical and transformative vision of a new, increasingly transnational, landscape, where race, nationality, gender, sexuality and class can interact in less fractious ways.

Not all of Sudbury's insights are uncontentious. Her over-reliance on the perspective of black lesbians who attended OWAAD's 1981 conference leads to a partial account of its demise that does little justice to the complexities of the organisation or its era. The homophobia of a small yet vocal minority is assumed to represent the body politic, and, not for the first time, resistance in the aftermath of the 1981 uprisings to an identity politics associated with white feminist introspection is cited as conclusive evidence of OWAAD's 'overt hostility' to a black lesbian agenda.

Given the paucity of research and public debate by black women in Britain over the past decade, such skewed conclusions are perhaps inevitable. There are undoubtedly other versions and perspectives that have yet to be voiced. Sudbury's ground-breaking work seeks to break this silence, and represents a call to the many other black women who have lived the realities she explores to give voice to their experiences and the political forces that have shaped them.

London

STELLA DADZIE

King: a street story

By JOHN BERGER (London, Bloomsbury, 1999) 256pp. £14.99.

John Berger is a European in the true sense of a maligned word. Born in England, living in France, the frontiers of his own humanity open to all people and all species too, his new novel does what all new novels should do – takes the real world and offers it truth, reason, the imagination and hope.

Beside a rampaging, filth-spewing motorway, on the poisoned ground of rubbish-filled debris in the badlands of an unnamed city, a disparate group of homeless Europeans have pitched their shanties and used the trash of civilised living to build the dwellings which shelter them from normal life and normal people. In a reality where 'the barbarism of today grabs everything across the world whilst it promises promises and talks of freedom' but offers destitution, tyranny and death to millions, John Berger has pitched his own bivouac of truth and written a profound novel of our times.

Across this toxic wasteland, a dog called King walks from dwelling to dwelling, denizen to denizen, offering a warmth and comradeship that it seems that 'normal' human beings trapped in this world of money and consuming cannot bring. At least, the reader assumes King is a dog – for he has assumed, too, the best, most loyal and loving dimensions of humanity – or perhaps it is his caninity, his very dogness, that is the stronger force. His growl becomes a message of courage. His bark announces, 'I'm here', always with you. He connects the squatters, makes lifelines between them and offers a fusing love between Vico and Vica, the camp's oldest dwellers. 'We are being wiped off the earth; not the face of the earth, the face we lost long ago, but the arse of the earth. We are their mistake.'

Their mistake, which must be rectified. So when this stygian site is bought by investors, its people must be evicted; there must be a ritualistic 'wiping out' by mobile guards with their Famas sub-machine guns and giant Crawler to bulldoze them into oblivion. In a denouement of brave resistance and tenacious wilfulness, the squatters fight their eviction, with King, the dog, diving and running like a four-legged Mercury between their emplacements and trenches, bringing communication and hope.

King's dreams are of comfort, comradeship and freedom. As he trots across this despoiled earth, he 'dreams of a night when the poor are rich' and his every act is to strategise and secure warmth and solidarity between these rejected ones – who have also rejected the chaos of selfishness and tyranny which they see beyond them in these years around the millennium.

Berger's tale of truth and struggle, and its subliminal humanity, reminded me of an incident a few weeks ago when the National

Express coach to the north that I was travelling on approached the start of the M1, across the maze of overpasses, concrete bridges and intersecting ramps. On another section of grim, polluted land, a man had built a dwelling of corrugated iron, discarded wood and blocks of polystyrene. The middle-aged coach hostess asked the driver to slow down. As the coach stopped, she jumped out, strode up to the squatter and handed him a bag of sandwiches. In front of fifty tired and random travelling humans, she had shown the best of humanity, making, as Berger writes it, 'a story in another life' that is this very life too.

King does the same, from the body and spirit of a dog, yet transmuted to the hope of humans, and the stamina they will need to contest this new European barbarism – as much a part of Britain, too, as it ever was. Prophetic and teeming with insight about our times, *King* is an epochal novel.

Goldsmith's College

CHRIS SEARLE

Rethinking Northern Ireland: culture, ideology and colonialism

Edited by DAVID MILLER (Harlow, Longman, 1999) 344pp. £17.99.

Rethinking Northern Ireland, by its very title, implies a new approach to its subject matter, but for some of us the views expressed in this book have been held for many years now. Briefly, there is a colonial dimension to the political conflict in the North of Ireland, Britain is not an objective outsider keeping the peace, and discrimination continues to underpin much of the political and economic life of the North of Ireland.

And yet this book adds much to our understanding by bringing such critiques up to date and applying them to new areas, as well as offering a thorough and diverse introduction to those who have come to the study of the North for the first time. Crucially, it offers a strongly argued and well referenced rebuttal to the dominant stories of the 'Troubles', whether they emanate from state, academic or broadcasting mainstreams, which hold that the conflict is based on religious/tribal/ethnic differences.

The book opens strongly, with a contribution from Miller which not only makes the case for recognising the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland as a key to understanding the conflict, but offers a hefty critique of academic institutions, practices and publications, which, unsurprisingly but disappointingly, tend not only to identify with, but are often at the forefront of defending, the status quo. Another strength of the book is its range of study which includes racism, media, feminism, Irish nationalism, unionism, the settler/

native dichotomy, security and the economy. I will concentrate on a couple of areas rather than attempt a comprehensive coverage, but would note the rigour which permeates most of the book.

Desmond Bell's analysis of the burgeoning heritage industry contrasts 'The road to Northern Ireland' exhibition in Derry's Tower Museum with the Irish Famine Museum in Strokestown, Roscommon. 'The road' is an attempt to tell history from two perspectives, both portrayed as equally valid, nationalist and unionist positions. It is part of Northern Ireland's attempts to overcome conflict by 'seeing the other side'. Implicit in this reasoning, shared by the Northern Ireland Office and the majority of the North's heritage curators, is that the Troubles are, if not caused by ignorance, at least perpetuated by it. Thus, that which introduces the other side's history is healing. But to make history accessible by depoliticising it, by removing power relations from it, by always 'balancing' traditions and atrocities can appear to be a benign version of a 'curse on both your houses'; it allots blame in equal shares. But, Bell argues, that which is harnessed to the balancing act of community relations is deprived of its critical and analytical usefulness. How do you represent power and 'power over', if you are forever laying the blame at the feet of both sides?

Bill Rolston develops this point by critiquing the wider multicultural industry, whose ideology he traces to the US's attempts to undermine the growing civil rights and black power movements of the 1960s and '70s. The rise of ethnicity as an explanation for the Troubles has gained considerable credence in academic and administrative circles and, in consequence, multiculturalism has come to be offered as the solution. It can be detected in the Education for Mutual Understanding programme and the Community Relations Council, both of which espouse, in truly postmodern fashion, tolerance, diversity and difference, but become susceptible to charges of depoliticisation, pseudo-psychology, relativism, reductionism and social engineering.

Carol Coulter repudiates the argument that loyalism and republicanism are mirror images of each other and that both are inimical to women's emancipation. She draws upon theories of colonialism and histories of anti-colonialism to establish that women have always played a major part in movements of national liberation, and the fact that nationalist movements have served them poorly once in power does not negate their importance to women in a colonial situation. She also defends the usually derided role of family in women's attempts to maintain some power in an otherwise powerless world. While acknowledging the tendency of families to reproduce the hierarchies of the coloniser, these spaces are also sources of cultural and political solidarity, operating as alternatives to the colonial public

spaces which are only open to those who betray something essential in themselves.

Robbie McVeigh reaffirms the continuing importance of colonialism as a structuring element in contemporary British and Irish society. He also draws on an analysis of racism to shed more light on sectarianism, that much used and abused term. Whereas multiculturalism would utilise 'sectarianism' to describe equally undesirable attributes, if not essentialisms, of the conflict, McVeigh restores the notion of power to the term and links it to colonialism – thereby drawing parallels between racism and sectarianism, without falling into the trap of equating the two. The comparisons he draws are most useful for the theorising of sectarianism, which is comparatively under-theorised, while the interface between racism and religion may benefit from the insights into sectarianism.

Despite some less developed sections, such as those on the media and what is referred to as 'participatory democracy', *Rethinking Northern Ireland* is a useful work, leaving the reader with a healthy desire for more enquiry.

Belfast

CAHAL McLAUGHLIN

Fascism: theory and practice

By DAVE RENTON (London, Pluto Press, 1999) 150pp. £10.99.

The recent re-emergence in Europe and North America of fascist parties and movements has prompted increased academic interest in 'fascism studies' at university level. Ironically, this has not led to deeper understanding of the phenomenon of fascism, or an explanation of why movements of the 1920s and '30s should reappear now. In fact, it has, argues Renton, led to the re-examination of historical fascism in ways that can obscure, rather than illuminate, our understanding of modern fascism. The failure to understand and oppose fascism in the 1920s and 1930s, he goes on, had disastrous consequences then and a similar failure today could have parallel dangers.

For Renton, fascism is best understood as 'a specific form of reactionary mass movement'. However, before outlining his own conclusions, his first task is to challenge the new consensus on the ideology of fascism and to take apart each one of the various ideological accounts of what fascism was and is. Mussolini was fascist but Hitler wasn't; fascism is a sort of social democratic revision of Marxism; fascism has no common class basis for support: these are only three of the more outlandish notions expounded in 'fascism studies' that the author sets out to confront.

In order 'to analyse fascism as an active force within society', Renton has to account for all the seemingly contradictory facets of fascism which are either ignored or neglected by other, self-referential, theories of fascism. Fascism is in its rhetoric anti-capitalist, yet in power it acts to stabilise society so as to protect and promote the capitalist system; under fascism, capitalists appear to have lost political power, yet the social system they dominate remains; fascism is based on a mass movement, the core of which is drawn from the middle classes, yet the middle classes do not prosper under fascist rule; and so on. To explain these myriad contradictions, the author, a Marxist, turns first to the Marxist theorists of the 1920s and 1930s who first attempted to grapple with fascism theoretically and practically.

He identifies three distinct Marxist analyses, Left, Right and dialectical, which all have their counterparts today. The Left theory of fascism, associated initially with the Left factions of the Italian (PCI) and German Communist Parties (KPD) in the 1920s, saw fascism as an elite movement and as a form of state coercion designed to smash the workers' movement; essentially it was 'a trick in the hands of the capitalist ruling class'. This crude and simplistic view of fascism not only neglected the mass character of fascist parties, it also did not 'separate fascist reaction from any other form of reaction under capitalism'. In its later variant, this theory underpinned the complacency of the KPD in the face of Hitler's rise to power. The Right theory of fascism originated in the Italian Socialist Party in the early 1920s and, as against the Left theory, stressed the mass support and consent given by the 'petty bourgeoisie' of Italy to fascism. Fascism was not simply a movement of big capitalists, it was a middle-class movement prompted by the aggressive demands of the Left, an exceptional phenomenon in an otherwise stable capitalism. The passive conclusion to be drawn from such an analysis was that all that was necessary was to wait until the capitalist class reverted to more ordinary methods of rule. In the hands of the German Social Democrats (SPD) confronted with the growth of Nazism, this Right theory led to the SPD relying on the conservative establishment, Hindenburg and Papen, to resist Hitler. Moreover, the Right, in blaming the excesses of the Left as one of the principal causes of fascism, was as anxious about the growth of the KPD as it was about the Nazi Party. At the same time, the KPD took the Left view to extremes, identifying the SPD as social fascists. Thus, mutual antagonism, rather than unity in the face of their common enemy, was the order of the day, with the result that the day was Hitler's.

The third theory of fascism, the dialectical, is, not surprisingly, the one favoured and developed by Renton. He identifies its origins in the early debates of the Comintern in 1923; it was then later developed in the late 1920s and early '30s by, among others, August Thalheimer,

Ignazio Silone, Antonio Gramsci and Leon Trotsky. Among these theorists, dialectical analysis in its most rounded form is found, in Renton's view, in the ideas of Trotsky. 'Fascism, he argued, was a product of contradictory circumstances, of the tension between the crisis of the elites and failures of the socialist parties. The social base of fascism was itself in antagonism, the petty bourgeoisie asserted its anger against capital by crushing the single class that could defeat capitalism.' For Trotsky, the answer to the rise of fascism was a United Front tactic, similar to that of Gramsci. But it was a tactic that was largely ignored and, according to Renton, is not to be confused with the 'Popular Front' tactic, belatedly adopted by the Comintern from the mid-1930s onwards. The Popular Front is seen as a variant on the Right theory of fascism and relies on the unity of all non-fascists, even conservative parties, to defeat fascism.

Turning to the more modern Left theories of fascism – such as those of Miliband, Poulantzas, Mason and Vajda – Renton derides Poulantzas' explanation as 'befuddled by the several contradictory levels of explanation' and reaffirms his own preference for a dialectical interpretation. And, by way of conclusion, he proposes a dialectical model which takes in the three elements of fascism as a reactionary ideology, an independent mass movement, and a phenomenon with a 'disparity between ideology and movement' at its very heart.

This is an excellent little book. Even when Renton controversially designates regimes and parties as fascist (the RSS in India) or non-fascist (Franco's regime in Spain), he does so in terms of his clear definition of fascism. The book is genuinely thought provoking and, refreshingly, demonstrates that while its author is taking on the academics of 'fascism studies', he is neither offering the last word on the subject nor proposing that fascism be re-examined completely from scratch.

London

DANNY REILLY

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