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The past in the present

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Contributions

Contributions, editorial and advertising correspondence and books for review should be sent to: The Institute of Race Relations, 2–6 Leeke Street, King's Cross Road, London WC1X 9HS, UK. Fax: +44 (0)20 7278 0623; Tel: +44 (0)20 7837 0041, email: raceandclass@irr.org.uk.

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Doing reparatory history: bringing 'race' and slavery home

CATHERINE HALL

Abstract: This article asks whether history writing can be reparatory. Opening with a discussion of the bi-centenary of the abolition of the slave trade in 2007 and the national conversation that was created at that time, it goes on to reflect on contestations over memory and the significance of the emergence of reparations as a key term with which to think about the wrongs of the past and the possibilities of repair. It uses a discussion of the author's individual and collaborative historical work to argue for the importance of a different understanding of Britain's involvement in the slavery business and our responsibilities, as beneficiaries, of the gross inequalities associated with slavery and colonialism.

Keywords: collective memory, disavowal, historical wrongs, Legacies of British Slave-ownership project, Macaulay, 'race', reparation, slavery

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Catherine Hall is Emerita Professor of History and Chair of the Centre for the Study of British Slave-ownership at University College London. Her recent work has focused on the relation between Britain and its empire: *Civilising Subjects* (2002), *Macaulay and Son* (2012) and Hall et al., *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* (2014). She is a member of the *History Workshop Journal* collective.

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What is reparatory history?
What does it mean to do it in Britain?
This essay reflects on some of the ways in which the histories of 'race' and slavery have figured in the recent past in Britain. It argues that debates on reparation need to include questions about the historical narratives on 'race' and empire that have been and are being produced. It utilises a discussion of some of my own work as a historian over the past twenty years to think about what history that was reparative might look like.

Creating a national conversation

The bi-centenary of the abolition of the slave trade in 2007 provoked what could be described as a 'national conversation' in the United Kingdom.[1] This had happened before: at the end of the eighteenth century, pro-slavers and abolitionists engaged in fierce debate and polemic culminating in the abolition of the trade in 1807. The hope that once the trade had been dismantled slavery would disappear was soon shown to be an illusion, and this led to the activism of the 1820s, once again challenged by the pro-slavers. The major revolt of 1831 in Jamaica combined with popular pressure across the country brought about the Act of 1833 abolishing slavery in the British Caribbean, Mauritius and the Cape. During 2007, once again, the question of British responsibility for the enslavement of Africans became a subject of mainstream political and cultural debate. The context for this re-awakening was the major changes which had taken place in British society since the late 1940s, the scale of the African-Caribbean presence, the turbulent politics of race particularly in the wake of the killing of Stephen Lawrence (1993) and the Macpherson Report (1999) recognising the significance of institutional racism in the police, and the pressing questions from second and third generation young people as to whether it was possible to be black and British. In 2007 the bi-centenary provided an opportunity to re-open questions about the slave trade and slavery. Anti-racists had a number of different political agendas but were perhaps united in their hopes for new political and educational initiatives that would tackle persistent racism and repair historic wrongs.

Blair's New Labour government looked to the future and advocated the idea of a modern multicultural Britain. The limits of their commitment were all too apparent, however, in the response to the Parekh Report of 2000, *The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain*, which discussed 'the many varieties of racism and exclusion that disfigure modern Britain and that have been woven into the fabric of British history for many centuries'.[2] The report provoked a furore in the rightwing press. Jack Straw, the then Home Secretary who had supported the establishment of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain by the Runnymede Trust, backtracked, effectively abandoning any efforts to follow up on the report's more radical recommendations.[3] The following year, at the World Conference against Racism held in Durban, the British government did not support Caribbean

nations' claims for reparation for slavery and the Conference Declaration was limited to acknowledging the historical and contemporary practices of the slave trade and slavery as morally outrageous.[4] That same year, Randall Robinson, an African-American lawyer, author and activist, published *The Debt: what America owes to Blacks*. This significant intervention in the US debate on reparation argued that responsibility for the terrible effects of slavery across generations, the destruction of a hereditary identity, lay with the US government and people. Restitution could and should be made.[5] Questions about racisms, reparations and historical wrongs were increasingly present in public debate across the Atlantic world.

So when it came to 2007 the government felt the need to respond. 'It is an opportunity for the United Kingdom to express our deep sorrow and regret', as prime minister Tony Blair put it, 'for our nation's role in the slave trade and for the unbearable suffering, individually and collectively, it caused.' He was very careful, however, as many pointed out, not to apologise; for an apology might have indicated historic responsibility and had material consequences.[6] 2007 gave all Britons an opportunity, he argued, to reflect on 'the spirit of freedom, justice and equality that characterised the efforts of the early abolitionists, the same spirit that drives our determination to fight injustice and inequality today'. We could 'rejoice at the different and better times we live in today'.[7] The government's chosen focus was abolition, not slavery, echoing the narrative that had been established from the early nineteenth century.[8] This was part of an updated version of the Whig story of progress, of Britain's capacity to lead the world on issues of liberty and freedom. 'There is a golden thread which runs through British history,' said Gordon Brown, 'that runs from that long-ago day in Runnymede in 1215 when arbitrary power was fully challenged with the Magna Carta, on to the first bill of rights in 1689 where Britain became the first country where parliament asserted power over the king,' to the abolition of the slave trade and on to democratic reform.[9] This was the narrative that informed the liberal humanitarian interventions of the Labour government, some of which had such disastrous effects.

While the official response to 2007 was to celebrate Britain's record, others asked, how can we *celebrate* this? Establishment figures such as cultural commentator Melvyn Bragg and former Tory leader William Hague, albeit from different political perspectives, were united in their admiration for William Wilberforce, the saintly and iconic figurehead of the abolitionists whose evangelical Christianity was central to his struggle against both slavery in the Caribbean and vice at home. A rather different perspective informed the critique of what some called the Wilberfest.[10] 'Our object', as Wilberforce had put it, 'was by ameliorating regulations, and by stopping the influx of uninstructed savages, to advance slowly towards the period when these unhappy things might exchange their degraded state of slavery for that of free and industrious peasantry.'[11] This language of 'uninstructed savages' and 'unhappy things' is redolent of the ways in which much abolitionist discourse assumed white superiority, a discourse that has had

powerful echoes into the present. At the same time, Wilberforce's vision of 'free and industrial peasants' marked the gap between conservative abolitionists such as himself, who believed in class, gender and racial hierarchies, and those radicals, Robert Wedderburn and Elizabeth Heyrick, for example, who rejected his pastoral vision of everyone in their proper place and sought not only the ending of slavery but also a transformation of society and the creation of an egalitarian world.

The 'national conversation' was greatly facilitated by the Heritage Lottery Fund's decision to commit a substantial sum, between 15 and 20 million pounds, to bi-centenary projects. The money made possible both large-scale projects such as the establishment of the New Centre for the Understanding of slavery in association with the Liverpool Museums and many small-scale initiatives, some of which have now been archived in an effort to conserve what was an extraordinary set of activities. 'Remembering 1807' (http://antislavery.ac.uk/remembering1807) reflects the ways in which hundreds of heritage groups and local organisations around the UK marked the anniversary. Museums, galleries, archives, community groups, churches, theatres and schools organised exhibitions, debates, music, dance, theatre, storytelling, poetry, film, carnivals and festivals. The BBC commissioned radio and TV programmes. Universities organised conferences, seminars and exhibitions.[12] Artists produced new materials, such as Lubaina Himid's 'Swallow Hard: the Lancaster dinner service'. Himid collected plates, jugs, tureens and dishes from local shops in Lancaster and Whitehaven, significant ports for slaving vessels. She decorated them with images of traders, ships, sailors, buildings, servants, the enslaved, maps and goods, exploring the connections between the North West and the development and abolition of the slave trade. The dinner service was initially exhibited on the splendid mahogany dining table in the Judge's Lodging in Lancaster, reminders both of the flourishing mahogany trade from Jamaica and Honduras and its importance to the development of eighteenth-century consumer society, and of the centrality of the law to class power in that period.

Contested memories

The 'national conversation' about the slave trade and slavery in 2007 marked a contestation over memory – what was to be remembered and how? It was Maurice Halbwachs in the period after the first world war who initiated much of the work on collective memory, drawing on his own experience and illuminating the ways in which memory is constructed, mediated and shaped in the social world. Individual and collective memory are always related; experiences and private recollections are tested by and shaped in encounters with collective memory. It is collective memory that constitutes social values, shapes convention, law and language. If we are haunted by past memories that are not shared by others, it can be deeply lonely and indeed alienating. 'I have shown', he argued, 'that memory is

a collective function ... If recollections reappear, this is because at each moment society possesses the necessary means to reproduce them.'[13] In 2007 the question that was being asked was what should be remembered? Was Wilberforce really the carrier of the story of abolition? Can trauma pass through generations affecting the descendants of the enslaved? If so, how? How can the different legacies be given weight and significance in the minds and cultures of people today? There will always be different perspectives and voices but which narratives would/should achieve cultural and political hegemony? Would it continue to be white abolitionists or those black abolitionists, men such as Ottobah Cugoano, kidnapped at 13 in West Africa, sold into slavery and eventually freed in England, who believed that redress would never be adequate, and drew attention to 'the incommensurability between pain and compensation'.[14] And what about the women? What about the practices of the trade and slavery itself, the hundreds and thousands of African men and women who had been transported across the Middle Passage, and sold to planters and merchants across the British Caribbean? What impact did all of this have on the lives of those in the UK? What kind of responsibility did Britons, generations later, have for those wrongs committed by their forbears? There was no common view, but many voices were raised, unsettling what had seemed to be settled narratives.[15] In that sense 2007 was a reparative moment, marking new discoveries and provoking new questions.[16]

Reparations

There is a long history of claims for reparations for the wrongs associated with slavery. As early as the 1780s there were petitions from those who had previously been enslaved. Hundreds of Quakers both freed enslaved men and women and paid them compensation. Some abolitionists argued in the nineteenth century that freedom should include compensation, some challenged the payment of compensation to slave-owners at the time of emancipation in the British Caribbean, Mauritius and the Cape.[17] Arguments were made for compensation in the US after the civil war and Marcus Garvey sought payment to descendants as part of the back to Africa movement. Congressman John Conyers, who represents Detroit, has marked every session for the last twenty-five years by introducing a bill calling for the congressional study of slavery and its lingering effects and recommending remedies.

'The subterranean stream of Western history', Hannah Arendt wrote in the immediate postwar years, 'has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our position. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of the future, are vain.'[18] Such a recognition of the weight of the past, 'that subterranean stream', marked a very different attitude from earlier periods. For Marx the past had weighed like a nightmare on the brain of the living: but it was to be transcended. It was not until the 1990s that the need

to come to terms with the past and the insistence that the legacies of the past lived on in the present became more urgent. Notions of reparation and a demand for reparative justice became a global phenomenon. The Holocaust was the most powerful symbol of the impossibility of ignoring the misdeeds of the past, and of thinking about that past as catastrophic, for it was still a living memory. Holocaust survivors, slave labourers in Nazi camps, Australian aborigines, Native Americans in Canada, Maori in New Zealand, the Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa were making claims on governments. Such claims implied a break with the idea of history as progress, that the future would always be better than the past, an idea heavily influenced by both Enlightenment stadial theory and Marxism. Now the emphasis is on reconstituting the past, in ways that enable thinking about responsibility in the present. Some have argued that this preoccupation with the past is a result of the decline of a more future-oriented and utopian politics. The combination of the horrors of Stalinism and of fascism, together with the end of the Soviet Union, the resurgence of nationalism, the unfinished work of decolonisation, the 'failures' of postcolonial states and the apparent triumph of global capitalism, have destroyed beliefs in the possibility of a transformative politics, the loss of a sense of common destiny, and a retreat into a growing concern with particular groups and claims, with victims and their rights.[19] It may be that the crisis of neoliberalism and the growing critique of capitalism and the market that characterises one aspect of our contemporary world, albeit alongside the successes of authoritarian populism, will mark the onset of a very different political moment. Could re-thinking the past, taking responsibilities for its residues and legacies, be one way of challenging rightwing politics and imagining a different future?

In the aftermath of the first world war, the word reparations was associated with the punishing payments demanded by the victors from the defeated. Sometime after the second world war, the word was transformed from its original connotations with war reparations. Karl Jaspers' *The Question of German Guilt* argued for the need for the German people as a whole to atone: the Nuremberg trials and the hanging of individual Nazis were in no sense an adequate response to what had happened. Reconstruction and restoration would require recognition of the full meaning of what had happened and its implications for the majority population.[20] A shift took place from the language of *perpetrators* to the notion of *beneficiaries*, facilitating efforts to claim reparations for wrongs done in the past, for gross violations of human rights and their effects into the present. As Mahmood Mamdani put it in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

> Where the focus is on perpetrators, victims are necessarily defined as the minority of political activists; for the victimhood of the majority to be recognized, the focus has to shift from perpetrators to beneficiaries. The difference is this: whereas the focus on perpetrators fuels the demand for justice as criminal

justice, that on beneficiaries shifts the focus to a notion of justice as social justice.[21]

Responsibilities are then understood as belonging to nations and peoples, to 'bystanders', those who acquiesced or benefitted, as well as those who pressed the button. In a similar vein, Michael Rothberg, exploring what the legacies of slavery mean today in terms of justice and historical responsibility, has proposed the term 'implicated subjects'. He argues that there is a need to develop a new category describing the implication of people in events that are temporally or spatially distant and in which they have not played a direct role either as perpetrators or victims.[22] Those of us living in the rich societies of the West have all, albeit profoundly unequally, enjoyed the fruits of racial capitalism, we are all survivors of slavery, not just those who can directly trace their lineages.

John Torpey makes a helpful distinction between 'reparations' (plural) in the more literal meaning of rectifying past injustices (whether or not you are directly responsible for committing the wrongs), and 'reparation' (the singular noun), which covers the wider terrain of reparation politics. Transitional justice, with its many permutations of truth, justice, and reconstruction; the tropes of forgiveness, apologies, and regret; efforts at reconciliation, memory, and communal memorialisation, all these can play a part in attempts to take responsibility for as well as hope to put wrongs right.[23] While the word *reparations* generally means compensation of some kind, *reparation* has come to mean repair. People *make* reparation, states and corporations *pay* reparations. Reparation politics can include *transitional justice*, the legal mechanisms such as criminal trials and truth commissions which would mostly be concerned with perpetrators. 'Transitional justice', writes David Scott, 'is the name of a post-Cold War development in liberal justice that, through the political technologies of successor trials and above all, historical truth commissions, aims to draw a line between the illiberal past and the *liberalizing* present.'[24] Then there is *compensation* and *restitution* of a material kind such as the German payments to Israel and the return of art works stolen by the Nazis. *Reparation* can include acknowledgement as in the case of the Japanese-American claims over internment, which involved token payments, apologies, as Blair refused in relation to slavery, some churches have made for sexual abuse, most recently Hollywood for misogyny/sexual harassment, or statements of regret. Efforts to reshape historical memory can also be made through history writing, school textbooks, exhibitions in museums, memorials, statues and commemorative plaques. Many of the activities associated with 2007 were indeed of this kind.

Claims from the Caribbean for reparation from the erstwhile empires were given new life by the publication of Hilary Beckles's book *Britain's Black Debt* in 2013, documenting the evidence of the destruction wreaked by slavery, the benefits that accrued to Britain, and the arguments for reparation. This was followed by the launch of the CARICOM ten-point programme in 2014, a claim from the regional states for reparatory justice from the European states 'whose

countries grew rich at the expense of those regions whose human wealth was stolen from them'. A full apology was demanded alongside debt cancellation, development programmes, resources to tackle ill health and illiteracy and psychological forms of rehabilitation for those who were 'denied recognition as members of the human family by laws derived from the parliaments and palaces of Europe'.[25] The search was for a 'path to reconciliation for victims of crimes against humanity and their descendants' in the region. The CARICOM claim has been met with a deafening silence from European governments, has provoked criticism from Pan-Africanists for its failure to challenge the system of racial capitalism with its global reach, and from those in the wider diaspora for the exclusive focus on harms done in the Caribbean. Many black people are suspicious of the whole enterprise, many white people think that there is no reason to saddle them with responsibility for things they did not do. But might the reparations argument have the potential, as David Scott puts it, to

> redescribe the past's relation to the present ... to foreground the sense in which Caribbean debt is the other side of European *theft* – that the 'persistent poverty' of the Caribbean has been a constituting condition for *ill-gotten* European prosperity ... The point is that this is not the story of a mere episode in a marginal history; it is the integrated story of the making of the modern world itself. [26]

It is to be hoped that the new Centre for Reparations that has been established at the University of the West Indies will be able to build a detailed case that European governments will not be able to ignore. The priority is to seek reparations for the descendants of the enslaved and of those indigenous peoples who suffered genocide. But as Robin Kelley has written in relation to the US, 'The reparations campaign, despite its potential contribution to eliminating racism and remaking the world, can never be an end in itself ... without at least a rudimentary critique of the capitalist culture that consumes us, even reparations can have disastrous consequences.'[27]

Reparation and the UK

Reparatory work in the UK needs to be connected with these wider struggles but also to be rooted in the locality. Anti-racists have been challenging the systemic racism that has blighted the lives of generations, tackling inequality and discrimination for decades. Historians, writers, visual artists and critical race theorists have been exploring colonialism and its legacies, challenging the silences on 'race' and slavery. In her brilliant essay on the apparent absence of 'race' in the American literary canon, *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison analysed a range of texts, from Willa Cather to Edgar Allen Poe and Mark Twain. 'Her project', she argued, 'is an effort to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the

described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served.' She examined

> the impact of notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability and availability on nonblacks who held, resisted, explored, or altered those notions. The scholarship that looks into the mind, imagination, and behaviour of slaves is valuable. But equally valuable is a serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behaviour of masters.[28]

The recognition of white privilege, grasping the extent to which white identities have been built on the capacity to 'other' those who are defined as lesser is a crucial part of the work that is underway and needs to be sustained in Britain.

My own first effort to do something I have come to call 'reparatory history' began in the 1980s when questions about the politics of 'race' erupted angrily amongst feminists, with demands from black feminists that white women should think about themselves and the positions of privilege they/we occupied. I began to research the question of 'race', the ways its presence and significance had been denied and disavowed in British history, and what this meant for white populations, whether 'at home' or in the empire. Britain's domestic history had been systematically demarcated from its imperial history as if the two had nothing to do with each other. My study became an investigation of the impact of colonialism on English identities in the period after the abolition of slavery, an exploration of the long historical links between England, particularly Birmingham, and Jamaica. What did it mean to be a coloniser: how central was that identity, that sense of power over others who were thought lesser, to notions of Englishness and Britishness? How were white identities constituted in relation to black? What were the distinctive characteristics of white masculinities and femininities? How was class articulated with this? What happened to thinking about 'race' in the wake of abolition? Once slavery, with its supposedly clear binary between white and black and assumption of black subjection, was abolished, other legitimations had to be found for the systematic forms of exploitation, expropriation, cruelty, terror, coercion, violence, abuse, destruction and hatred of 'others' that continued across different sites of empire. Othering could take many forms as has been clear from the treatment of the Irish, of Jews and of people of colour in the metropole.[29] As Cathy Bergin and Anita Rupprecht have argued, the demand for reparation put a particular purchase on history and the history of 'race'. 'It challenges the progressive onward march of freedom from below by demanding the recognition and repair of exploitation, expropriation and violence not just by building monuments or demanding financial payback.'

There is much work to be done: exploring the continuities between the racisms of the past and the present, investigating the history of the descendants of the enslaved, documenting resistance and exploring the constructions of 'race',

including whiteness, across different sites of empire, investigating the role of states and corporations. We need histories of the enslaved and their survival, they argue, of the perpetrators and the beneficiaries, of those who refused the Manichean binaries of 'race'. Reparatory history must be about more than identifying wrongdoers and seeking redress: it begins with the descendants, with trauma and loss, but the hope is that the work of mourning can be linked to hopes for reconciliation, the repair of relations damaged by historical injustice.[30]

The attachment to the idea of abolition as a mark of Britain's love of liberty and freedom was linked to a deep, yet disavowed, attachment in English culture to Britain's imperial power. In the wake of decolonisation and the loss of Empire, Paul Gilroy diagnosed 'postimperial melancholia', marked by

> an inability even to face, never mind actually mourn, the profound change in circumstances and moods that followed the end of the Empire ... Once the history of the Empire became a source of discomfort, shame, and perplexity, its complexities and ambiguities were readily set aside. Rather than work through those feelings, that unsettling history was diminished, denied, and then, if possible, actively forgotten.

Such a denial has had profound moral and psychic costs, he suggested, not least shaping hostile responses to strangers and settlers, stirring up fears of 'swamping' and invasion. 'An anxious melancholic mood has become part of the cultural infrastructure', he argued in 2004.[31] Gilroy's analysis recalls Freud's emphasis in *Mourning and Melancholia* that if a loved object cannot be relinquished and mourning completed, melancholia will ensue, akin to a state of paralysis.[32] That melancholic mood has more recently been transposed into widescale resentment, an anger associated with the loss of an imagined time of purity, when England was white and her borders were secure.[33]

Disavowal and evasion

The concept of *disavowal*, first articulated by Freud and subsequently developed by a range of other psychoanalytic thinkers has become central to me in my efforts to understand the erasure of 'race' and empire in much British history writing. Freud asked, how do we remember, forget and reconfigure the past, and how is it that we can make a thing appear never to have happened? We can 'know', according to this account, something unconsciously even as we are consciously 'innocent' of the knowledge. Freud's thinking was based upon the idea that mind is always conflicted, and that we actively rid ourselves (sometimes unbeknownst to ourselves) of certain mental contents. The body may speak another 'unconscious' story: thus Freud described a hysterical patient who seemed to know nothing of sexual desire, yet whose hands conveyed a different drama: the one unbuttoning her clothes, the other doing them up.[34] Others have investigated the ways we may misrecognise ourselves, avoid pain, bury our guilt, and disclaim

our desires. Lacan's famous reading of a story by Edgar Allen Poe, 'The Purloined Letter', zeroed in upon a hidden object, the epistle in question, hidden in plain view, on a mantelpiece where nobody (except the alert detective) could see it. Hence the casual leaving of a secret in an accessible location may turn out to be, by and large, a brilliant hiding place. As historians are well aware, archives may be technically 'open', but nobody bothers to look in them, or they/we look with 'blind eyes', asking some questions, forgetting others. Freud's emphasis is on an unconscious process, the rejection of a reality that is potentially traumatic. Forgetting is understood as actively produced, not just a matter of failed remembering, rather it is willed, unconsciously. Disavowal is connected with a denial of external realities, a refusal to think what is unthinkable, a wish to put aside what cannot be integrated. And this is as relevant in our intimate and interpersonal relations as in relation to forgotten histories. Statements of denial are assertions that something did not happen, does not exist, is not true, or is not known about. It can be argued that individuals or collectives, indeed whole states and societies can be engaged in it.[35] Disavowal is the refusal to avow, the disclaiming of responsibility or knowledge of, repudiation or denial. It is often linked to the notion of a 'blind eye' or the refusal of something in plain sight, so carrying the implication of knowing and not knowing.

Hannah Arendt was no disciple of Freud, yet there are connections with her concept of thoughtlessness, characterised in part by the absence of internal dialogue. This was a crucial concept for her exploration of the imperial roots of totalitarianism and the Holocaust. She re-named Nazi rule 'race imperialism'. The priority, she insisted was to examine the past 'bearing consciously the burden that events have placed upon us – neither denying their existence nor submitting meekly to their weight as though everything that in fact happened could not have happened otherwise. Comprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality – whatever it may be or might have been.'[36] She saw the repetition of empty and trivial truths as a key aspect of 'modern times'.

'In matters of race, silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse', Morrison wrote. 'Evasion has fostered another, substitute language in which the issues are encoded, foreclosing open debate. The situation is aggravated by the tremor that breaks into discourse on race.'[37] A similar argument can be made about history writing, a topic that I have been investigating in recent times. One case study has focused on Macaulay's *History of England*, the great popular history of the nineteenth century, read across the globe.[38] It was an epic story of progress from Elizabeth I to modern times, 1848. It covered the period of the conquest of Jamaica and the expansion of the slave trade and the development of colonial slavery. Macaulay's father, Zachary, had a lifelong preoccupation with Africa and the Caribbean. An abolitionist, he had spent formative years as a bookkeeper in Jamaica and then time in Sierra Leone, and became Wilberforce's right-hand man. Yet his son banished the slave trade and slavery to the uttermost margins of his volumes. The peoples and politics of the Atlantic

were irrelevant to his vision of history as was the huge flow of wealth from Caribbean slavery and commerce. Despite the development of the Royal Africa Company under Charles II and James II there was no discussion of the slave trade or plantation slavery, the subjects that had occupied most of Zachary Macaulay's waking hours. This was a startling silence. Sugar and slavery were becoming central to England's wealth and power by the late seventeenth century. But slavery was a system that Macaulay preferred to forget. It was abolition that should be memorialised. This was a process that had begun in 1808, with the publication of Thomas Clarkson's history, celebrating the actions of a group of humanitarian white men on both sides of the Atlantic: it was they who had effected abolition. The Wilberforce brothers' hagiographic account of their father's life confirmed this way of constructing England's role: it was humanitarianism that was to be remembered, not the country's investment in the slave trade and slavery.

In Macaulay's mind there was nothing significant to be said about the Caribbean, those colonies had no History, with a capital H, History was a story of progress, the story England exemplified. The Caribbean was locked in what Dipesh Chakrabarty famously named 'the waiting room of history', possibly seeking entry at some future date.[39] The 'great experiment' of emancipation was increasingly problematic in the 1840s, the years Macaulay was writing, the freed men and women had found no real freedom and were frequently in conflict with their erstwhile owners, the Caribbean islands no longer dominated sugar production and were increasingly irrelevant to global economics and politics. There was no story of progress there. Macaulay's history was of the making of the multi-ethnic nation named England, with its inclusion, as lesser siblings, of the Scots, and, much more problematically, the partial inclusion of the Irish, who could not be comfortably assimilated in his imagination. England provided a model in his analysis, a successful example of the route to modernity, laying out a path which others could follow. His underlying assumption, rooted in his ethnocentrism, was that it was *the* route. In that sense his *History* purported to be a universal history.

Macaulay never chose to write a biography of his father, far from it. He preferred to distance himself from all that his father had most valued, evangelicalism and the struggle against slavery. We cannot think, as he had once proclaimed, as our fathers do. His disavowal of the significance of the slave trade and slavery to his nation's history could be read as the most potent rejection of his father's legacy. Abolition had been effected: in its wake he had no time for 'impracticable, uncompromising reformers', who never did good and led 'miserable lives' and he hated 'negrophiles' as much as 'nigger drivers'. He disliked the whole subject of slavery, did not want to talk, think, or write about it, refused to act as the Vice-President of the Edinburgh Antislavery Society. It was a relief when the subject was avoided, as at a dinner with Sumner, the Massachusetts anti-slavery leader: 'We had no talk about slavery, to my great joy.' Avoiding subjects, blocking off

difficulties, making the world in his own image: these were some of his strategies for keeping trouble at bay.

He had been in the House of Commons in the difficult days when the terms of abolition were being negotiated. He had done his duty to his father. The supreme authority of the 'parent state' had been enacted with the abolition of slavery in 1833 by the imperial parliament, in the face of opposition from the colonial assemblies. England had done its duty and so had he. Now he could put it aside. But putting it aside meant deliberately avoiding and forgetting: disavowal. Macaulay was well aware of the extent to which the slave trade and slavery had sustained the economy and society. He was a member of the government that negotiated compensation to the slave-owners: he knew what the payment of 20 million pounds meant in terms of the government's overall expenditure. But he preferred not to know, he could not face reality. The West Indies rarely crossed his mind, peopled as they were by 'stupid ungrateful' gangs of 'negroes'. He paid lip service to the abolitionists, but Africa and the Caribbean, effectively excluded from his history, only featured in one paragraph.

Yet what a paragraph: the tremor in his text was marked by the forgotten but not to be dispelled spectre of the slave trade and slavery. Evoking the terrible earthquake in Port Royal, Jamaica, in 1692, he described 'The fairest and wealthiest city which the English had yet built in the New World, renowned for its quays, for its warehouses, and for its stately streets, which were said to rival Cheapside.' On that fateful day all 'was turned into a mass of ruins'. Here the focus was on the city, built by Englishmen and brought into homely purview by being compared to Cheapside. The markets where the enslaved were sold as commodities, the wharves where the slavers docked, the Africans who peopled the island – none of these were in his line of vision. It was the impact on home that preoccupied him, the effect of the disaster on 'the great mercantile houses of London and Bristol'. Thus Jamaica was domesticated and slavery disavowed. That earthquake signalled the eruption of repressed memories, for repression cannot always contain its troublesome baggage. Macaulay's *History* marginalised slavery and empire in the nation's story. The work of such an influential historian, read across generations, can tell us much about the construction of Anglophone visions of white civilisation. Unpicking that narrative, demonstrating how that marginalisation was effected, what and who were excluded, how the story is fundamentally changed once questions of gender, 'race' and class are opened up, exploitation and expropriation registered, is one way of attempting repair.

To focus on undoing the legacies of 'great white men' is one possible strategy. New understandings can never undo the devastation and loss that was suffered in the past and that lives on for descendants in the present. But thinking differently can perhaps awaken a sense of the responsibilities of 'implicated subjects' who have benefitted culturally, economically and politically from the hurts inflicted on others, in the hope that change can happen, racisms could be eradicated. Recognition matters. The reparation done for the Holocaust has made a

difference – the absence of reparation for slavery means that the wound is still open for many people of African-Caribbean descent. Acknowledgement can mean that those implicated in oppression can align themselves with the oppressed and try to repair.

The Legacies of British Slave-ownership project (www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs) (LBS) which seeks to put slavery back into British history, on which I was a principal researcher from 2009 to 2015, has also focused on individuals, but this time on a significant group, the slave-owners.[40] The aim has been to shift the narrative of Britain's relation to slavery from a focus on abolition to one on the benefits associated with the business of slavery and its importance to the making of modern Britain and in the process to contribute to undoing whitewashed histories. Little systematic attention had been paid to British slave-owners though there were invaluable case studies of particular families and Eric Williams had pointed the way in his attention to the absentee West Indian elite, living in Britain.[41] We decided to use them as a lens through which to explore the tentacles of the slavery business in the metropole. Pro-slavers resisted emancipation as long as they could. Once they knew the battle was lost they used their parliamentary power to get the best terms possible for themselves. They drove a hard bargain. The 20 million pounds (16 billion in today's money) paid to them in compensation for the loss of 'their' human property was combined with a system of apprenticeship, binding the freed men and women to working unpaid for their former masters for fixed hours over four to six years. The compensation records were meticulously collected in the wake of emancipation, providing a census of slave-owners at that time, a unique source.[42] By documenting the 46,000 individual claims for compensation and detailing the legacies – commercial, financial, political, cultural and imperial of the absentees – those with addresses registered in Britain, the extent of Britons' involvement in slave-ownership has been laid bare. Some of the wealthy slave-owners such as John Gladstone, William's father, were well-known. But the 3,500+ who received compensation in the metropole were enormously varied, ranging from modest widows living on annuities that were funded by the labour of the enslaved to middle-range merchants, bankers and lawyers, and rich 'West Indians' based partially in Marylebone and enjoying a country residence. Twenty per cent of those who received compensation in Britain were women. The compensation records deal with individuals but they illuminate the structures of class and state power. It was the imperial parliament which legislated the ending of slavery, just as it had previously legislated the trade and the notion of an enslaved person as a commodity.

Tracking the legacies has meant looking at the West India lobby and its retention of significant political influence into the 1840s, protecting the interests of the planters. British railway and canal systems, merchant banks and insurance companies, urban developments in spa towns such as Leamington, all bear witness to wealth derived from slavery. British museums and galleries display the perquisites of slavery and empire, visitors to country houses can marvel at the riches

associated with sugar. Enterprises in the new colonies of white settlement were partially built on the fruits of slave-ownership. Scrolling through the LBS documentation of slave-owners who contributed to philanthropic enterprises we discover that they supported asylums and schools for the urban poor, hospitals and an Institute for the Blind, the Governesses Benevolent Society and the Lifeboat Institution, typical objects of middle- and upper-class charity. Modern Britain was better equipped to respond to ill-health, poverty and disability than were the lands and peoples it colonised.

Bringing slavery home means tracking all these material traces, following the money and the people, making visible the legacies of slave-ownership, excavating what has been suppressed and marginalised, re-inscribing the slavery business in modern British history in an effort to reshape what is understood as the truth of what has happened. The database provides the evidence of the webs of connections to slavery that continue into the present within the white British elite and key social and economic institutions. It confirms Eric Williams' insistence on the contribution that slave wealth made to the development of capitalism. It is a resource opening up the entangled histories of Britain's relation to the Caribbean and offering extensive refutations of that binary between black and white which the slave-owners tried to impose, the 'race-making' that was central to their power.[43] It challenges the systemic disavowal, the knowing and not knowing of the realities of slavery that has characterised British history writing and British society. Anecdotal evidence from educational institutions, the media and public debates suggests that LBS has made a difference. The national narrative has shifted: it is impossible now to think about abolition without compensation. Furthermore, the empirical work has given people who are making political claims the historical grounding from which to do so.

LBS's current project is documenting the structure and scale of Britons' ownership in the Caribbean between 1763–1833, this time establishing patterns of land holding and levels of production when possible, uncovering the political, economic and cultural legacies, and utilising the Slave Registers to record the numbers of men, women and children who worked on the estates.[44] Digitising these histories, in so far as we can, including locating estates on maps, means extensive additions to the database and new possibilities for family and local historians as well as academic researchers. Attempting to grasp the world of the planter historian of Jamaica, Edward Long, the subject of my current research, is greatly facilitated by this wider comparative context across the British Caribbean. I aim to situate him as a child growing up in a family whose plantations had been established in the 1650s, fill out the details of his twelve years on the island as a planter, grasp the significance of his authoritative work as a historian and his life amongst the West Indian elite as an influential pro-slaver in Marylebone and the home counties.

The hope is to understand more about how racial thinking works, what are its logics and its mechanics, how did slave-owners such as Long establish the

practices that attempted to fix the binaries between black and white, master the world in which they lived? The ability to see and not see was fundamental to Long's life, to disavow and deny realities. He relied on what Ann Stoler has called 'imperial dispositions' to legitimate his own behaviour, as a planter, a legislator in the House of Assembly, a writer and polemicist, and in the network of his family and kin. He learned to ignore, turn away, refuse to witness: these were the 'well-tended conditions of disregard' that enabled slave-owners to live with the contradictions of their practices.[45] Long could be a loving family man and a buyer and seller of human property, valuing others only as commodities and relying on violence and coercion to extract their labour. This culture and the divisions between black and white were not 'natural', they had to be created and learned. This was the work of 'making race'.

So can we think of such work as reparative? Its primary intention is not to seek new resources for education and health in the Caribbean, nor is it focused on the long-term effects of the slave trade on Africa. It is not about the politics of survival and existential struggle under the conditions of 'bare life' as Vincent Brown evokes in his discussion of studies of slavery.[46] It cannot offer the kinds of insights into the harshness of Jamaican plantation life that Diana Paton has been able to unearth in her study of slave courts or the complexities of the sex-gender system captured through a fragment in the life of a free woman of colour.[47] My chosen focus is on the UK and the need to develop a different understanding **here** of Britain's involvement in the slavery business and *our responsibilities, as beneficiaries* of the gross inequalities associated with slavery and colonialism. This means thinking about understandings of 'race' and difference. How significant were the ideas about 'race' which developed in the Caribbean to English/British understandings of difference? Debates over slavery and abolition brought this material 'home': pro-slavers and abolitionists tried to marshal their forces and their organisations, worked hard to influence policy and practice. Anti-slavery activism was vital, but it did not always undermine notions of white superiority.[48]

A decade after 2007 it is possible to make some assessment of what shifts have and have not taken place in the UK on the question of slavery and its legacies into the present. There have been some welcome changes in schools and universities, more scholarship produced, more materials made available, a sense that the story cannot any longer be told in quite the way it once was. Politically, ground has been lost. On his visit to Jamaica in 2015 the then prime minister David Cameron's refusal to consider reparations together with his extraordinarily ill-judged promise of 25 million for a new prison on the island marked a low point. The harsh policies of the current Conservative government on immigration and deportation and of the police on stop and search leave little faith in platitudes about tolerance.[49] The appalling statistics on African-Caribbean levels of inequality, whether in education, employment, prisons or mental health speak volumes about the persistence of racism.

Colin Prescod has recently recognised the work that has been done by archivists and curators on Black cultural heritage, but makes a powerful argument for moving beyond including the Black experience to allowing Black agency in the making of the record.[50] Black community groups have registered anger and frustration about the opportunities that have been lost, the disappointment of hopes raised in 2007 of changes that would be made, collaborations that would develop, more genuinely inclusive policies that would be implemented. It is just as urgent to insist that Black Lives Matter in the wake of Grenfell as it was in 2007, 1807 or 1833. Morrison's call for a 'serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behaviour of masters' seems no less important in the current climate of Islamophobia and xenophobia, the abandonment of refugees as 'disposable people'. We need to understand that we are dealing with deeply embedded assumptions in the UK, what Stuart Hall described as 'a reservoir of unconscious feelings' about 'race'.[51] There remains much reparatory work to be done: history writing can be one way in.

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Reparative histories: tracing narratives of black resistance and white entitlement

CATHY BERGIN and ANITA RUPPRECHT

Abstract: The reinvigoration of forms of white supremacy in the US and Europe has sharply delineated the connections between occluded racialised pasts and contemporary race politics in ways which make reparative history an urgent concern. This article argues that contemporary struggles over the politics of memorialisation telegraph more than a debate over contested histories. They are also signs of how the liberal narrative of 'trauma' and healing no longer suffices as a way of marginalising the history of radical black agency. Building on the research by the Legacies of British Slave-ownership project, the article focuses on the incendiary year of 1831 and on a moment of collision – between black resistance and white entitlement. It situates a hitherto overlooked aborted slave uprising in Tortola, British Virgin Islands, within its multiple radical Caribbean, Atlantic and British contexts as a way of disrupting the distance between

Cathy Bergin is a senior lecturer on the Humanities Programme at the University of Brighton. Her research focuses on transnational black radical politics, particularly in respect of literary and cultural production. She is the author of *Bitter with the Past but Sweet with the Dream: communism in the African American imaginary* (Brill, 2015) and *African American Anti-Colonial Texts 1918–1939* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

Anita Rupprecht is a senior lecturer in the School of Humanities at the University of Brighton. Her research projects include the development of maritime financial insurance in the context of the Atlantic slave trades and anti-slavery resistance and colonial labour struggle in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world.

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histories confined to 'there' and those confined to 'here'. The article explores how the link between slavery and capitalism can be connected concretely to the black claim made on the nature of that emancipation as a way of further developing the concept of reparative history.

Keywords: 1831 revolts, abolitionism, Brighton, Confederacy statues, Haitian Revolution, Legacies of British Slave-ownership, memorialisation, reparative history, slave rebellions, Tortola conspiracy, transatlantic slavery

Memorial battles for the racialised past

Writing recently about the statue wars in the United States, Jonathan Beecher Field argued that the Confederate effigies that have become a rallying point for the far Right in the US offer an opportunity to 'reflect on how seemingly race-neutral public monuments often in fact stake territory in debates over racial identity and whiteness'. Moreover, he urged, we should 'treat each statue as an invitation to think critically about the story it tells about a past, the work it does in the present, and the impact it has on the future'.[1] Beecher Field has no problem with the statues being removed. He is more interested in reflecting critically on the ways in which America's racialised legacies are woven into myriad forms of memorialisation that reach beyond the brittle stares of Confederate generals. Indeed, the removal of Confederacy statues provides exhaustive space for thinking about the occlusions of racialised pasts in the service of contemporary race politics. At the same time, the mobilisation of race conscious resistance is redolent of the rich history of black opposition to the whitening of European and American history. The stark symbolism of the empty plinths where looming Confederate 'heroes' have been taken down has often been eclipsed by the spectacle of the actual processes of the physical removal of the statues.

In Baltimore, August 2017, Stonewall Jackson and Robert Lee were driven through the city streets at night with 'Black Lives Matter' scrawled on the prone generals. In the city, which saw mass protest over the police killing of Freddie Gray in 2015, the Mayor and city council ordered the removal of the statues 'following the acts of domestic terrorism carried out by white supremacist terrorist groups in Charlottesville Virginia'.[2] In Durham, North Carolina, in the wake of Heather Heyer's killing, anti-racist protesters themselves pulled down the quickly crumpling Confederate Soldier monument outside the court house. The image of General Lee hoisted and swinging on a crane against a clouded blue sky in New Orleans, in May 2017, provides a wealth of symbolic readings about industrialisation, plantation slavery and racial terror in the US. As has been widely noted, these statues, which were mostly erected in the early twentieth century to justify Jim Crowism, were cheaply mass produced in order to consolidate the mythologisation of the Civil War and also to police African American life.[3] In effect, they inserted a disciplining memory into the lexicon of America's race history, in the

service of a narrative of white martyrdom. Their removal, and the resistances to their removal, are also about memory, martyrdom and discipline. The emergence of 'Black Lives Matter' in the wake of George Zimmerman's acquittal for the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2013 instantiated a form of black radical protest, which has maintained an unwavering focus on the 'disciplining' of black bodies by the homicidal policing of African American communities.

The simultaneous emergence of a narrative of 'white' dispossession and alienation, where white America has been abandoned by a mythical multiracial elite, played a considerable part in the election of Donald Trump. In this context, the statue wars are indeed a fitting place from which to extend the 'cultural reach' of their local meanings. Taken within the wider context of the dominant disavowal of Europe and America's imperial and racialising origins, the controversy over what gets remembered by whom, and the form that memorialisation takes, are urgent questions for a reparative history. We are, at this moment, witnessing an eruption of active memory. Here anti-racist resistance is directly targeting a dominant memory that has obliterated traumatic black pasts in the name of a beleaguered white identity. But there is more at stake than competing concepts of historical authority centring on traumatic legacies of racialised terror. The resistances mobilised around Confederacy statues are not about memory alone – but about the now. The expunging of racialised violence and racialised labour practices in a shiny iteration of whitewashed history in the service of negating contemporary racism is taking place in the context of the most significant anti-racist movement in the US since the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s.[4] Moreover, the campaigns that have focused on statues from South Africa to Oxford to North Carolina have brought the past and present into a productively fractious relationship for thinking about reparative history.

On this side of the Atlantic, the 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign in Oxford University has been greeted in the Tory press by the familiar faux horror at the spectacle of 'snowflake' students who are demanding a history which meets the exacting standards of their safe-space universe.[5] The campaign has been read through the paradigms of free speech, but at the centre of the critique is a complaint that criticism of Empire has become *too* un-nuanced and that colonial crimes must be seen in context of the 'standards of the time'.[6] In this context, 'here' and 'there', 'then' and 'now', are assumed to be of quite different orders. Moreover, underlining these divisions is a demand that the colonial past remains firmly in the past, not least in terms of refusing to bring that past into any kind of dialogue with contemporary racialisations. In this rubric, the temporal and spatial interconnections of Empire and contemporary globalisation are riven asunder in a 'common sense' discourse, in which the colonial past is frozen as a moment that should not be asked to bear the weight of contemporary sensitivities about race. Moreover, this is a demand underpinned by the idea that the 'now' is a moment untroubled by racism, save for the hyper-sensitivity of a generation of mollycoddled students.

In Bristol, the controversial statue of the slaver Edward Colston has been at the centre of a long and charged debate about Bristol's slaving past. The blindingly polarised narrative of white philanthropy underpinned by black death could hardly be starker. In the campaign to trouble Colston's representation as a beneficent donor and, according to the statue's plaque, as 'one of the most virtuous and wise sons' of the city, his role as a slaver and the 85,000 Africans who were kidnapped and enslaved while he was running the Royal Africa Company have been highlighted.[7] In November 2016, the plinth of Colston's statue was daubed with 'kidnapper', 'murderer', 'slave trader' and 'human trafficker'. The latter indicated a set of connections that were being made to present circumstances – however complicated that connection might be – as the scale of the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean was emerging in the British press.[8] For a reparative history that seeks to revisit the past in relation to contemporary resistances, the statue wars that have sought to destabilise the literal monumentalising of racialised histories, are indicative of the ways in which silencing narratives of 'closure' on violent pasts are being contested.

This article builds upon Catherine Hall's call to open up the 'entangled histories' of racialised capitalism and to trouble the 'binary between black and white' which we can see at work in the reactions to the statue wars.[9] It does so via the investigation of a quite different historical moment, and one to which no memorial exists. It is a moment, however, that reaches out from the history of the enslaved to illuminate what Colin Prescod has termed the 'radical histories of resistance to White supremacy, locally and globally'.[10] It is a moment opened up by the Legacies of British Slave-ownership project.

Reparative history and Legacies of British Slave-ownership

The Legacies of British Slave-ownership project (LBS) has examined the records of the Commission set up to administer the £20 million paid by the state to British slave-holders as part of the Emancipation Act. Its findings have further solidified Eric Williams's argument about the significance of British colonial slavery for the take-off of Britain's industrialisation. An extraordinary, and hitherto hidden, picture has emerged, not only of a set of corporate foundations in slavery but also of the subsequent trajectories of those funds which were acquired as compensation for slavery's ending, and which were funneled – post-emancipation – into key financial, industrial and political institutions. The members of the research team are not only tracing the evolution of particular financial and commercial businesses that received slave compensation, and the redeployment of those monies into other investments, but have also identified, and are tracing further, concrete legacies that extend from the economic after-life of slavery, and which are intimately bound into it. This includes the ways in which those monies circulated through the wider contours of the British Empire as ex-slave owners moved on to become investors, administrators and settlers in colonial spaces within and beyond the slave colonies, as well as their impact on the political, cultural, historical, physical and built landscapes of the imperial nation itself.[11]

The project has provided an extraordinary resource for tracing the global reach of transatlantic slavery down the streets and into the houses and drawing rooms of Britain. As the researchers readily acknowledge, however, following these monies tells us much about those diverse beneficiaries and the ways in which slavery sutured the Empire, structured modern Britain and moulded British identities, but little about the enslaved who were registered in ledger books and assigned generic monetary value in scribbled ink. Indeed, C. L. R. James was critical of Eric Williams's *Capitalism & Slavery* – upon which the legacies project directly builds – precisely because, while he focused sharply on the role of slavery in the emergence of capitalism, his argument that abolition was the outcome of the triumph of bourgeois economic interests over bankrupt protectionism meant that he left out the 'liberating activity of the slaves themselves'.[12] As James's critique shows, the challenge of connecting histories from above with those from below in this context is not new. It has long been a productive problematic within histories of the black radical tradition.

The current reparative challenge, then, is to develop narratives that widen the analytical frame in order to build on the radical black tradition. Tracing the dialectic between past and present, and the local and the global in order to identify the erosion or domestication of black rage is an urgent task for anti-racist praxis. It helps to redress the effective erasure of the connections between metropolitan accumulation and the everyday resistances practised in the Caribbean. This was an erasure or a forgetting inaugurated by the compensation scheme itself, as it effectively laundered property in human beings – and the memory of holding property in human beings – into abstract cash, thereby setting in motion a powerful process of metropolitan divestment and disavowal.[13] Moreover, as Christer Petley notes, in discussing the further political potential of the legacies research, despite the considerable methodological challenges that it poses, 'Britain's true relationship with (and debt to) slavery will perhaps be clearer when lived realities in colonial towns, smallholdings, and plantations can be shown in the same analytic frame as British country estates, town houses, and parliamentary debates.'[14] Bringing the lived realities of those on the plantation estates into the same analytical frame as Britain's local geographies offers further possibilities. It would also help to counter, as Manisha Sinha has recently done in her extraordinary study, *The Slave's Cause*,[15] the conventional, and usually racialised, divisions between slave resistance and anti-slavery activism.

As she has recently argued:

> only by writing people of African descent out of the history of abolition can we view it as a white, bourgeois movement designed to justify capitalism and, later, imperialism. Only by writing the non-white world out of the history of democracy and human rights can we develop narrow and ahistorical genealogies of their emergence and progress in the modern Western World, which since its inception has been interracial.[16]

Sinha's intervention is a vigorous riposte to a current upsurge in academic debates about whether the status of the term 'resistance' is thoroughly compromised by its relation to bourgeois liberalism.[17] The term certainly deserves scrutiny, especially for its particularly masculinist history, but given the current political cataclysm – and the ways in which individualising 'trauma' so often neutralises collective rage or conceptions of economic justice – to dismiss resistance as somehow passé is either peculiarly out of joint with the times or simply indulgent.

Tracing racialised pasts in a British coastal city

In the Autumn of 2017, a three-week gallery installation opened in the Phoenix Gallery in Brighton. The project presented a blank map of the town in order to create a 'moment of collision between local lives and global market forces, in Brighton' to collaboratively create a 'collective streetscape'.[18] Its aim was to reclaim Brighton from the property-developing vision of a gentrified ossified space, so as to make visible the memories of political activism, the hidden histories and the lived experience of the town. Gallery visitors and community groups were invited to 'fill' the map with objects, photographs and stories which would reimagine *their* city in a variety of ways that challenged its asinine contemporary corporatisation and subverted traditional exhibitionary practices. Over the three weeks, the classic landmarks that condense Brighton's identity as a place of tourist consumption, such as the Royal Pavilion, the pleasure pier and the beach, were largely ignored by participants who instead marked out their allotments, their local parks, their own neighbourhood streets and crossroads and their everyday meeting and marching points.[19]

Brighton and Hove Black History Group inserted its extraordinary research into Brighton's historic Black presence across the exhibition space, with notably, their recent discovery of the grave of a young African boy named Tom Highflyer, who had been rescued from a slave Dhow in 1866 and brought to Brighton by Captain Thomas Malcolm Sabine Pasley of the Royal Navy's East African Anti-Slave Trade Squadron.[20] Britain had abolished its part in the transatlantic slave trade in 1807 and slavery itself in 1838. The marking of Highflyer's grave acted as a reminder of the continuation of human trafficking.

The Brighton seafront was also mapped in order to illuminate its slave-owning past. Raiding the rich archive created by the Legacies of British Slave-ownership project, we told the stories of some of the compensated slave owners who resided in the Regency splendour of these heritage dwellings. Perhaps it is unsurprising that a significant number of awardees of slave compensation lived in, or owned properties in, Brighton. It had become *the* stylish English resort town by the early nineteenth century, attracting aristocrats and the *nouveau riche*, many of whom invested in the new luxury housing developments springing up along the seafront to the east and west of the Prince Regent's 'stately pleasure dome', the Royal Pavilion. The Pavilion's myriad Orientalist minarets and extravagant lattice-work

– referenced in many other contemporary buildings throughout the town – symbolise the significance of British imperial conquests in 'the East' in shaping the tastes and fantasies of the new fashionable elite of the time. This colonially derived exoticism remains central to the city's dominant heritage narrative today, but it also helps to obscure the significance of the colonial wealth extracted from the other side of the Atlantic, which also congealed in the city's brick and flint. This history of colonial connection and entanglement is far less visible, but in the short half mile along the sea-front, running east towards the grandeur of Thomas Kemp's Sussex Square, records show eight properties occupied by recipients of very substantial slave compensation monies.

If part of the wider project of the 'Maps and Lives' participatory exhibition was to re-inscribe the topography of the town with its hidden and occluded histories, this moment of talking about 'here' also became a moment of talking about 'there'. In telling the story of white settlement (in both the financial and geographical senses of the word), it opened a space for tracing black resistance in the tiny island of Tortola in the British Virgin Islands. Caroline Ellen Anderson was a co-claimant with her sister of £2,222.5s. 9d. in compensation[21] whose last known address was 9, Bedford Street, Marine Parade, Brighton.[22] These monies came from the family plantation in Brewers Bay, Tortola; a plantation on which a planned rebellion – one that has been hitherto overlooked in the archive – has much to tell us about black agency on a tiny Caribbean island and about the extent and reach of anti-slavery resistance.[23]

Tracing anti-slavery resistance on a Caribbean plantation

As the sun went down on Sunday, 4 September 1831, a conch shell sounded on the Anderson plantation in Brewers Bay, Tortola, signalling that there was urgent news. In response, enslaved men from the neighbouring Martin estate hurried to find out what was going on. When they arrived at the home of an elderly enslaved woman, Tanty Sophy, she told them that 'Anderson's People' had gone to Road Town to 'look for their freedom'. She passed on details of the agreed meeting place just outside the town at Frances Head under the plum tree. That night, some sixty-five enslaved men from all parts of the island gathered in the darkness and waited for others who had given their word that they would join them. For months, if not years (as one of them noted), talk had seeped across plantation lines, as elsewhere across the Caribbean that 'Freedom was come in the Packet for the Slaves' but that local Whites were refusing to implement the King of England's decree. As elsewhere across the Caribbean too, the enslaved were not prepared to wait any longer. Tortola's labourers had begun to organise their rising six months earlier. They knew the 'Blacks were more than the Whites – and they could take the Island from them'.[24] They appointed 'Captains', and made a deal with a black mariner from the nearby Danish island of St Thomas called Romney. One enslaved man, Sam Fahie, had tried to get to Haiti before and so he already knew what

course would need to be set. He also knew 'what sort of colours' stood for 'St Domingo' and he wanted the rebels to wear them, marked with the letters, 'L' and 'K' for 'Liberty' and 'Equality'. Thus arrayed, they planned to arm themselves and march into town en masse to demand their freedom. If they were denied, they would take it collectively and by force. They were to kill the Whites, torch the town, take money and food, and sail with Romney to 'St Domingo' and freedom.[25]

That the rebels planned to leave the island for 'St Domingo' demonstrates the power and reach of the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804) – the only successful slave rebellion in history – to inspire the enslaved across the Americas during the early nineteenth century. It is also evidence of the rebels' geopolitical literacy and the importance of maritime networks – and of Black Atlantic involvement in those seaborne activities – for reporting news and transmitting political currents. Tortola was only a stone's throw from the Danish island of St Thomas and the enslaved would have known that the thriving free port and cosmopolitan entrepôt of Charlotte Amelie provided a 'porthole of opportunity to a wider world'. The heavy commercial traffic between St Thomas and St Domingue/Haiti caused considerable paranoia amongst local colonial authorities, given the multiple possibilities of revolutionary contamination, and especially as many ship captains were free peoples of colour, as Romney most probably was. In such a vessel, as Neville Hall notes, 'a slave could find the maritime equivalent of a house of safety in a Free Gut'.[26]

The fact that the plan to sail for Haiti was dropped until September registers the complexity of Tortola's island life and culture for the enslaved, as well as the extreme difficulty of cohering collective forms of resistance. A set of Methodist Revival meetings were called across that summer and, as many of the rebels were also members of the church, they put their plans on hold in order to worship. The day before the secret meeting under the plum tree, however, another packet had arrived in port bearing large sacks of mail that were carted – covertly, the enslaved thought – into the Court House.[27] Moreover, Woodcock, the Deputy Provost Marshal, had beaten a drum in town that afternoon to announce that the British Government had extended civil rights to all 'Free Coloured and Free Black Subjects'. They were now able to sit on local juries. The rebel leader, Sam Fahie did not trust the official enfranchisement of free peoples because it breached racialised boundaries. As far as he was concerned, the Whites would never 'let them pass an opinion on the Blacks'. Given his suspicions, Fahie had a different interpretation of the drumming, thinking that it meant that the 'Whites must have smelt a rat that the Slaves were going to rise'.[28] His concern that the plot was about to be uncovered set off twenty-four hours of intense efforts to disseminate the message that it needed to be activated immediately. The enslaved's long established provisioning grounds, their well-mapped 'rival geography', carefully honed communication networks and the strong sense of moral economy that had facilitated their ability to countenance a rising now enabled them to spread word of it, undetected, across the entire island.[29]

Twelve miles long and just over three miles wide, Tortola was in steep economic decline as British mercantile interest waned in the Caribbean sugar islands in the early nineteenth century. In 1819, a devastating hurricane caused widespread structural damage as well as impacting social relations on the island in the context of weakening white authority. Despite the fact that the enslaved at Brewer's Bay in Tortola were still known as 'Anderson's People' in 1831, Andrew Anderson, the long-time resident owner of the sugar plantation, had been dead for over a decade, leaving his declining estate, like so many others, heavily mortgaged. He had nominated his brother, James Anderson, a lawyer in London, to act as executor, leaving his children to inherit their father's land, his debts, and ninety-six enslaved women and seventy-eight enslaved men from afar. Their uncle put the estate in the hands of powerful local attorneys, William Rogers Isaacs and William George Crabb, whom the enslaved loathed. In 1831, Isaacs and Crabb were still in legal possession of Anderson's plantation, managing it for the Anderson children. Indeed, Isaacs and Crabb are perfect examples of how new money was made and new powers were generated out of the financial ruin of the planter class.

Prior to emancipation, these two men had held nearly every position of colonial officialdom on the island, and sometimes many at the same time. They were merchants, planters, dispensers of criminal justice and also attorneys by mortgage tenure for the London-based financial trading firm, Reid Irving and Company, whose off-shore global financial interests reached from the majority of encumbered estates in Tortola all the way to Mauritius.[30] To all intents and purposes, as a recent Tortolan memoirist has written, by the early decades of the nineteenth century, Isaacs more or less owned the island.[31] From this position, Isaacs and his business partner Crabb 'managed' emancipation when it finally came in 1833, and also the ensuing period known as 'apprenticeship'. This was a period, as set out in the Emancipation Act of 1833, that stipulated that the enslaved were legally freed but obliged to work for their former masters for up to forty-five hours a week without pay. 'Apprenticeship' (as well as the £20 million in compensation) was meant to lessen the burden of emancipation for planters, whilst easing the ex-slaves into 'citizenship'.

Joseph Gurney, visiting Tortola in 1838 on behalf of the Society of Friends to report on the apprenticeship system, met with the 'most respectable old gentleman' Isaacs who had, by then, 1,500 ex-slaves 'under him'. Gurney was interested to know his views, given that his 'habits had long been associated with the old system'. Isaacs tersely replied, 'I have ... no complaint to make'. Gurney later visited one of Isaacs' estates to find the apprentices labouring at cane-holing. His comment that 'the fact that so large a proportion of the island has passed out of the hands of proprietors, into those of the merchant and the money lender, was a conclusive evidence against slavery' betrays his unwillingness to register the continuities of labouring conditions pre- and post-emancipation, and the ways in which they were overseen by 'old system' figures such as Isaacs.[32] Seven years

earlier, Sam Fahie and his co-conspirators were determined that they, rather than 'the merchant and the money lender' would determine their route out of slavery, offering, in doing so, a vision of black liberation outside the imaginary of capital investment.

It is impossible to know whether Caroline Ellen Anderson knew about the rage that fomented into a long-planned conspiracy to rebel on 'her' estate in 1831. More generally, it is impossible to know whether she knew anything at all about the material realities, and source of, her wealth. Prior to the compensation monies paid to her by the British state for her (inherited) 'property', and precisely because of her gender, whiteness and social status as an upper middle-class unmarried British woman, she lived on income violently generated thousands of miles from Brighton that was extracted and abstracted by the corrupt local attorneys and her uncle. One of the most revealing aspects of the research undertaken by the Legacies of British Slave-ownership team concerns the fact that 21 per cent of the absentees who received compensation awards were women. Only a few of them owned large numbers of enslaved people like Caroline Anderson. While we can know little about Anderson, her brief place in the archive illustrates the familial intimacy of the relationship between slavery-derived colonial wealth and white patriarchal domination. As Catherine Hall powerfully argues, 'Capital was not anonymous – it had "blood" coursing through its veins and this had implications for how it functioned on both sides of the Atlantic.'[33] Indeed, she quotes Marx's famous lines, 'Capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt', and notes that 'the blood we could associate with the blood lines of familial capitalism and with women's bodies – as objects of desire, as workers in the cane fields, as bearers of children, as transmitters of capital – whether the capital of the heiress or the capital of labour reproduced.'[34]

Caroline Anderson's capital was certainly not anonymous and not simply property. Colonial law designated enslaved peoples as persons *and* property. It was the consistent and rebellious agency of enslaved peoples that ensured that human life, as well as commodity status, was recognised. That recognition, as Hartman notes in her discussion of the relation of the law to plantation slavery, was inescapably bound to violence. As she argues, it 'set minimal standards on existence for it depended upon the calculation of interest and injury'.[35] However, the enslaved never settled for these minimal standards of existence and they rejected their translation into something fungible, something for which monetary compensation could be found.

Under the plum tree that night in 1831, as they bolstered their resolve to rise up and claim their freedom, Anderson's enslaved men, along with those from other estates, talked about their local and immediate grievances as well as about what they had read in the newspapers and heard in the port, about the British anti-slavery reforms. They focused their ire on the reviled attorneys, Isaacs and Crabb. They knew how powerful the two colonials were. One of the rebels Jacob Long thought that, should they be refused their freedom, they only needed to kill Crabb

and Isaacs and they would 'get the country'.[36] Long wanted Isaacs' white horse to 'lead the troops'. Isaacs' humiliating treatment of the black workers, his withdrawal of their customary rights and cutting off of food allowances, made him a particular object of their fury. Valentine, who worked in the distillery of one of the plantations newly managed by Isaacs, reported that Isaacs had said that he would 'rather have his head cut off' than 'give the negroes free'. Since the planter-owner Kelly had 'gone away', Valentine, as a 'Stiller Man', said he was 'not the same man'. He complained bitterly that he had been obliged, 'every night to go home with an empty pan not as much as hot or cold liquor in it and as much as Mr. Isaacs had in the World, he would shortly lose it'. Valentine was determined to burn Isaacs' house first. The house was so grand that it did not have a thatched roof, leading the men to debate how best to burn it. Peter believed that Isaacs was, in fact, an 'Obea Man' who had 'worked Obea and driven his Master off the Island' and now barely fed the workers. He said that he was prepared to 'fight on his knees in blood for his freedom'.[37]

Despite the fact that some were committed to act, the assault on the town was called off for that night. It was felt that not enough men had assembled for the plan to succeed. In the early hours, however, messengers were again dispatched around the island, this time to tell people to strike work the next day. The precise extent of the work stoppage is not clear, but 'Anderson's People' refused to go out to work the next morning and the altercation led to exposure of the wider plot. Three of the Andersons were arrested and taken to Road Town, followed by the rest of the gang who behaved in what was considered a disorderly manner. While this was being investigated, the conspiracy was uncovered. Forty-seven enslaved men were arrested and tried for 'Mutiny and Rebellion', of whom thirty-eight were later discharged. The judge stressed the 'appalling' nature of the case to the jury in relation to the numbers of accused and the 'enormity of the crime', and he blamed the British press for having fired up the men.[38] The nine who were convicted were sentenced to death. A legal debate ensued about whether these men – as slaves – were entitled to 'benefit of Clergy'. This dispensation was an ancient English common law clause that enabled a sentence of death to be transmuted. The debate turned on whether the enslaved should be treated as men or as property.[39] Despite the fact that Isaacs argued strongly that the crime had taken place in a 'Slave Colony', which 'must make it a Capital Felony', the Governor was inclined to clemency on the grounds that the plot had not been activated.[40] He denied the enslaved their part in the plot, however. He argued that they had been 'led astray' under a 'mistaken notion that their freedom had been withheld from them'.[41] The nine were transported from the island.

Interconnected histories and black resistance

The Tortola conspiracy is a little acknowledged contribution to the great Atlantic-wide wave of militant Black anti-slavery rebellion and resistance, with the

success of the Haitian Revolution as its motor, that reached yet another crescendo in 1831. Only a month before the Tortola conspiracy was hatched, Nat Turner led a revolt in Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831, the bloodiest of all slave rebellions prior to the Civil War. Just weeks after the Tortola rebels had been tried and convicted, Sam Sharpe's Jamaican 'Baptist War' mobilised tens of thousands of the enslaved, thus dealing a final blow to slavery.[42] One week after Sam Sharpe's execution in 1832, Parliament appointed a select committee to debate 'Effecting the Extinction of Slavery throughout the British Dominions'. In the House of Lords, English Baptist missionary Henry Knibb was pressed about the causes of the Jamaica rebellion. In reply, he assured the Lords that of course the enslaved read the '*English* newspapers', noting specifically the edition of the *Falmouth Packet* which 'had an Account of the Rebellion in Tortola, and he stated that it had been read and circulated'. Significantly, Knibb recalled that the newspaper had also carried a headline, 'British Colonial Slavery', an itinerary of anti-slavery lectures and 'something about the brutish Custom of flogging'.[43] This was an article, read by the enslaved in Jamaica, that was not about the practice of flogging in the West Indies but in Britain.

Unlike Nat Turner's and Sam Sharpe's uprisings, the Tortola conspiracy involved relatively few individuals and never exploded. It was an unprecedented moment in the colony's history, however. Earlier incidences of unrest had occurred on single plantations but this was the first plot that was island-wide, demonstrating the mobility of the enslaved and their readiness to act in solidarity. A record of the conspiracy can be found in the colonial archive in the form of a set of forced confessions, panicked letters and excessive indictments, but they do not yield the full picture. The place of the plot within the wider Atlantic revolutionary vortex, however, is registered in scraps of connecting evidence that testify to the circulation of radical struggle, the wider currents of political action, and the power of fugitive connections that, together, defined the collective nature of the revolutionary Atlantic. It also speaks to the multiple ways in which Black Atlantic solidarity and struggle from below helped to shape, and radicalise, anti-slavery activism from above.

As William Knibb confirmed in the House of Lords, the Tortola conspiracy was covered in the press. News of the rebels' plan was conveyed throughout the Caribbean and reported in American and British newspapers. The salacious and exaggerated narration of the rebels' designs, together with the publication of letters stressing the terror evoked among the colonists on the island, signalled the deep alarm of the planter class about the fate of their property, their patriarchal and sexual security and, more generally, the threat posed to their hegemony – not only in the Caribbean but also in the metropole.[44] Reports about the 'diabolical plot' on Tortola sat side by side with those documenting the urban and rural unrest sweeping the Mother Country in the context of Reform in 1831, most immediately with those reporting the radical protest and riots that had broken out in Bristol in response to the rejection of the Reform Bill by the House of

Lords.[45] James MacQueen – an extremely vocal and prolific supporter of slavery – directly linked the Tortola conspiracy to the 'sacking' of Bristol, in the context of a blistering critique of the Reform movement in his ultra-Tory and protectionist newspaper, *The Glasgow Courier*, and which was also reprinted in the *Morning Post*. His article is a stark reminder that anti-slavery activism was at the heart of the radical protests for domestic political reform. Reversing conventional understandings of the direction in which radical protest travelled, MacQueen suggested that Bristol's destruction was a warning that the reformers' 'pernicious principles of robbery, insurrection and rebellion', which had already destabilised the colonies, were, in fact, coming home. *The Morning Post* published an alarmist note below his article called 'Political Parallels' in which 1831 was likened to the revolutionary period of 1641.[46]

MacQueen, who was a particularly virulent example of the pro-slavery interest, was fighting against, and losing to, the combined forces of slave resistance and anti-slavery activism on all fronts in 1831. Earlier in the year, the first female slave narrative, *The History of Mary Prince* had been published in London.[47] MacQueen infamously published a scurrilous attack on the moral character and veracity of Mary Prince in *Blackwood's Magazine*, helping to provoke two widely publicised libel cases at which Prince testified. The testimony that she offered about her abuse at the hands of several sadistic owners contributed to the abolitionist writings of English women who were radicalising the anti-slavery movement by boycotting West Indian sugar and demanding immediate emancipation. Indeed, Elizabeth Heyrick's incendiary pamphlet, 'Immediate, not Gradual Emancipation', first published in 1824, had already had a decisive impact on the direction and tactics of the Anti-Slavery Society.[48] Heyrick defended the Haitian Revolution. She argued not for sympathy for the plight of the enslaved but for their rights, and she had called for the boycott of West Indian sugar to be stepped up. As Manisha Sinha notes, with reference to the impact of Prince's narrative, abolitionism was an interracial movement shaped by black protest. This article has, perhaps, travelled a long way from the Tortolan heiress Caroline Anderson's Brighton address, but Heyrick allows us another shard of connection by which to find a way back to the south coast. Heyrick's incendiary pamphlet, written in the wake of the Demerara slave rebellion of 1823, was prefaced with an advertisement informing readers that Brighton's grocers were already refusing to sell West Indian sugar.

A year before the Tortolan rebels were tried and convicted for 'Mutiny and Rebellion', a packed public meeting had been held in Brighton to debate the subject of colonial slavery. Passionate speeches were given referencing the upsurge of resistance in the Caribbean. Locals demanded the government move on the issue or else it might be 'enforced in a way dreadful to contemplate'. Others spoke of the 'mighty power' of the diffusion of knowledge and information that 'would break down every barrier opposed to the destruction of tyranny and oppression'. There was a unanimous vote for 'the early and entire Emancipation of slaves in

our Colonies'.[49] The public gathering agreed to petition the House of Commons and to found immediately an Anti-Slavery Society and a Ladies Anti-Slavery Association.[50] Leading merchant and Brighton grocer, Isaac Bass, who attended the Brighton meeting, was subsequently appointed the town's delegate to attend the World Anti-Slavery Convention held at Exeter Hall in 1840.

Conclusion

In a special issue of *Race & Class* on Reparative Histories in January 2016, we argued that 'the politics of the present moment demand a rigorous investigation of how certain stories of the past are mobilised, and how certain histories are shaped in the light of contemporary concerns'.[51] The story of Sam Fahie and his co-conspirators in Tortola is oblique in the annals of anti-slavery rebellion, but it provides a way for thinking about the intertwined history of black resistance and abolitionism in light of current debates about black agency and the mobilisation of forms of humanism against racialised exclusionary practices. The idea of the 'reparative' sets up a certain temporality – one marked by the interval between what Avery Gordon has recently called the 'no-longer' and the 'not yet'. The Tortola rebels moved into that interval in their preparedness to act. Their actions – in the interval – changed the nature of that in-between time. As she notes, it is what that 'mobility or movement inaugurates in its refusal to tolerate any longer the conditions of life as given that matters, that changes things'.[52] The black radical tradition has always insisted that liberal universalism is forced to face the oppressions that have contradicted its vaulting and seductive claims. In relation to the contemporary moment, frantic claims of 'heritage' and 'legacy' are rallying forms of white supremacy and colonial apologetics that precisely seek to deny the interval, and deny contemporary institutionalised racism as much as violent racialised pasts. Tired clichés about 'memory wars' are wholly inadequate to the heightened stakes unfolding in the context of a newly emboldened toxic far Right which, as Robin Kelley reminds us, is 'not seeking normalization' but rather thrives on 'the chaotic, on the symbolic'.[53] The symbolism of the removal of confederacy statues is thus more than an occasion for wry observations about the inverted spectacle of disembodied whiteness being carted off in the middle of the night. Rather, it points to a politics of active and potent resistance to the project of disavowing black life and black labour in race-making capitalism. In this context, the commitment to excavating interconnected histories which can be identified in the very architecture and streets of the towns in which we live is an insistence on the multi-racial inherited past which we inhabit and the multi-racial traditions of resistance upon which we must build.

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Exhuming memory: Miguel Hernández and the legacy of fascism in Spain

BILL ROLSTON and AMAIA ALVAREZ BERASTEGI

Abstract: Each March in Orihuela in the province of Valencia, Spain, there is a festival of mural painting in honour of local poet Miguel Hernández. For long the poet, who died in a fascist jail in 1942, had been publicly unacknowledged, but now his life, his work and his political involvement as a Republican political activist are openly displayed. How Hernández is remembered provides a powerful example of the struggles between memory and forgetting in post-Franco Spain. Faced with the contradiction of a Pact of Forgetting in 1977 and a Historical Memory Law in 2007, memory in Spain has to be carefully exhumed from under layers of fascist policies and culture.

Keywords: Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, exhumation, Historical Memory Law, Miguel Hernández, murals, Orihuela, Pact of Forgetting, Spanish fascism

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Bill Rolston is an emeritus professor and former director of the Transitional Justice Institute at Ulster University. He has been documenting and writing about the political murals of Northern Ireland for the last three decades. Recently he has also focused on researching political murals elsewhere, including in the Basque Country, Chile, Colombia, Sardinia, Iran and Gaza.

Amaia Alvarez Berastegi is a researcher at the University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU). She obtained her PhD at the Transitional Justice Institute, Ulster University and her research and publication interests include political violence, transitional justice and media.

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Introduction

In July 2004, the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH) organised the exhumation of forty-six bodies at Villamayor de los Montes in the Burgos region of northern Spain. The dead had been victims of rightwing terror in 1936 during the coup of Generalissimo Franco and the subsequent destruction of the democratic Republic and the establishment of an authoritarian state. Among the dead was Zacarias Diéz Ontañón, aged 57, killed and disappeared in September 1936. At the end of the exhumation, a group of researchers who were recording testimonies of relatives involved in the recovery gave a gift to Zacarias Diéz, the grandson of Ontañón – an ARMH poster and an extract from a famous poem by Miguel Hernández, 'Elegia a Ramón Sijé', written in 1936.[1] During the excavation process, Zacarias had been reciting the poem aloud.

The significance of this cultural expression is powerful and apt. At one point, Hernández writes:

> A hard slap, a frozen blow,
> an invisible and murderous stroke of the axe,
> a brutal shove has brought you down.
>
> There is nothing longer than my wound,
> I weep for all my misfortunes
> I feel more for your death than for my own life.

And later in the poem:

> I want to scrape at the earth with my teeth,
> want to split the earth apart bit by bit
> with dry, hot bites.
>
> I want to mine into the earth until I find you
> and kiss your noble skull
> and take your shroud from you and bring you back.[2]

It is not simply that the words are chillingly appropriate for an exhumation. It is also that they were written in the same year Ontañón was disappeared. Miguel Hernández, one of Spain's most popular poets then and now, was himself later a victim of the same terror which obliterated Zacarias Diéz's grandfather. So, in a very real sense, the exhumation was of Hernández as much as it was of Ontañón: in one case a body, and in the other case a spirit and a dream; in both cases memory was being revived.

This article sets out to examine the way in which the memory of Hernández, his life, politics and poetry are commemorated in contemporary Spain. Specifically

it will consider the annual mural painting event in his home town of Orihuela in the province of Valencia. At the core of the article is an analysis of these murals with the intention of placing them in the context of the struggles between memory and forgetting in post-Franco Spain.

Miguel Hernández, 'the People's Poet'

Miguel Hernández was born in Oriheula in 1910. He was one of eight children, three of whom died when they were very young. Like the majority of people in Spain at the time, he was a peasant. Later, his poetry reflected his close connection to the land and farming. His verses were simple, short, and easy to understand for peasants and workers, even those with minimum or no literacy skills. This accessibility allowed his poetry to be used in the propaganda war which accompanied the bloody years of Franco's coup against the Republic and the brutal war which followed. But his influence as a poet was not confined to those at the lower end of Spain's class hierarchy. Even before the war, his poems had gained respect in intellectual circles. As politics polarised in Spain, Hernández became a member of the Alianza de Intelectuales Antifascistas along with other great poets of the time. But, unlike some other contemporary intellectuals, Hernández went much further; he joined the Communist Party, enrolled in the popular militias and fought on the front line in the Fifth Regiment.

Hernández had published his first book in 1933, *Perito en Lunas* (*Expert in Moons*), and had travelled several times to Madrid, where he met Pablo Neruda, Vicente Aleixandre and María Zambrano, among other intellectuals. He was in Madrid when the war started in 1936 and quickly escalated. For Hernández, the consequences of the war came close to home in many ways. At an early stage, sixty priests were killed in his native Orihuela, a highly conservative and Catholic part of Alicante. The father of Josefina, Hernández's wife, was also killed by the *milicianos*. In August 1936, just one month after the insurrection of the fascists, Spain's most renowned poet, Federico García Lorca, was killed. This had a great impact on Hernández, considering his relationship with and admiration for the Andalusian poet.

In 1937, Miguel Hernández went to Russia as a representative of the republican government. In the same year he married Josefina Manresa. Their first child, Manuel Ramón, was born in December 1937, but died a few months later as a consequence of hunger. Starvation is a common theme in Hernández's poetry. A second son, Manuel Miguel, was born in 1939 and lived until 1984. Josefina died in 1987.

The war ended in March 1939. In May that year Hernández was arrested while trying to escape to Portugal, but released as a result of the intervention of Pablo Neruda. Later he was rearrested, jailed and charged. He was sentenced to death in 1940. Jail conditions were difficult; he was transferred frequently between jails and often relied on the connections Neruda had with the Chilean embassy to receive food. His intellectual friends successfully pleaded on his behalf and the

death sentence was commuted, replaced by a jail sentence of thirty years. In 1941 Miguel Hernández was transferred to a prison in Alicante. There he became seriously ill with tuberculosis, typhus and bronchitis and died on 28 March 1942.

Shortly before he died, Hernández scratched a final verse on the prison hospital wall: 'Goodbye, brothers, comrades, friends; let me take my leave of the sun and the fields.' This was a final instance in a prolific period of poetry-writing that he engaged in while in prison, continuing on his output from previous years. He succeeded in getting these poems out to his wife and other friends and they were eventually collected under the title, *Cancionero y romancero de ausencia* (*Songs and Ballads of Absence*). They deal not only with the suffering of the civil war, but also his own imprisonment, the death of his first son and the struggle for survival of his wife and remaining son. The poverty of his family outside prison inspired perhaps his best-known poem, 'Nanas de la cebolla' ('Onion Lullaby'). Josefina had written telling him that she and Manuel had only bread and onions to eat. In the poem, Miguel represents his son as breastfeeding on his mother's 'onion blood'. The child's laughter is a sign of hope in the face of the desperate circumstances of the family, and by extension, Spain.

Remembering Miguel Hernández

After Franco's victory and during the long period of dictatorship, when Hernández was remembered, his political affiliation and military activity were frequently denied. He was acknowledged solely as a poet and not as a political activist. For some, there were also practical, self-defensive reasons for silence; Hernández's widow had to deny his militant past in order to survive the dictatorship.

Although Miguel Hernández and his poems were not forgotten in Spain and elsewhere, it was not until close to the end of Franco's dictatorship that public acknowledgement began to emerge. Initially commemoration events were small and non-institutional. In March 1971, while Franco was still alive, the Club Thader (a cultural group from Orihuela) organised a commemoration for Hernández in the Riacho Cinema in Orihuela on the anniversary of his death.

The last years of the dictatorship saw an upsurge of progressive and leftist politics. As part of this, cultural activity in support of democracy also flourished. One of the most important folk singers of the era was the Catalan Joan Manuel Serrat, who, in 1972, released an album entitled *Miguel Hernandez*, where he set the poems to music. Thus, the poet began to become an icon for the anti-dictatorship and pro-democracy movement.

One of the critical moments in terms of commemoration took place in 1976. Franco had died a year earlier. In February 1976 the Law for Political Reform was introduced. Pro-democracy protests were strong but were brutally repressed by the police. At this point, the Communist Party, along with other social and political movements (such as Friends of Unesco), decided to organise an event entitled Homenaje de los Pueblos a Miguel Hernández (People's Commemoration of

Miguel Hernández), which became the biggest cultural phenomenon during the Spanish transition. Around 250 separate events – poetry readings, lectures, exhibitions – were organised across Alicante and other parts of Spain. The heart of these events in Orihuela was a mural painting initiative in San Isidro, one of the most deprived areas of the town. Armed police tried to disrupt the events, but, despite the strong presence of the Guardia Civil and numerous tense moments, people managed to paint between thirty and forty murals between 15 and 23 May 1976 honouring Hernández.[3]

In 1981, a group from Orihuela organised commemorative events. One of these was the restoration of some of the murals painted in 1976. In the 1990s, several initiatives relating to Hernández were organised, but were mainly academic and more concerned with the cultural and intellectual aspect of the poet rather than with his political past or the fact that he had become a potent symbol in pro-democracy circles. Fifty years after his death, in 1992, the first International Conference dedicated to Miguel Hernández was organised at the University of Alicante. Although political aspects of his life and work were considered, the main emphasis was on poetry, drama, and influences and literary connections in Hernández's work.[4]

Years later, when the Spanish historical memory movement began to get strong, the Miguel Hernández Foundation organised an exhibition with photos and press coverage relating to the commemoration in 1976. This was 2006, just a year before the Spanish Congress passed the Historical Memory Law. The following year, 2007, the Cultural Association Orihuela 2010 was launched with the goal of organising events for the centenary of the birth of Miguel Hernández in 2010.

Finally, in 2010, commemorative events for Hernández became properly formalised and eventually official. The Fundación Miguel Hernández and several institutions (such as the government of Valencia and the Council of Orihuela) organised events to remember the poet, although they hardly mentioned the events of 1976. In contrast, the Fundación Pablo Iglesias and the University of Alicante organised another series of events and released a book focused on the period 1976–2010, which included photographs of the murals painted in 1976 and after. The author emphasises that the murals and other commemorative events of 1976 were 'cultural in form, but the background was evidently political'.[5] In effect, for many the aim in 2010 was identical to that in 1976: to remember Hernández the political activist as well as the poet, and through that memory to stimulate contemporary popular political activism.

In 2011, the control of the council of Orihuela changed for the first time since the restoration of democracy. Partido Popular (PP), the conservative and Christian Democratic Party formed by a former minister during the Franco dictatorship, had been in power up to that point, but in 2011 a coalition consisting of Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), the Greens and an independent party took control. The council decided to recover the initiative on murals and in

2012 organised a weekend of events to restore some of the old murals in San Isidro and to paint forty-three new murals. This has become an annual event, taking place each March, even when the PP regained control of the council in 2015. Each association or community group from the town paints a mural each year, and artists from the wider region are also involved. The event has grown to become not just a festival with poetry, art, music and murals but also a community-building initiative.

Approaching the 75th anniversary of Hernández's death in March 2017, Orihuela Council, now ruled by the PP, created a commission along with Cuidadanos (the Citizens' Party) to organise commemorative events in the town. Further afield, the leftwing party Podemos and PSOE in Valencia and PP nationally prepared to remember the poet.

Memory and transition in Spain

When Colonel Francisco Franco instigated a coup against the Second Republic in Spain in July 1936, he unleashed a period of violence whose consequences lasted until his death almost forty years later and, indeed, beyond. Estimates of casualties during the civil war between 1936 and 1939 vary, but it is likely that up to half a million people died. A further 250,000 to 500,000 people were forced into exile, mainly republican sympathisers. Both republicans and Francoists disappeared victims, but it is probable that victims of the Francoists were twice as many as those of republicans. In 2008, Judge Baltasar Garzón estimated that 115,000 bodies remained in unmarked graves.[6]

Nor did the terror cease with the fascist victory and the defeat of the Republic. During the early 1940s, when the Spanish population was approximately 26 million, there were more than 300,000 prisoners resulting from the political repression. This was almost ten times the number of prisoners as compared to the period immediately preceding Franco's coup d'état. Over 190,000 prisoners were executed or died in prison in the same period. Between 1936 and 1945, military courts sentenced over one million people to prison; the main 'crime' committed by the vast majority had been to side with the elected Popular Front government during the civil war.[7]

Victors' justice was apparent in other ways. For example, streets and other public places were named after Franco and other military men and groups, such as the División Azul (Blue Division), a Spanish unit fighting alongside the Nazis on the eastern front during the second world war. Monuments to the Francoist dead proliferated, most notably Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen) in El Escorial, where Franco himself was finally buried. It was not simply a symbolic site but the burial place of 40,000 Francoist dead whose bodies were exhumed and reburied there. By contrast, 'few monuments exist to honor the Republican dead'.[8]

Franco's victory was not simply a military one but also a triumph of exclusive memory in the public sphere. The republican losers could not exhume the bodies

of their dead, place them in dignified burial sites and inscribe their names on commemorative plaques; they could not name streets and other public places after their victims and heroes; they could not have regular ceremonies, including religious ceremonies, acknowledging their loss, not least because the Catholic church 'was not only implicated but fully involved in the legal system of repression organized by Franco and his cronies after the Civil War',[9] to the point that the ideology of Spain could be labelled 'National Catholicism'.[10]

However, enforced silence is not the same as forgetting, so there were already some tentative challenges to silence towards the end of Franco's life. For example, relatives of the disappeared began calling for exhumations of graves and, as has already been mentioned, Miguel Hernández was remembered publicly in Orihuela. After Franco's death, demands for democracy increased, but progress was slow. The transition did not result from military victory or indeed a peace agreement between powerful factions. So it was unclear how much the Right would give up power, and how quickly and definitively moves might be made towards democracy. A discourse emerged built around caution, gradualism and ultimately the continuation of silence.[11] An amnesty law was passed in 1977, the so-called Pact of Forgetting, drawing 'a clear line between Spain's turbulent dictatorial past in order to ensure a peaceful, democratic future'.[12] Around the same time, amnesty laws were also being passed as former dictatorships in Latin America moved towards some sort of democratic transition – Chile in 1978 and Argentina in 1982. And, like them, the Spanish *Ley de amnistía* was clearly a *Ley de amnesia*, which was intended to close the books on crimes against humanity during the dictatorship.[13] In both cases, state forces were set to gain most from such continuing silence. Yet, there was a substantial difference between the Spanish and Latin American cases. In Latin America the laws represented self-amnesties instigated by the military at the end of their authoritarian regimes, while in Spain the amnesty law resulted from a democratic vote.[14] Elsewhere the skewed and imposed nature of amnesty led to popular demands for justice, but in Spain such demands were virtually absent in the first instance. There was a large degree of consensus in Spain that democratic progress required drawing a line in the sand. The transition 'was predicated upon the "social contract" of the burial of the past – no reopening of old wounds and no questions asked'.[15]

Part of this consensus was a specific interpretation of the civil war period. The bloody conflict of the late 1930s was represented as a breakdown in democracy in which extremists from both Left and Right overwhelmed the political centre. What emerged was a 'myth of collective responsibility',[16] wherein both sides were judged equally guilty of atrocities. There was presumed to be no value in digging up the past. Progress required reconciliation, which was taken to mean silence about the past.

'Consensus' and 'reconciliation' became the key words of the early transition,[17] with the former seen as the gateway to the latter. Two decades later, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa operated under the

mantra that 'truth is the road to reconciliation', but there was no such insight in Spain. Rather, reconciliation required the 'atrophy of memory'.[18] With the civil war judged as 'a fratricidal mistake', both sides had to 'give up their claims to historical justice'.[19]

Yet there were factors which led to the realisation that silence was not a solution. One was that, as the period of peace and the strengthening of democratic institutions progressed – shown, for example, by the failure of an attempted right-wing coup in 1981– it became easier to envisage discussing the unfinished business of the past without accusations that one was threatening the process of nation-building. Second was that a new generation had emerged without the experience and fears of the previous generation and who began to see questioning as a healthy aspect of democratic society.[20] Third, accusations of hypocrisy began to emerge where Spain's legal powers were utilised in the attempts to prosecute Latin American torturers and assassins, such as Augusto Pinochet of Chile, but were not being used to pursue similar perpetrators from Spain's past.[21] Similar hypocrisy was seen also in the behaviour of the Catholic Church. In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI beatified 498 'martyrs of religious persecution' during the Spanish civil war while the Historical Memory Law, which will be discussed shortly, was being debated in Congress.[22] This infuriated Franco's victims, not least because the Church hierarchy continued to argue that the historical memory movement was a danger to democracy because it threatened the Pact of Forgetting on which Spain's transition to democracy was based.[23]

Throughout the early transition, therefore, pro-democracy activists were increasingly questioning the Pact of Forgetting with some success. Thus, on 20 November 2002, a parliamentary resolution formally condemned the rightwing uprising that led to the civil war and extended 'moral recognition' to victims of Francoist repression. This was the first clear sign of the recognition that 'whether or not one views Spain's *pacto del olvido* as necessary or legitimate, its effect was in many ways to perpetuate the historical injustice suffered by the victims of Francoism'.[24] That initial crack was forced wide open by the demands for the exhumation of bodies of the disappeared.

The main organisation behind this issue, ARMH, was founded in 2000. Its demands were that the state should establish a commission to investigate the fate of the disappeared, open military archives to facilitate investigations, and carry out the exhumation, identification and reburial of bodies.[25] By October 2004, almost 300 bodies had been exhumed, but this resulted from ARMH's actions, not those of the state which refused to become involved. Consequently ARMH approached the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. Their case was enhanced by the criticism of Spain by Pablo de Greiff, the UN special rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, that the 'privatization of exhumations' was an inadequate policy.[26] Subsequently, the UN Working Group added Spain to a list of countries falling short of their obligations in relation to disappearances.[27] After the passing of the Historical Memory Law in 2007, some regional governments

– for example, Navarre and the Basque Automous Community – paid families for the cost of exhumation.

The agitation on exhumations provided a powerful metaphor for Spain's failure to deal openly with its past.[28] It was not just the bodies which were buried, but also the truth and indeed the right to memory of the descendants of victims of fascism. Thus this agitation played a key role in the debate which led finally in 2007 to the Law on Historical Memory.

The Historical Memory Law contains twenty-two articles. Its main provisions are as follows:[29]

- The right of all citizens to moral reparation and to the recovery of personal and family memory (Article 2);
- The illegitimacy of the tribunals, juries and any other penal or administrative body during the civil war, as well as the sentences they imposed (Articles 3 and 4);
- Assistance on financial matters such as compensation, taxation, etc. for victims of Franco's policies (Articles 5 to 9);
- The provision of assistance to the direct descendants of victims who solicit information regarding the activities of the investigation, location and identification of the persons violently disappeared during the civil war or the subsequent political repression, whose whereabouts are unknown (Articles 11 to 14);
- The removal of shields, insignias, plaques and other objects or commemorative items, personal or collective, which glorify the military uprising, the civil war and the repression of the Dictatorship (Article 15);
- The prohibition of acts of a political nature or exaltations of the civil war, its protagonists, or of Francoism, at the Valley of the Fallen (Article 16);
- The preparation of a census of buildings and works created by members of Disciplinary Battalions of Worker Soldiers, as well as by prisoners in concentration camps, Worker Battalions and prisoners in Militarised Penitentiary Camps (Article 17);
- Granting of Spanish citizenship to the volunteer members of the International Brigades (Article 18);
- Recognition of victims' associations (Article 19);
- Creation of the Historical Memory Documentation Centre and General Archive of the civil war in Salamanca (Articles 20 and 21).

The three most innovative promises of the Law related to the illegitimacy of Francoist legal proceedings, the removal of Francoist symbols in public spaces and support for exhumations. Some successful outcomes resulted; for example, more than €1million was spent between 2006 and 2010 on 642 projects for the removal of Francoist monuments and insignia.[30] However, although the Law is unequivocal in its condemnation of the human rights abuses of fascism, appropriate and full action did not always follow. The PP voted against the Law.

Moreover, despite the removal of some Francoist symbols, the PP was centrally involved in identifying and acknowledging the members of División Azul who fought with Hitler.[31] Likewise, although the Law allowed for exhumations, the PP condemned the 'wasting' of public money on them.[32]

More than that, the state has vigorously blocked those who have tried to embrace the spirit of the law by pursuing practical outcomes. Initially, some relatives hoped that the sentences enacted against their relatives could be judged not simply illegitimate but null and void, but in the vast majority of these cases the Spanish judiciary has refused to overturn the sentences.[33]

In a similar vein, when Judge Baltasar Garzón in 2008 set out to investigate crimes against humanity committed by the Franco regime, the Supreme Court (in 2012) concluded that this legal action was forbidden as a result of the 1977 Amnesty Law. In addition, it denied the applicability of the European Convention on Human Rights, arguing that the crimes could not be investigated because they occurred before Spain became a signatory to the Convention.[34] While victims may have a right to truth, it concluded, this 'may be met by historians, but not by the courts'.[35]

For all the apparent inclusivity of the Act, it is clear that victims of fascism are not viewed in contemporary Spain as equivalent to victims of terrorism, particularly ETA terrorism.[36] The latter can expect the full force of the state to be used in terms of uncovering the truth and pursuing justice through prosecutions. The 2007 Act does not acknowledge that Franco's victims have the legal status of victim, and therefore have no right to economic compensation. This was the main reason why the Republican Left of Catalonia, despite being otherwise fully in support of the recovery of historical memory, voted against the Law.[37] Victims of fascism are relegated to relying on their own actions and may experience the full force of the state blocking, rather than facilitating, their quest for truth and justice.

In summary, for all its promise the Historical Memory Law falls far short of what was needed. Given its lack of commitment to action, it ensures that a full-bodied assault on the legacy of fascism is avoided. Instead, there is the contradictory existence of two mutually exclusive policies, a pact of forgetting and a law on memory. Frequently it appears that, when these clash, silence trumps memory. At the same time, the memory of Franco lives on in open view. And in Callosa de Segura, 19km from Orihuela, a confrontation developed in 2016 over the names of Francoist victims engraved on the cross outside the church. When the priest opined that, ten years after the passing of the memory law, it was time to consider removing these names, the *Falangistas* came out in force, staging rallies during which they were photographed giving the fascist salute.[38]

Walking the tightrope of memory

In August 1936, Spain's most internationally famous poet, Federico García Lorca, died.[39] The initial official explanation was that he died 'from war wounds'.

Allegations of more deliberate action were confirmed in 2015 when a radio station revealed a police report from 1965 stating that Lorca, a 'socialist and freemason' who had engaged in 'homosexual and aberrational practices', had been 'executed immediately following a confession'. Prior to that, Lorca was acknowledged and commemorated in Spain, but within a restricted narrative which ignored his politics and sexual preference and represented his death as 'a mistake' or the result of 'rogue action' by some police. Lorca's works were published during Franco's lifetime because 'Lorca was inscribed within harmonising discourses – a position fiercely adopted by his own biological family from the 1960s onward'.

In immediate post-Franco Spain, with the pact of forgetting in force, Lorca continued to be remembered as the poet, but not the homosexual or political activist. Thus in 1998 Prime Minister Aznar could enthusiastically celebrate the centenary of Lorca's death, stating that 'poetry has no ideology; it is beauty and humanity'. Once again, Lorca's family was content to subscribe to this narrative, arguing that his homosexuality and leftwing politics were a 'superficial' distraction from his work.

But if Lorca as symbol stood for the silence of the early transition, the re-emergence of memory in the new millennium also came to affect how Lorca was represented. Lorca's body was believed to be buried, along with those of two other victims, in a particular spot and, in 2008, Judge Baltasar Garzón inaugurated proceedings to exhume the bodies for identification. This was initially opposed by Lorca's family. The exhumation in 2009 revealed that there were, in fact, no human remains at the site. However, the overall effect was that, where previously Lorca had been 'appropriated in aid of the project of national reconciliation', he now 'functioned as the public face of the *desaparecidos* – the site of struggle through which the debates as to whether to dig up the past or to attempt closure were realized'.

The case of Lorca is highly revealing in terms of how memory, and in particular subaltern memory, in contemporary Spain walks a tightrope between silence and articulation. Where both forgetting and remembering are enshrined in state policy and law, the pressure is to engage in selective public memory as well as to fluctuate between remembering and forgetting from time to time. Remembering another of Spain's poet-victims, Miguel Hernández, has trod a similar path, albeit with some significant differences. Miguel's relatives initiated a court case asking for the revision of the resolution enacted in Madrid by the 5th Permanent War Council on 18 January 1940 that sentenced Miguel Hernández to death. However, the Spanish Supreme Court, and later the Spanish Constitutional Court, rejected the petition to revise the case in 2012.[40]

The Orihuela murals

By 2016, there were 188 murals in San Isidro, Orihuela, dedicated to the memory of Miguel Hernández. In March 2017, a further twenty-four murals were painted.

Figure 1. Street scene, Orihuela.

Given that there are no more than a dozen streets, including pedestrian-only streets, in the area, the effect is highly impressive (see Figure 1).

The Orihuela murals are probably unique in world terms in that the focus is almost totally on one theme, the life and work of a single poet. The most common topics in the murals, as in the poems, are love and family. A number also acknowledge the dignity of peasants and their work; see Figure 2, where peasants are at work in the fields, overseen by the ghost of Miguel Hernández. Miguel's portrait is ubiquitous (see Figure 3), and other motifs include onions, moons, flowers, children, cockerels, doves and goats. Of these, the moon is most frequently represented, in line with Hernández's self-definition as a 'perito en lunas'.[41]

Almost every mural has a quotation from one of his poems. The most cited are 'Carta' ('Letter'), 'Vientos del pueblo' ('Winds of the People'),[43] 'El rayo que no cesa' ('The Lightning which does not cease')[44] and 'Elegia a Ramon Sije' ('Elegy for Ramon Sije'). By far the most popular is 'Nanas de la cebolla' ('Onion Dreams') and consequently onions are widely represented in the murals (see Figure 4 which also contains the frequently cited reference to a mother feeding her child).

Some of the poems, and indeed some of the murals, are very dark, with references to hunger, blood, death, separation and imprisonment. And yet, many exude joy and hope. Often light and dark coexist in the murals. To first appearances, with poetry to the fore, politics seems a minor key in the murals. There are few direct references to Miguel the prisoner (see Figure 5), Miguel the activist, and the Spanish civil war (see Figure 6, which reproduces the famous Robert Capa photograph, taken in 1936, of the republican combatant struck by a bullet). But many of the images appear whimsical and child-like, such as the one which depicts a boy painting the face of Miguel in the moon (see Figure 7). This would seem to replicate the public memorialisation of Lorca. But such a conclusion would be erroneous. Politics is never far away.

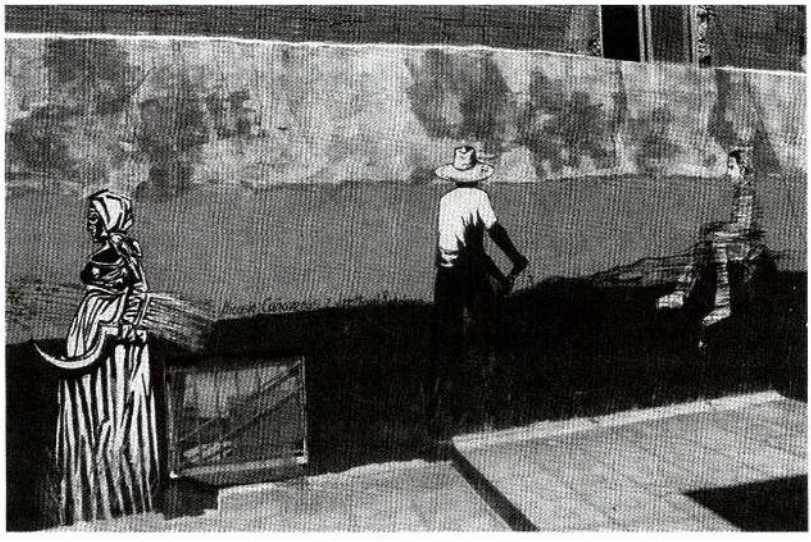

Figure 2. 'La siega. The mowing.' Painted by Nicasio Cañaveras and Juan Miguel Rodríguez, 2013.[42]

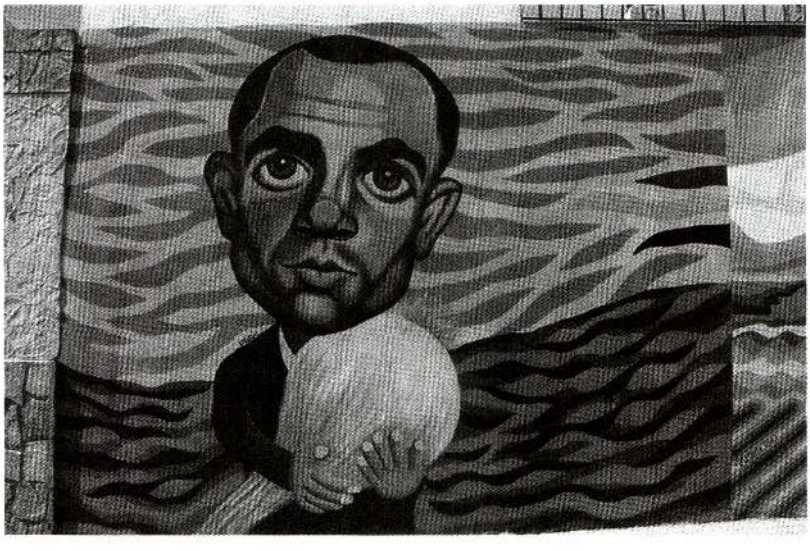

Figure 3. Portrait of Miguel Hernández. Painted by Kike Payá (Kikelín), 2015.

Sometimes this is directly represented in the mural itself, as in Figure 8, which refers to the bombing of Guernica and nearby Alicante by planes of the German Condor Legion.[45]

Sometimes the iconography appears apolitical, but the juxtaposition of text changes things; take the mural shown in Figure 9. The most obvious items are the portrait of Miguel and a bird. But then it becomes apparent that the bars of an actual window have been worked into the mural like prison bars. Then the word

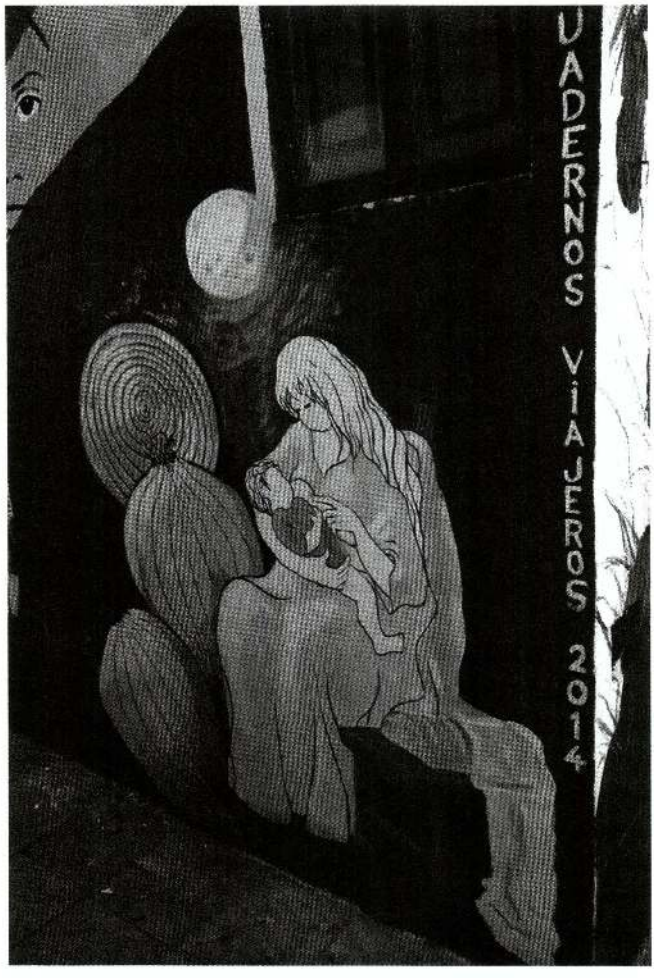

Figure 4. 'Pedazos de vida mía' ('Pieces of my life'). Painted by Cuadernos Viajeros, 2014.

'carcel, prison' comes into view. And finally the words quoted from one of Hernández's poems situate the mural as profoundly political:[48]

> Your laugh makes me free
> It gives me wings
>
> Singing I await death,
> for there are nightingales that sing
> above the guns
> and in the midst of battles.

Thus war and family, the political and the intimate often sit side by side in the murals, as in Figure 10, where again one cannot escape from Hernández's

Figure 5. '¿Por qué? Why?' Painted by Ricardo Canovas Pérez and Ricardo Canovas Ballester, 2017.

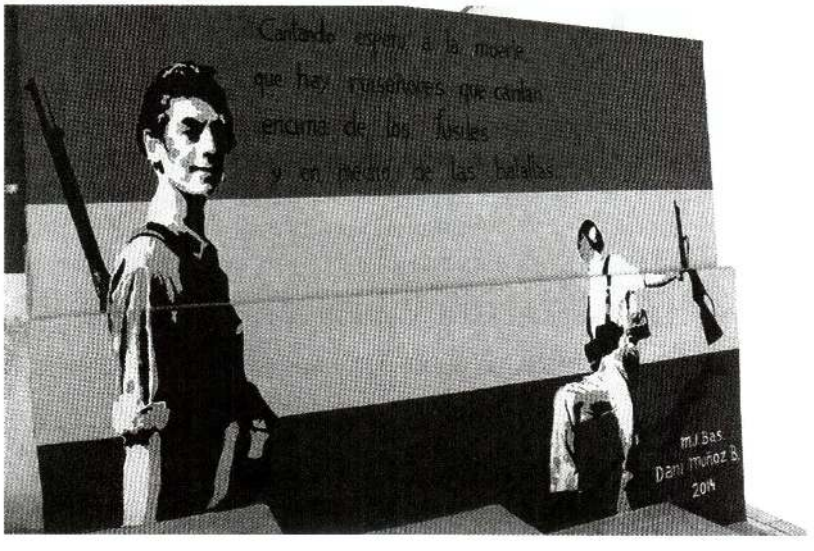

Figure 6. 'Cantando espero a la muerte. Singing I await Death.' Painted by M. J. Bas and Dani Muñoz, 2014.[46]

referencing of his wife and son. At the same time, the message of the mural is not simply about suffering and victimhood, but also about resistance, as the accompanying words quoted from the poem indicate: 'Our child will be born with his fist clenched.'[49]

At the same time, there are murals which do not contain directly political references in either the iconography or the text. But their sheer joy, vitality and sense of hope run counter not only to the silence of the Franco years but are also a direct

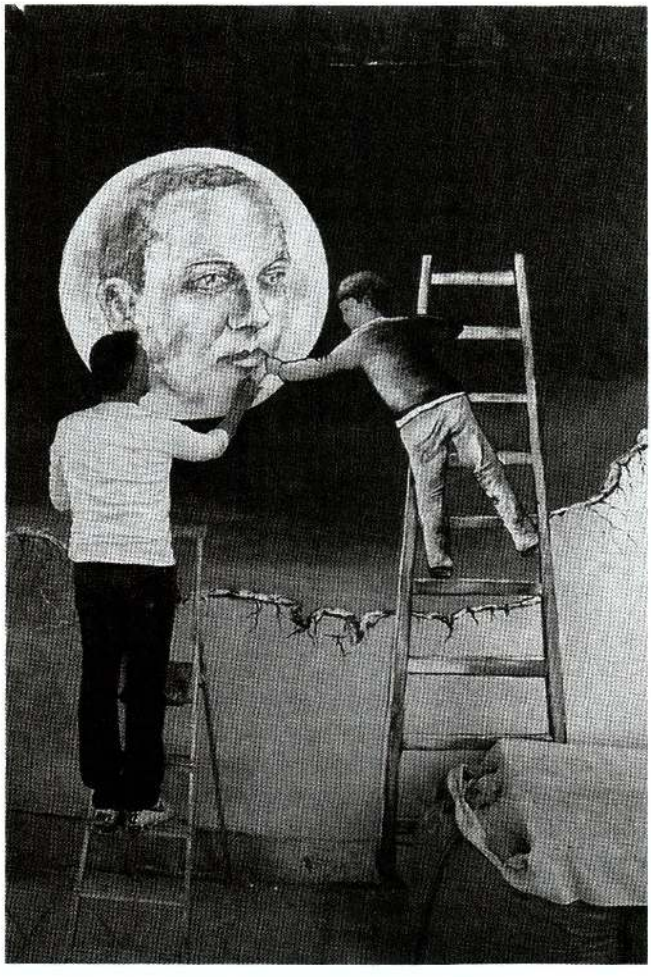

Figure 7. 'Ríete niño. Laugh, boy.' Painted 2013, restored 2017 by Andrés López (pictured at work).

challenge to the fascist mindset (see Figure 11); the crippled man is not confined by his disability, but takes flight. By their very existence such murals say that fascism represents the failed past, while Miguel is alive, as are the dreams he shared and shares with others.

The murals of Orihuela are not simply product, but also process. Over two or three days each March, around the anniversary of his death, groups of painters, helpers and friends take over the streets of San Isidro, each at their allocated section of wall. It is a fiesta, with stalls, children and dogs running about, bands marching from mural to mural, all enabled by the streets being blocked to traffic (see Figure 12).

In addition, it is crucial to see mural painting in situations such as this as public performances.[51] There are very few spectators as such in Orihuela; almost everyone is involved in this collective event, which is at once an acknowledgement of Miguel

Figure 8. 'Canción del antiavionista.' Painted originally in 1997 by Antonio Ballester, restored by Eva Ruiz, 2014.[47]

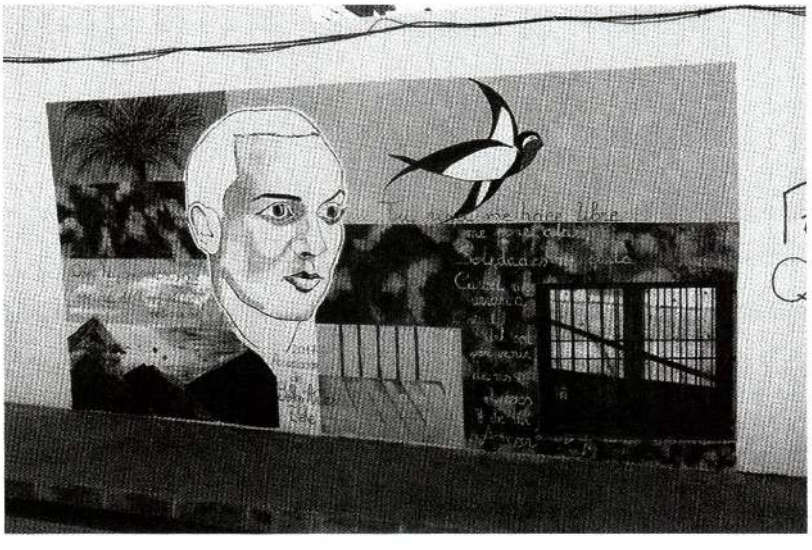

Figure 9. 'Pero hay un rayo de sol en la lucha, que siempre deja sombra' ('But there is a ray of sunshine in the fight that always leaves a shadow'). Painted by Asociación de Bellas Artes Elche, 2017.

Hernández and a celebration of his poetry and his life. It is important to remember that such acknowledgement and celebration were difficult, if not downright impossible, during the Franco years and indeed immediately afterwards. Much of what was politically significant about Hernández's memory had been banished to silence,

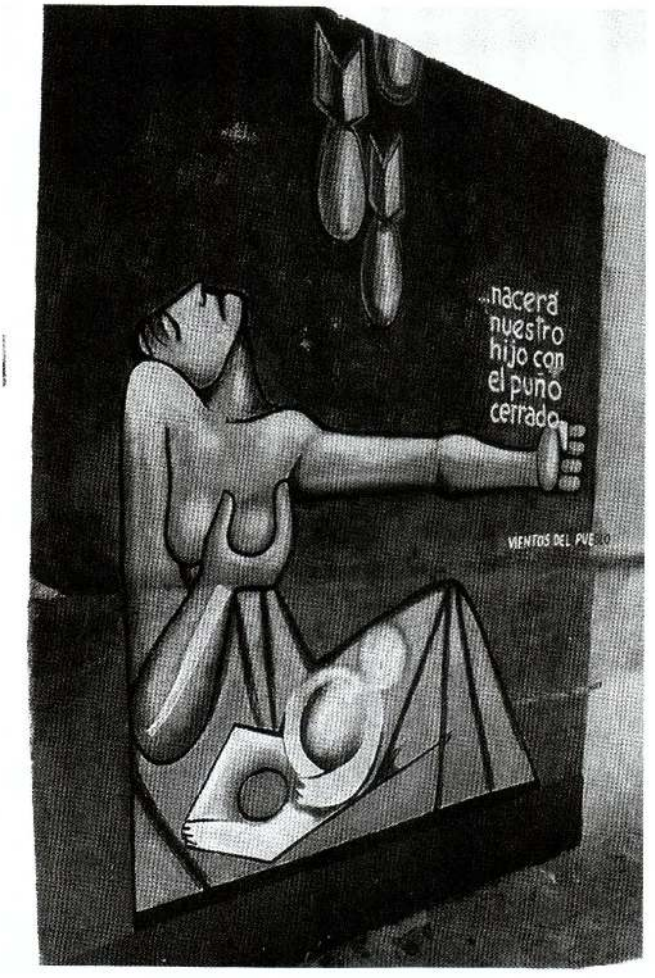

Figure 10. 'Vientos del pueblo. Winds of the People.' Painted originally by Pepe Gutiérrez, 1976. Restored by Enrique Barcala and Merche Bou, 2012.

leaving a carefully edited collection of his poetry and a sanitised version of his biography. What the annual festival of mural painting does is exhume the authentic Miguel. In all of this, the public nature of the performance is of crucial importance; it is not enough to simply remember the dead; one must also publicly display one's remembrance in pursuit of respect, acknowledgement and inclusion.

In this context, it may seem strange that his politics is not referred to more frequently in the murals. One could take this as a perfect example of transitional Spain seeking to cope with memory. It is apparent that there are three ways of seeking to solve the contradiction between the Pact of Forgetting and the Historic Memory Law. First, forgetting trumps memory; for example, the privatisation of exhumations. Second, memory trumps forgetting; for example, the changing of some street names and the removal of some monuments and statues. Third, there is a hybrid

Figure 11. Painted by Cayetano Ferrández, Begoña Martínez, Aurora Ferrández, Alba Ferrández and Cristian Ferrández, 2013.[50]

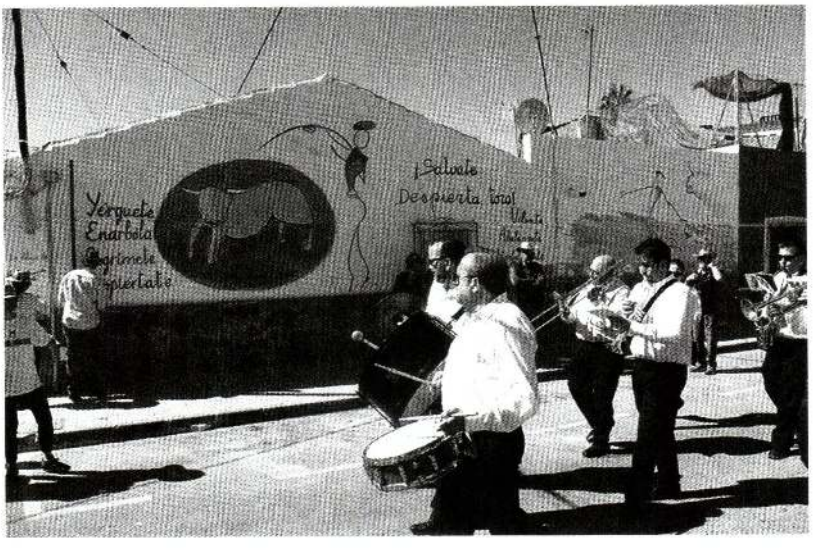

Figure 12. '¡Sálvate despierta toro!' ('Wake up and save yourself, bull'). Painted by L. Piñero, Pilar, Mª Teresa, J. Vicente, Paloma, Dolo, Andrea, Cristina, Adriana, Victoria, Sandra and Victor Manuel, 2017.

form of partial remembering, a way of remembering without fully remembering, as in the case of Lorca. The murals superficially would seem to fit in this third category: remembering Hernández the poet but not Hernández the radical republican. But there is an alternative view. Miguel the republican activist and political

prisoner is not central to more than a few of the murals, nor in most of the quotations from his poems which accompany the murals. However, this annual mural festival is like a repeated exhumation event. What is being exhumed is not literally the body of Hernández but the memory of everything he stood for. Fascists killed not just the man but the dream of democracy in Spain. So, the people are resurrecting the dream in a visual way. It is not just dreams of onions that are being celebrated and painted, but the dreams of Hernández and all who suffered at the hands of fascism. By their collective action, the muralists of Oriheula, like the activists of ARMH, are 'producing history in a world of absence'.[52]

For the hundreds involved in the mural event and for thousands who come to view the finished product, Miguel speaks to their dreams – in the images of moons and children, of nursing mothers and onions, summed up in the words of his most popular poem:

Laugh, child,
drink the moon
when you need to.

Lark of my house,
keep laughing.
The smile in your eyes
is the light of the world.
Laugh so much
that when it hears you
space beats in my soul.

Your laughter makes me free,
gives me wings.
It relieves me of solitude,
tears away my prison.[53]

In 1998, on the occasion of the centenary of Lorca's birth, Prime Minister Aznar spoke of a sanitised and depoliticised version of the poet when he said, 'Spain, today, is called Federico'.[54] But in the murals for Miguel Hernández, even if politics is not directly articulated at every turn, it is the poet, activist, political prisoner and victim, the whole life, which is being remembered. For those involved, it would be no problem to alter Aznar's statement to agree: 'Orihuela, today, is called Miguel.'

The mural festival is a performance which involves memorialisation, celebration, acknowledgement, the refusal of oblivion, political challenge, disinterment

and exhumation of memory. It speaks to justice, in opposition to the injustice experienced by Hernández. In a situation where there is still a 'lack of adequate forms of linguistic expression and public spaces for the articulation of memories related to defeat',[55] the muralists of Orihuela are showing the way. It is, in fact, an act of social healing. As such, it reveals the potential role of memory in nation-building. What Ferrándiz has to say about exhumations could easily sum up the collective experience of mural painting in Orihuela:

> Against the ever-present backdrop of the uncovered bones, conversation (informal and more structured), the giving and receiving of testimonies, and the collective sharing of memories and participation in commemorative acts, are crucial performances constructing a particular network of symbolic channels and social relations ... These narratives are presumed to have a double healing effect. At a personal level, they break with years of shame, humiliation, fear and forgetting. At a social level, they feed into public discourse producing a collective recognition of their authors' suffering, in a long overdue act of historical justice.[56]

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26 Druliolle, 'Recovering historical memory', p. 317.
27 Davis, 'Is Spain recovering', p. 873.
28 Another powerful metaphor utilised by academics and others is that of the ghost. Thus Colmeiro ('Nation of ghosts', p. 26) argues: 'Thousands of unmarked burial sites in ditches along the roads still remain in the Spanish landscape, invisible but ever present, just like ghosts still awaiting their day of justice. The liminal and invisible position is an adequate metaphor of their non-existing status in the margins of the official history.' In Almodovar's film *Volver* (2006), the supposedly dead mother rematerialises to comfort her daughters; see Stephanie Golob, 'Volver: the return of/to transitional justice politics in Spain', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 9, no. 2 (2008), pp. 127–41. See also Francisco Ferrándiz Martín, 'The return of Civil War ghosts: the ethnography of exhumations in contemporary Spain', *Anthropology Today* 22, no. 3 (2006), pp. 7–12.
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War, Empire and the Attlee government 1945–1951

JOHN NEWSINGER

Abstract: In this article, adapted from a speech delivered at a conference on reparative history, the author challenges the dominant view of the progressive radicalism of the postwar Attlee government by exposing the brutality of its imperial adventures. Examining British involvement in Vietnam, Indonesia, Greece, Malaya, Kenya, India, Palestine, Iran and Korea, the piece paints a very different and bloody historical narrative from the dominant one. It argues that the welfare state was accompanied by the creation of the warfare state and that it was the Labour Party which cemented the 'special relationship' with the United States, which today the vast majority of the parliamentary Labour Party would still like to see hold sway in terms of foreign policy and questionable foreign interventions.

Keywords: Attlee government, colonial policy, imperialism, Indian Independence, Labour Party, special relationship, warfare state

In his 2013 documentary film, *The Spirit of '45*, Ken Loach presented a somewhat nostalgic view of the 1945–1951 Labour governments, celebrating their

John Newsinger is Professor of History at Bath Spa University. This is an edited version of his paper 'Imperial Silences', given at the conference 'Reparative Histories 2: the making, re-making and un-making of "Race"', Brighton, April 2017.

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programme of domestic reform, best described as the putting in place of a system of welfare capitalism.[1] Whatever criticisms one might have of the portrayal of Labour's domestic achievements, more important is the fact that such a film from a leftist film-maker had an altogether absent dimension. What was missing was any serious concern about the Attlee government's foreign, defence and colonial policies, about what can be usefully described as its imperial strategy. As well as the modern welfare state, the Labour government also established the modern warfare state, a much less celebrated achievement. Not only does this deserve more attention than it generally receives, but it also, as we shall see, seriously impacted on the government's domestic agenda, and arguably brought about its downfall in 1951. Moreover, the government's reputation as somehow 'progressive' with regard to imperial affairs, a reputation deriving from Indian Independence, was spurious. The Labour government engaged in a number of (now forgotten) colonial wars and only reluctantly conceded independence to India in order to avoid revolt on a scale that the British would not have been able to suppress. And the Attlee government's involvement in the Korean war was remarkably similar to the Blair government's later involvement in the Iraq war. The main differences were that the Korean war was an even more bloody and murderous affair than the Iraq war, but that the Cold War provided a much more plausible pretext than the 'war on terror'. But how did the Labour government itself explain away its embrace of imperialism?

The starting point has to be the nature of imperialism itself. Too many historical accounts reduce discussion of Empire to colonialism, to the occupation and administration of conquered territories. The better studies include some acknowledgement of the 'informal empire', that is of those formally independent countries which did what the British government told them to. But there is another dimension to imperialism: the competition – military, political, economic, even cultural – between rival great powers. This imperialist competition has been the great driving force of modern history, consuming millions of lives in two world wars and countless smaller ones, and actually threatening the destruction of human civilisation altogether in the Cold War. After a brief hiatus following the fall of the Soviet Union, this imperialist competition between the great powers has resurfaced with a vengeance today. Any meaningful historical discussion of the British Labour Party and Empire has to embrace these dimensions.

The Statement of War Aims, 1917

One problem with Labour is the gap between what the leadership has said it was committed to and believed in, and what its governments actually did in practice. A good starting place to explore this discrepancy is provided by the Party's Statement of War Aims, made decades before Attlee's government, which was adopted at a joint conference with the Trades Union Congress on 28 December 1917. According to Mark Phythian, this was the Labour Party's first serious consideration of 'questions of war and peace' and it showed the party's 'instinctive

pacifism'.[2] The Statement, three-and-a-half years into the Great War, committed the party to 'so conduct the terrible struggle in which they find themselves engaged as to bring it, as soon as may be possible, to a secure and lasting peace for the world'. It proclaimed that 'the fundamental purpose of the British Labour movement in supporting the continuance of the struggle is that the world may henceforth be made safe for democracy'. It called for 'the complete democratisation of all countries; on the frank abandonment of every form of Imperialism; on the suppression of secret diplomacy ... and the entire abolition of profit-making armament firms, whose pecuniary interest lies always in war scares and rivalry in preparation for war'. The Statement supported 'the principle of allowing each people to settle its own destiny' with 'the outstanding example being that of the Poles'. It called for the establishment of 'a free state' in Palestine 'to which such of the Jewish people as desire to do so may return and work out their own salvation'. And it called for the European colonies in Tropical Africa to be placed under the control of the League of Nations. There were also a number of statements of opposition to the postwar plans of the 'Imperialists and capitalists' of all nations. The Statement was carried by 2,132,000 votes to 1,164,000. Opposition came primarily from those most supportive of the Lloyd George government, which regarded any Statement as undermining the war effort, and were openly pro-imperialist.[3]

What prompted the Statement was fear of revolutionary contagion from Russia. The Labour leadership recognised that it had to move to the Left, at least rhetorically, to defeat any revolutionary challenge. And, of course, the Bolsheviks had publicly called for a ceasefire and released the text of the Allies' Secret Treaties (which were published in Britain by the *Manchester Guardian* on 13 December 1917), revealing for all to see the imperialist ambitions underpinning the Allied war effort.

Rhetoric or reality? When the Statement was passed, there were still Labour ministers participating in the Lloyd George Coalition; Arthur Henderson, the Labour leader, had been a member of the Coalition government at the time of the 1916 Easter Rising, after which Labour MPs had joined in cheering the news of the execution of the rebel leaders. More to the point, over the years since the 1917 Statement was passed, Labour governments have made war, crushed colonial rebellions and embraced the arms industry. It is worth remembering that it was the Attlee government that began the development of British nuclear weapons and Attlee had, as Prime Minister, endorsed the US decision to drop nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Indeed, the only part of the 1917 Statement to which Labour has remained true is its commitment to Zionism and even here, whenever the Zionist cause was felt to conflict with the interests of British imperialism, it was abandoned, even if only temporarily. It is worth noticing, moreover, that the Labour commitment in 1917 actually went further than the Balfour Declaration, which had at least paid lip-service to the rights of the Palestinian people.

Part of the problem with distinguishing between the rhetoric and the practice of British Labourism over the years since the first world war is that many active

party members and even some Labour MPs have indeed been 'instinctive pacifists'. This has been particularly true of those on the Left of the party. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that their concerns have not been the concerns of Labour governments which have always pursued the interests of British imperialism as they have seen them. During the 1945 general election campaign, Winston Churchill accused the Labour Party of having a 'secret Socialist Foreign Policy' whereas, as Peter Taylor has pointed out, while many party members hoped this was the case, in reality, the party had 'what can only be called a secret capitalist and traditional foreign policy'.[4] And, under the Attlee government, the pursuit of British imperial interests involved embracing, however reluctantly, a subordinate position to the United States, a subordination that continues today even under President Donald Trump. British politicians of all parties have always insisted on calling this subordination a 'special relationship'.

Restoring colonial rule

What of the Attlee government's reputation for being somehow 'progressive' in colonial affairs? What we find is a different rhetoric from that of the Conservatives, but a remarkably similar practice. At the end of the second world war, the Labour government found itself involved in three military interventions, in Indo-China, Indonesia and in Greece, all initiated while Labour had been in coalition with the Conservatives, but now enthusiastically continued. In Indo-China, British troops intervened in the south of the country to restore French colonial rule. The first British and Indian troops arrived in Saigon in early September 1945 (by which time Attlee had taken office). They were welcomed as liberators by the Vietnamese, who were under the sadly mistaken impression that the Allies were going to recognise their independence. The British soon came into conflict with the Communist-led Vietminh nationalist opposition. By the beginning of October, there were over 20,000 British and Indian troops in the city, engaged in a running battle with the rebels. Artillery was used against rebel positions inside the city and, according to one contemporary account, the British 'deliberately burned down great sections of the native quarter in Saigon'.[5] The situation became so desperate that the British rearmed surrendered Japanese troops to help suppress the Vietminh. By the time the British handed over to the French, over forty British and Indian soldiers had been killed. The British claimed to have killed over 600 Vietminh fighters, but the death toll, including civilians, was certainly much higher.[6] The British were also involved in restoring French control in Cambodia, with a small British force being despatched to Phnom Penh where they once again rearmed Japanese troops to help maintain order.[7]

This colonial adventure excited little concern back in Britain at the time. The same cannot be said for the much more bloody intervention in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). Once again, British troops began arriving after Labour had taken office, and found themselves confronting a well-armed nationalist movement that had taken control of most of the country. Fighting was so fierce that the

British turned to the Japanese prisoners-of-war, rearming thousands of them and deploying them against the rebels. The city of Semarang was taken by Japanese forces, using both tanks and artillery, killing over 2,000 rebel fighters and civilians, and driving the survivors out. According to one account, 'Truck loads of Indonesian prisoners with their hands tied behind their backs were driven into the countryside and never seen again.'[8] When the Japanese handed over to the British on 20 October 1945, the British were so impressed that the Japanese commander, a Major Kido, was recommended for the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). Such an award would, of course, have been political dynamite at a time when British prisoners were being liberated from Japanese camps and would have drawn unwelcome attention to the Labour government's policy of imperial restoration. Indeed, both Attlee and Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, lied to the House of Commons about the extent of the use of Japanese troops.[9]

The heaviest fighting took place in the port-city of Surabaya where some 4,000 British troops came under attack towards the end of October. Over 200 British and Indian soldiers were killed, including their commander, Brigadier Mallaby. Reinforcements were poured into the city and on 9 November a full-scale assault, involving 24,000 troops supported by twenty-four tanks, was launched. Surabaya was shelled by both land and sea and bombed from the air. On the first day of the assault, over 500 bombs were dropped on the city including 1,500 pounders. Two cruisers and three destroyers joined in pounding the city. It was, according to one account, 'one of the largest single engagements fought by British troops since the end of the Second World War'.[10] Only after three weeks of heavy fighting were the nationalist forces driven from the city, suffering some 10,000 casualties in the process. At the end of the fighting, '90 percent of the city's population were now refugees'.[11] Even today, this major battle is virtually unknown in Britain, although in Indonesia the first day of the British attack, 10 November, is still celebrated as 'Heroes Day', commemorating the Indonesian struggle for independence.

Elsewhere, the British were actually driven out of Magelang and Ambarawa, and in fighting for control of Bandung, much of that city was burned to the ground. The war was waged with considerable brutality and British troops shot prisoners out of hand 'as a matter of routine'.[12] At the height of the fighting, there were 60,000 British troops occupying the country. They only finally handed over to the Dutch in November 1946. By then over 600 British and Indian troops had been killed, more than 1,400 had been wounded and another 300 were missing. There were accusations that Indian troops were deliberately placed in the firing line in order to minimise British casualties which were more politically damaging for the government. The rearmed Japanese had suffered over 1,000 casualties. At the time, there was considerable opposition to this intervention, both in Britain itself, in Australia, but also among many British and Indian soldiers. The ferocity of the Indonesian resistance and the scale of the losses they inflicted were salutary lessons for the British army. The conclusion drawn was that war with mass nationalist movements in heavily populated colonies was something to be avoided at all costs as the British Empire no longer had the military and economic

strength to defeat them. This lesson certainly informed the Labour government's response to Indian nationalism.

The Labour government's reputation as being 'progressive' in its colonial policy is completely dependent on the fact that this brutal war, with the loss of so many lives, has been almost completely forgotten, indeed suppressed. Note the Indonesian intervention was considerably more bloody than the British role in the recent occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. One last point goes some way towards explaining British interest in the Dutch East Indies: 'In August 1945 a highly secret agreement had been signed by the Dutch granting the British and Americans access to thorium deposits – vital for nuclear processes – on Singkep island.'[13]

The Labour government inherited military intervention in Greece, although Attlee and co. had been members of the Churchill Coalition when British troops were first sent into Athens to crush the Communist-led resistance. By the time Labour came to power, the resistance had already been driven out of Athens after heavy fighting, but Attlee and Bevin continued the policy of royalist restoration they had supported as members of the Coalition. Sir Orde Sergeant, the Permanent Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, actually wrote reassuringly to Rex Leeper, the British ambassador in Athens, that Labour was wholeheartedly committed to the intervention in Greece, but had 'to give it all the trappings of anti-Imperialist non-interventionist respectability'.[14] As it was, the deteriorating situation, with the country descending into civil war, proved too costly. After the Labour government had provided £200 million in military and £144 million in economic aid for a reactionary Greek government that embraced former collaborators, in February 1947, Foreign Secretary Bevin had to reluctantly acknowledge that the burden was too great. Greece, which had been regarded as part of Britain's 'informal empire', had to be handed over to the Americans. Even so, the last British troops were not withdrawn until 1950. The British surrender of primacy in Greece was, of course, of considerable significance, occasioning the declaration of the Truman Doctrine. It was the first postwar diplomatic acknowledgement of British subordination to the United States. What had been seen as an alliance between great powers was now reluctantly and often bitterly acknowledged as a dependent relationship with Britain very much the junior partner.[15]

'Merdeka!' – Liberation

One other restoration is worth briefly noticing here: the restoration of British rule in Malaya. Here the British had to fight no battles against armed nationalists; indeed the Malayan Communists were actually allies, with their leaders honoured by the British government. Chin Peng, soon to become Communist Party secretary, was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) no less. Instead of taking advantage of British involvement in Indo-China and Indonesia to launch a war of liberation, the Communists devoted their efforts to building up a strong trade union movement and a constitutional broad Left alliance uniting Malays,

Chinese and Indians. The growth of a militant Left in Malaya was not acceptable to the Labour government in London. Malaya's tin and rubber were vital for British economic recovery. In 1948, Malayan rubber and tin earned more dollars than all Britain's own exports. Repression by Britain was to drive the Communists down the road to insurrection. Strikes were broken, leftwing newspapers were closed and leftwing activists were imprisoned.

Demonstrations were dispersed by force. On 15 February 1946, Communist-organised demonstrations were banned and, when they went ahead, were attacked by police and troops. In Singapore, two demonstrators were killed and in Labis fifteen were killed. A demonstration in Mersing protesting against this loss of life was dispersed, with another seven demonstrators killed.[16] As part of their war on the Left, the British proceeded to strip thousands of non-Malays – Chinese and Indians – of their citizenship. By closing the door to reform, the Labour government effectively precipitated a Communist insurgency in 1948.

The Labour government introduced a State of Emergency on 19 June 1948, in effect imposing a police-state regime on the colony. This was accompanied by mass arrests. By the end of August, 4,500 people had been rounded up, with the brunt of the repression falling on the trade unions. The Pan Malayan Federation of Trade Unions (PMFTU) had already been banned, but now activists were arrested, sacked and blacklisted, so that by September 1948 union membership had fallen from over 154,000 to only 75,000. And, in May 1949, the former general secretary of the PMFTU, S. A. Ganapathy, a veteran of the anti-Japanese resistance, was hanged, despite international protests, for possession of a pistol.

The Communists launched a guerrilla insurgency which the British initially attempted to crush by means of brutality and intimidation. Villages were burned down, torture was commonplace and prisoners were routinely shot 'while trying to escape'. This culminated in the Batang Kali massacre of December 1948 in which twenty-four Chinese unarmed civilians were killed, a matter that the Labour government again successfully covered up. This repression failed to crush the revolt and so the British introduced the forcible resettlement of the Chinese population, the backbone of the insurgency, in heavily policed camps in June 1950, the so-called Briggs Plan. This used to be presented as part of a 'hearts and minds' strategy, as a sort of welfare state counter-insurgency, but, as Leon Comber has pointed out, 'although it has not been widely commented on in the published literature, the Briggs resettlement plan bears an extraordinary resemblance to the Japanese Protection Village program introduced by the Japanese when they invaded Manchuria and China in the 1930s ... the matter is worthy of further research'.[17]

'Moto' – Fire

There was a similar pattern of development in Kenya, where the Labour government's refusal to challenge the power of the white settlers precipitated rebellion. Here the Attlee government was once again confronted with a militant trade

union movement. This was clearly incompatible with Colonial Office thinking. As an official handbook for Kenyan workers explained, 'Trade unions are formed so strikes can be avoided.'[18] Instead, the militants established the East African Trades Union Congress (EATUC) on May Day 1949 and raised the demand for independence and an end to white settler rule on May Day 1950. The EATUC was the first organisation to call for independence, provoking the arrest of its leaders, Fred Kubai and Makhan Singh. And on 16 May, thousands of workers began walking out on strike in protest. The colony was gripped by a general strike that started in Nairobi but spread throughout the country and, at its height, saw over 100,000 workers out on strike. Throughout the general strike, a great fire was kept burning outside Nairobi and the cry 'Moto' (Fire) became the strikers' slogan. The strike lasted for nine days before it was called off by the unofficial leadership responding both to government repression and to an increase in the minimum wage. Over 350 workers were arrested and thrown into prison and some 2,000 were victimised. The EATUC's general secretary, Makhan Singh, was interned without trial by a Labour Colonial Secretary, where he remained for eleven years.[19] Although the so-called Mau Mau rebellion, which was only put down by the most brutal and murderous methods, began once the Conservatives had been returned to power, it had its origins in Labour's terms of office.

'Giving' freedom to India

The fact that India gained independence under the Labour government is the key to the claim that Labour was 'progressive' as far as imperial affairs were concerned. Clement Attlee 'gave' independence to India, and, whatever other shortcomings there might have been, this is championed as one of the great achievements of his government. The truth is somewhat different. Let us look briefly at Labour's record. When Gandhi launched his great campaign of civil disobedience in March 1930, there was a Labour government in power. It presided over the most brutal repression. Unresisting demonstrators were beaten to death, protests were fired on and, according to official figures, more than 60,000 people were arrested, including Gandhi himself. In Sholapur, a general strike was called to protest against Gandhi's arrest. The workers effectively took control of the city, which was not recaptured by the police until 16 May 1930. Strikers were shot down by the police, brutally beaten and many were sentenced to public floggings. The strike leaders, Mallappa Dhanshetty, Qurban Hussain, Shrikrishna Sarda and Jagannath Shinde, were all subsequently hanged. This repression does not appear on the Labour Party's record. It has been excised, forgotten.

This sort of amnesia is absolutely vital if the Labour Party's 'progressive' reputation in imperial affairs is to be maintained. And, of course, when the Congress Party was suppressed and Gandhi was once again arrested along with thousands of others in August 1942, Labour was in coalition with the Conservatives and Attlee was Deputy Prime Minister. Indeed, it was Attlee who, in Churchill's absence, actually ordered the crackdown. This repression provoked a widespread

popular insurrection that was only finally suppressed after hundreds had been killed (Nehru's estimate was some 10,000 dead) and 90,000 people had been imprisoned. Villages were burned, there was widespread rape and looting by police and troops, and prisoners were tortured. The 'Quit India' revolt, needless to say, barely features in most British histories of the second world war. And when the great famine of 1943–1944 laid waste to Bengal, Labour was a partner in the Coalition government that stood by while Churchill deliberately sabotaged relief efforts, leaving some five million people to starve to death or die of disease.[20] Even so, the Labour leadership did recognise that independence would have to be conceded once the war was over. The question was: what kind of independence?

What the Attlee government intended was to concede independence to a fragmented India that would still be under British domination, in effect part of Britain's informal empire. As far as possible, Congress's influence would be minimised by the Muslim League and the princely states. Not only would Britain keep military bases in the country, including air bases from which the Soviet Union could be bombed, but Indian troops would still be available to fight for the Empire. Not only was this unacceptable to Congress, but increasing popular unrest threatened an eventual explosion that was likely to dwarf the Quit India revolt and in which the Indian Army might side with the rebels. As late as January 1947, Ernest Bevin was arguing that Congress should be suppressed and any rebellion put down in order to ensure that India's resources and territory remain effectively in British hands. Attlee, however, recognised that Britain just did not have either the men or the materiel to remain in occupation of the country. It was only the threat of revolution and war that persuaded the British government to order what was in effect a humiliating withdrawal, successfully dressed up as an act of great liberal statesmanship.[21]

If Britain had decided to crush Congress and stay on until an acceptable puppet regime could be installed, then the histories of the period would chronicle a colonial war that would have been on a considerably larger scale than either Holland's war in the Dutch East Indies or France's wars in Indo-China and Algeria, although with a similar outcome. Certainly, the British army's experience in the Dutch East Indies helped persuade the generals that such a prospect was best avoided. As it was, British withdrawal was carried out in a way that left behind 'a million dead, thirteen million displaced, billions of rupees of property destroyed, and the flames of communal hatred blazing hotly across the ravaged land'. As Shashi Tharoor puts it, 'No greater indictment of the failures of British rule in India can be found than the tragic manner of its ending.'[22]

The historian, Anita Inder Singh, has, quite understandably, found Labour's reputation for anti-imperialism rather puzzling because, even after the withdrawal from India, 'Britain still possessed the rest of her empire and had every intention of holding on to it'.[23] Holding what was left without Indian troops, though, was a problem. In December 1950, Attlee asked the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir William Slim, how long it would take 'to create from the African

colonies an army comparable in size and quality with the Indian Army'.[24] But it was not to be. Once started, Britain's retreat was to be irreversible.

Palestine and Zionism

As we have seen, the Labour Party's commitment to Zionism dated back to 1917 and had been reiterated on numerous occasions in the years up until 1945. By that year, Labour was actually committed to population transfer in Palestine, with the Palestinian population being encouraged to move out so that Zionist settlers could move in. It was even proposed to 're-examine ... the possibility of extending the present Palestinian boundaries by agreement with Egypt, Syria or Transjordan' so as to expand the area available for Zionist settlement.[25] This policy was formally adopted at the 1944 Labour Party Conference and the commitment was included in the Speaker's Handbook issued for the 1945 general election. It is worth making the point here that, while the Labour leadership was quite prepared to see Zionist settlers displace the Palestinian population, they had no intention of allowing European Jewish refugees, the survivors of the Holocaust, into Britain. This had been the policy of the Churchill Coalition government, wholeheartedly supported by Attlee as Deputy Prime Minister and by Herbert Morrison as Home Secretary, during the war. They refused to open Britain up to Jews fleeing the Nazis, setting their faces against any policy of 'rescue'.[26] And this exclusionary policy continued once the war had come to an end, despite a chronic postwar shortage of labour that saw some 200,000 East Europeans welcomed into Britain, including, incredibly, a surrendered Ukrainian SS Division! The Labour government was determined to keep Jewish people out and, as far as possible, to repatriate people from the Caribbean who had either come to Britain as war workers or who had served in the armed forces. The extent to which Labour's immigration policy was 'racialised' could not be more dramatically demonstrated than by the preference for Ukrainians and Balts who had fought in the SS over black men from the Caribbean who had fought in the British armed forces.[27]

While there were undoubtedly many within the Labour Party, particularly on the Left, who supported Zionism unconditionally, as some sort of socialist colonialism that, they believed, would benefit the Palestinians, for the leadership, support was predicated on Zionism's usefulness to the British Empire. The Zionist settlement was seen as an outpost of Empire that would strengthen the British position throughout the Middle East. Once Labour took office in 1945, it was quickly made clear to ministers that the party's Zionist commitment would alienate the Arab people throughout the whole Middle East and that this would seriously threaten Britain's imperial position. The Zionist commitment was abandoned overnight, precipitating a Zionist revolt (encouraged by both the United States and the Soviet Union) that successfully forced the British out of Palestine at the end of June 1948. This left the Zionists free to forcibly expel an estimated 700,000 Palestinians from their homeland. The Labour Party was, of course, soon to be

reconciled with the Zionists, although once again this commitment was to be underpinned by, was indeed dependent upon, the state of Israel's usefulness to US imperialism.[28]

Mussadiq and Iran

On 1 May 1951, Mohammad Musaddiq signed legislation nationalising the British-owned Iranian oil industry. At the time, Iran produced some 40 per cent of Middle Eastern oil and the Abadan oil refinery was both the largest in the world and Britain's single most valuable overseas asset. How did the Labour government respond to this anti-imperialist act by a sovereign government? The idea of any solidarity with Mussadiq's National Front was, of course, never even considered. Iran was part of Britain's informal empire and the government had no intention of tolerating such a challenge. The then Foreign Secretary, Herbert Morrison, a former conscientious objector, advocated military intervention to overthrow Mussadiq, telling one official how he wished he was Lord Palmerston and could just resolve the situation in the old-fashioned way, by 'sending a gunboat'.[29] There might not be enough troops available to occupy the oil-fields themselves, but the oil refinery at Abadan could be seized. It was not just the seizure of British-owned assets that outraged the government, but the example it set for other countries and the damage it did to British prestige. The Minister of War, Emanuel Shinwell, himself a former radical trade unionist, insisted that action had to be taken 'not only because of the direct consequences of the loss of Persian oil', but because of 'the effect which a diplomatic defeat would have on our prestige and on our whole position throughout the Middle East'. He presciently warned that 'the next thing might be an attempt to nationalise the Suez Canal'.

Preparations for the seizure of Abadan were put underway, appropriately named 'Operation Buccaneer'. If this intervention had gone ahead, the Labour government's credentials as somehow 'progressive' on imperial affairs would have been completely shattered. One of its last acts would have been a crude exercise in 'gunboat diplomacy'. The reason it did not go ahead was because the opposition in the Cabinet was backed by the Americans, who made it clear that they were opposed to any such intervention. As Attlee told his colleagues, 'We could not afford to break with the United States on an issue of this kind.'[30] Instead, the government began putting in place secret plans for a coup with Attlee and Morrison themselves giving the MI6 asset in charge, Robert Zaehner, 'his first brief' and with preparations already underway when the government lost office.[31] The coup, restoring the Shah to power, was eventually carried out as a joint US-British covert operation in 1953.

The warfare state

As we have already noticed, while the postwar Labour government is well-known for its creation of the modern welfare state, much less celebrated is its

creation of the modern warfare state. This seriously distorts our understanding of the real priorities of the government, because a good case can be made that the warfare state was much more central to its concerns than the welfare state for which it is best remembered. This was obviously not true of the Labour Party's rank-and-file members, but was certainly true of senior ministers, no matter what they said in public. As David Edgerton has pointed out, 'the statistical evidence shows that postwar Britain was a low spender on social services by comparison with European nations. By contrast, British defence expenditures ... were high by Continental European standards.'[32] The warfare state was clearly the Labour government's primary concern. As Till Geiger puts it, 'the post-war British state should be regarded as a warfare state which prioritised the development of its military capabilities' and that this inevitably 'limited the scope of the Labour government's domestic reform programme'.[33] And the Attlee government was, as we shall see, to lay down its electoral life for increased military expenditure and the 'special relationship'.

One point worth making here is that while today British subordination to the United States is absolutely taken for granted, unquestioned, regarded almost as some sort of natural phenomenon, in fact it was the product of the second world war and of the immediate postwar years. What is interesting is that Labour embraced this subordination earlier than the Conservatives, but by the late 1950s the relationship was securely in place as far as both parties were concerned. The decision to accept a subordinate relationship to the US was based on a hardnosed calculation of what was in the best interests of the British state and economy. British capitalism still had global interests, but no longer had the military strength and resources to protect them. Only the United States had that capability. This is the reality that underpinned the so-called 'special relationship'. The romantics were those rightwing Conservatives who thought that Britain could still 'go it alone'.

Part of the working out of Britain's subordinate position with the United States was the creation of the new warfare state. Attlee's decision in January 1947 to develop a British nuclear bomb was an important step in this process. The decision was taken in secret without any reference to the Cabinet, to Parliament or to the Labour Party. Ironically, it was taken in an attempt to lessen reliance on the Americans, but the relationship was already far too one-sided for the mere possession of nuclear weapons to redress it. The supposed need to remain a nuclear power has, over time, actually increased British dependence on the United States. (Britain's vaunted 'independent' nuclear deterrent is, of course, today a 'dependent' nuclear deterrent, wholly dependent on American goodwill.)

Later in 1947, the Labour government took the historically momentous decision to allow the Americans to establish bases for their B-29 bombers in Britain. This opened the way for the establishment of permanent foreign, that is American, military bases on British soil for the first time in the modern era. This revolution in British military affairs has attracted nothing like the scrutiny it deserves. (And,

of course, that US presence is still there, long after the end of the Cold War, accepted as the natural order of things by both the Labour and Conservative parties.) In October 1947, Stafford Cripps, the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, made the Labour government's position clear: Britain had to be 'the main base for the deployment of American power'.[34] It is worth noticing that in 1948, US war plans envisaged 'dropping 50 atomic bombs on 20 Soviet cities'.[35] By 1950, the Americans had nuclear weapons based in Britain without the British government having negotiated any say in their use. This took subordination to positively 'puppet' status. Even the Americans were astonished.[36]

The last piece of the modern warfare state was British participation in the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in April 1949, the first permanent military alliance in British history. Indeed, the Labour government can make a serious claim to have been the driving force behind the formation of NATO, with Ernest Bevin as its chief architect.

The Korean bloodbath

British troops were sent to Korea in 1950, to participate in one of the most brutal post-1945 conflicts, in order to sustain the alliance with the United States. There was no other British interest. A failure to have supported the Americans would have done serious, perhaps irreparable, damage to relations between the two countries. The war, though sanctioned by the United Nations, was America's war. British troops were there not out of any loyalty to the UN but out of loyalty to the US. US bombing was carried out without any concern for the scale of civilian casualties; the results were horrendous. General Curtis LeMay of the US Air Force was frank about the impact of the bombardment: 'We burned down just about every city in North Korea and South Korea both ... during three years of warfare we killed off over a million civilian Koreans and drove several more million from their homes, with the inevitable additional tragedies bound to ensue.'[37] During the war, the US dropped 32,357 tonnes of its new 'wonder weapon', napalm, on Korean towns and cities. And whereas during the entire second world war, it had dropped 503,000 tonnes of bombs on targets in the Pacific, in Korea it dropped 635,000 tonnes (excluding napalm). The result was 'Biblical devastation'.[38]

The Korean war was, and is still, celebrated as a vindication of the 'special relationship'. British subordination has been successfully 'spun' as influence, with Attlee supposedly intervening with President Truman to prevent the Americans using nuclear weapons. (Even Tony Benn, for many years the effective leader of the Labour Left, claimed that Attlee had 'stopped' the use of nuclear weapons in Korea.[39]) On 30 November 1950, Truman had publicly indicated that the US was considering the nuclear option. The US commander in Korea, General Douglas MacArthur later admitted to pushing for the dropping of between twenty and fifty atomic bombs on North Korea and Manchuria at the time. On 4 December, Attlee flew to Washington to inform the President of European concerns

regarding such an escalation and extension of the war. He supposedly restrained the Americans from pursuing such a course. This is, as Ralph Miliband pointed out, 'a legend'.[40] The British certainly received no right of veto over the use of nuclear weapons, but were instead assured that if the decision was taken, they would be the first to be informed.

The US government's decision not to use nuclear weapons had apparently nothing to do with Attlee's representations. What we can surmise is that if the Americans had used nuclear weapons, the Labour government, with whatever private reservations, would have supported this, just as it had the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Attlee's concern appeared to be not the loss of Asian lives (there was no objection to the massive scale of conventional bombing in Korea), so much as the potential loss of British lives if the Soviet Union were to retaliate. Of course, the British did not even have a veto over the use of the nuclear weapons that were based in Britain, let alone those in the Far East. The supposed veto episode was invented to reassure ordinary Labour Party members and is still used to serve that purpose today. The reality was quite different. Indeed, on two occasions, in May and September 1951, the Labour government privately assured the Americans that it would support military action against China if necessary.[41]

The cost of the 'special relationship'

A good case can be made that it was its devotion to the 'special relationship' that led to the Labour Party's loss of office in 1951. The previous year, the Labour government, under American pressure, introduced a massive rearmament programme, committing itself to doubling the country's defence expenditure to £3,400 million over three years. At this time, Britain was already spending a higher proportion of GDP on defence than the United States. In January 1951, the government increased this commitment to £4,700 million, with the Americans pressing for more. The economic and political consequences of this rearmament programme were disastrous. In April 1951, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Gaitskell, a fervent pro-American, introduced his rearmament budget, raising income tax and petrol tax, suspending investment allowances to industry and introducing charges on false teeth and spectacles into the NHS. Whereas in 1950, Britain had a trade surplus of £244 million, in 1951 this was transformed into a £521 million deficit. The health charges, which only saved £25 million,were pushed through for ideological reasons, precipitating the resignation from the government of Aneurin Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman. Labour narrowly lost the October 1951 general election and the Conservatives took office once again and soon cut back the rearmament programme.

America right or wrong

There is a dreadful continuity between the foreign policies of the Attlee and Blair governments. Both willingly subordinated themselves to the United States and

repression, and warfare promoted by the ruling groups to contain the real and the potential rebellion of the global working class and surplus humanity. Second is how the global economy is itself based more and more on the development and deployment of these systems of warfare, social control, and repression simply as a means of making profit and continuing to accumulate capital in the face of stagnation – what I term *militarised accumulation*, or *accumulation by repression*. And third is the increasing move towards political systems that can be characterised as twenty-first century fascism.

But it is doubtful that these ballooning sectors of the global economy will allow the world capitalist system to avoid another catastrophic crisis. A new crisis could be triggered by a bursting of stock market bubbles, especially in the high-tech sector, by defaults in household or public debt, or by the outbreak of a new international military conflict. The more farsighted amongst transnational elites have expressed growing concern over this fragility in the global economy and the spectre of chronic long-term stagnation. Former World Bank and US Treasury official Larry Summers warned in 2016 of 'secular stagnation' in the global economy, which has 'entered unexplored, dangerous territory'.[10] Yet these elites are not prepared to address the larger backdrops to global economic malaise, namely capitalism's intractable problem of overaccumulation.

Overaccumulation: capitalism's Achilles heel

The polarisation of income and wealth is endemic to capitalism since the capitalist class owns the means of producing wealth and therefore appropriates as profits as much as possible of the wealth that society collectively produces. If capitalists cannot actually sell (or 'unload') the products of their plantations, factories, and offices then they cannot make profit. Left unchecked, expanding social polarisation results in crisis – in stagnation, recessions, depressions, and social upheavals. Cyclical crises, or recessions, occur about every ten years in the capitalist system and typically last some eighteen months. There were recessions in the early 1980s, the early 1990s, and the early 2000s. Structural crises, so called because the only way out of crisis is to restructure the system, occur approximately every forty to fifty years. A new wave of colonialism and imperialism resolved the first recorded structural crisis of the 1870s and 1880s. The next structural crisis, the Great Depression of the 1930s, was resolved through a new type of redistributive capitalism, referred to as the 'class compromise' of Fordism-Keynesianism, social democracy, New Deal capitalism, and so on.

Capital responded to the next structural crisis of the 1970s by going global. The technological revolution associated with the rise of Computer and Information Technology (CIT) in the 1980s was itself a response on the part of capitalists to the crisis of overaccumulation, declining rates of profit, and well-organised working classes and social movements in the 1960s and the 1970s. These technologies allowed capital to go global and also allowed it to reorganise the workplace,

reduce dependence on masses of concentrated and well-organised workers, to outsource and make flexible workers, and thus to forge a more favourable capital-labour relation. From the 1980s onwards, an emergent transnational capitalist class (henceforth, TCC)[11] promoted vast neoliberal restructuring, trade liberalisation, and integration of the world economy. The global economy experienced a boom in the late twentieth century as the former socialist countries entered the global market and as capital, liberated from nation-state constraints, unleashed a vast new round of accumulation worldwide. The TCC unloaded surpluses and resumed profit-making in the emerging globally integrated production and financial system through the acquisition of privatised assets, the extension of mining and agro-industrial investment on the heels of the displacement of hundreds of millions from the countryside, and a new wave of industrial expansion assisted by the CIT revolution. Public policy became reconfigured through austerity, bailouts, corporate subsidies, government debt and the global bond market as governments transferred wealth directly and indirectly from working people to the TCC.

But by liberating capital from redistribution at the nation-state level as a countervailing tendency to that of social polarisation, globalisation resulted in unprecedented global inequalities that, far from diminishing, have escalated at an astonishing rate since the 2008 Great Recession. According to the development agency Oxfam, just 1 per cent of humanity owned over half of the world's wealth in 2016 and the top 20 per cent owned 94.5 per cent of that wealth, whilst the remaining 80 per cent had to make do with just 4.5 per cent.[12] Given such extreme polarisation of income and wealth, the global market cannot absorb the output of the global economy. The Great Recession marked the onset of a new structural crisis of overaccumulation. Corporations are now awash in cash but they do not have opportunities to profitably invest this cash. Corporate profits surged after the 2008 crisis and have reached near record highs at the same time that corporate investment has declined.[13] In 2017 the largest US-based companies were sitting on an outstanding $1.01 trillion in uninvested cash.[14]

As this uninvested capital accumulates, enormous pressures build up to find outlets for unloading the surplus. Trumpism in the United States reflects a far-right response to the crisis worldwide that involves authoritarian neoliberalism alongside a neo-fascist mobilisation of the disaffected, often nativist, sectors of the working class. Yet this repressive neoliberalism ends up further restricting the market and therefore aggravating the underlying crisis of overaccumulation. The TCC has turned to two intertwined outlets to unload surplus in the face of 'secular stagnation'. One is militarised accumulation, or accumulation by repression. The bogus wars on drugs and terrorism, the construction of border walls, the expansion of prison-industrial complexes, deportation regimes, police, the military, and other security apparatuses, are major sources of state-organised profit-making. The Pentagon budget increased 91 per cent in real terms between 1998 and 2011 whilst defence industry profits nearly quadrupled during this period.[15]

Here there is a convergence around global capitalism's political need for social control and repression and its economic need to perpetuate accumulation in the face of stagnation. Putting aside the escalating rhetoric of Trump's war-mongering, there is a built-in war drive to the current course of capitalist globalisation. Historically wars have pulled the capitalist system out of crisis whilst they have also served to deflect attention from political tensions and problems of legitimacy. Now this drive towards war is moving towards a deadly combination with a new round of world capitalist restructuring through digitalisation.

The digitalisation of global capitalism

The other outlet for unloading surplus accumulated capital has been a new wave of financial speculation in recent years, and especially in the over-valued tech sector. The tech sector – which includes computer and electronic product manufacturing, telecommunications, data processing, hosting, and other information services, platforms, and computer systems design and related services – is now at the cutting edge of capitalist globalisation and is driving the digitalisation of the entire global economy. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels famously declared in *The Communist Manifesto* that 'all that is solid melts into air' under the dizzying pace of change wrought by capitalism. Now the world economy stands at the brink of another period of massive restructuring. Technological change is generally associated with cycles of capitalist crisis and social and political turmoil. At the heart of restructuring is the digital economy based on more advanced information technology, on the collection, processing, and analysis of data, and on the application of digitalisation to every aspect of global society, including war and repression.

The first generation of capitalist globalisation, from the 1980s on, involved the creation of a globally integrated production and financial system, whereas, more recently, digitalisation and the rise of 'platforms' have facilitated a very rapid transnationalisation of services. Platforms refer to digital infrastructures that enable two or more groups to interact. As the dependence of economic activity on platforms spreads the tech sector becomes ever-more strategic to global capitalism. Trade in CIT goods in 2015 exceeded $2 trillion, according to United Nations data, whilst CIT services exports rose by 40 per cent between 2010 and 2015. In that year, production of CIT goods and services represented 6.5 per cent of global GDP and 100 million people were employed in the CIT service sector. Moreover, global e-commerce sales reached $25 trillion as 380 million people made purchases on overseas websites.[16] By 2017 services accounted for some 70 per cent of the total gross world product[17] and included communications, informatics, digital and platform technology, e-commerce, financial services, professional and technical work, and a host of other non-tangible products such as film and music. Digitalisation and the transnationalisation of services – linked in turn to worldwide financialisation – have moved to the centre of the global capitalist agenda.

This rise of the digital economy responds in important part to earlier cycles of capitalist development and crisis, especially the downturn of the 1970s, then the boom of the 1990s followed by the dot-com bust and global recession in 2000–2001, and then the global financial collapse of 2008 and its aftermath. The tech sector has become a major new outlet for uninvested capital in the face of stagnation. Investment in the IT sector jumped from $17 billion in the 1970s to $175 billion in 1990, then to $496 billion in 2000. It then dipped following the turn-of-century dot-com bust, only to climb up to new heights after 2008, surpassing $700 billion as 2017 drew to a close.[18]

Material commodities contain an increasing amount of knowledge embodied in them that is driven by data. 'With a long decline in manufacturing profitability', observes political scientist Nick Srnicek in his study *Platform Capitalism*, 'capitalism has turned to data as one way to maintain economic growth and vitality in the face of a sluggish production sector.' The platform has emerged as a new business model, in Srnicek's words, 'capable of extracting and controlling immense amounts of data'.[19]A handful of US-based tech companies that generate, extract and process data have absorbed enormous amounts of cash from financiers desperate for new investment opportunities. In 2017 Apple held $262 billion in reserves, Microsoft held $133 billion, Alphabet (Google's parent company) held $95 billion, Cisco held $58 billion, Oracle held $66 billion, and so on.[20]

Can this digitalisation resolve the long-term problems of overaccumulation and stagnation? The enormous cash reserves and profits accumulated in the tech sector do not represent the production of new value so much as the appropriation by digital capitalists of the lion's share of surplus value through rents. As intermediaries, platforms intercede in the circuits of production and circulation of values and cream off major chunks of this value. This helps understand just how hypertrophied the leading digital and platform companies have become. In 2017, US-based tech companies registered the highest market capitalisation. Apple was in first place with an astounding market capitalisation of $730 billion, Google in second with $581 billion, Microsoft in third with $497 billion, Berkshire Hathaway (which has major shares in Apple, IBM, and other tech companies) in fourth with $433 billion, Amazon in fifth with $402 billion, and Facebook in sixth with $398 billion. By comparison, the nearest industrial company, Exxon Mobile, had a market capitalisation of $344 billion.[21] The leading digital companies are evermore parasitic. Nearly all of Google's and Apple's revenue comes from advertising, whilst Uber and Airbnb, which own no vehicles or housing units, skim value off the labour and resources of drivers, home owners and their customers.

At the core of digitalisation is a new wave of technological development that has brought us to the verge of the '4th industrial revolution', based on robotics, 3-D printing, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, bio- and nanotechnology, quantum and cloud computing, new forms of energy storage, and autonomous vehicles.[22] Whilst the tech sector that drives forward this new revolution constitutes only a small portion of the gross world

both sent British troops to fight in brutal, bloody wars at America's behest. History has been kinder to Attlee than to Blair, although his American war was far more costly in lives than New Labour's adventures. Moreover, it was the Attlee government that led the way in paying the blood price required for the US alliance. Attlee took office in 1945, determined to restore the fortunes of the British Empire, but it quickly became apparent that retreat was inevitable. Nevertheless, his government was determined to hold on to as much as possible. Attlee, Bevin, Morrison and co. were all unashamed imperialists. The Attlee government accepted subordination to the United States in order to help save the British Empire and today, even with the Empire gone, the maintenance of that subordination remains one of the central concerns of the British state. The challenge this poses for Jeremy Corbyn, the first Labour Party leader opposed to this subordination, has only just begun.

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The next economic crisis: digital capitalism and global police state

WILLIAM I. ROBINSON

Abstract: Transnational capitalists and global elites are confident that the world economy has recovered from the 2008 financial collapse, but there is good reason to believe that another crisis of major proportions looms on the horizon. Digitalisation and fourth industrial revolution technologies are driving a new round of global capitalist restructuring, yet they are also aggravating the underlying structural conditions that generate crisis; in particular, overaccumulation. Transnational investors have been pouring billions of dollars into the rapid digitalisation of global capitalism as the latest outlet for its surplus accumulated capital and hedging their bets on new investment opportunities in global police state. The concept of global police state allows us to identify how the economic dimensions of global capitalist transformation intersect in new ways with political, ideological and military dimensions of this transformation. There is a convergence around global capitalism's political need for social control and repression and its economic need to perpetuate accumulation in the face of stagnation. When the next crisis hits, the Left and resistance forces from below must be in a position to seize the initiative and to push back at global police state.

Keywords: digitalisation, fourth industrial revolution, global police state, overaccumulation, Transnational Capitalist Class, twenty-first century fascism, world economic crisis

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William I. Robinson is Professor of Sociology, Global and Transnational Studies, and Latin American Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara. His two most recent books are: *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity* (Cambridge University Press, 2014); and *Into the Tempest: Essays on the New Global Capitalism* (Haymarket Books, in press).

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Not since the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century has the world experienced such rapid and profound changes as those ushered in by capitalist globalisation starting in the 1980s. But can the next round of transformation, driven by digitalisation and fourth industrial revolution technologies, stave off another major crisis? Technocrats from the International Monetary Fund, mainstream economists, and transnational capitalists, giddy with record corporate profits, renewed growth, and an onslaught of pro-corporate policies, especially deregulation and regressive tax reform in the United States, have exuded confidence that the world economy has recovered from the disastrous 2008 financial collapse.[1]

Yet there is good reason to believe that another crisis of major proportions looms on the horizon. The underlying structural conditions that triggered the Great Depression of 2008, the worst economic crisis since the 1930s, remain in place and a new round of restructuring in the global economy now underway, based on digitalisation and militarisation, is likely to further aggravate them. Growth has plodded forward since 2008 as governments have made maximum use of monetary instruments, especially what has come to be known as 'quantitative easing' (essentially, printing money and making it available as credit) and bank and corporate bailouts, along with escalating consumer debt, a wave of speculative investment, especially in the high-tech sector, and ever increasing levels of financial speculation in the global casino. Now, however, central banks are running out of monetary instruments to promote growth and debt-driven consumption is reaching breaking point.

In the United States, which has long been the 'market of last resort' for the global economy, household debt was higher in 2017 than it has been for almost all of postwar history. US households owed nearly $13 trillion in student loans, credit card debt, auto loans and mortgages.[2] Of this total, US credit card debt reached an all-time high of $1.02 trillion in 2017 as credit card delinquencies rose steadily.[3] In just about every OECD country the ratio of income to household debt remains historically high and has steadily deteriorated since 2008.[4] The global bond market – an indicator of total government debt worldwide – has escalated since 2008 and now surpasses $100 trillion,[5] whilst total global debt reached a staggering $215 trillion in 2016.[6] Meanwhile, the gap between the productive economy and 'fictitious capital' grows ever wider as financial speculation spirals out of control. Gross world product, or the total value of goods and services produced worldwide, stood at some $75 trillion in 2017,[7] whereas currency speculation alone amounted to $5.3 trillion a day[8] that year and the global derivatives market was estimated at a mind-boggling $1.2 quadrillion.[9]

Alongside debt-driven consumption and financial speculation, transnational investors have been pouring billions of dollars into the rapid digitalisation of global capitalism as the latest outlet for its surplus accumulated capital and hedging their bets on new investment opportunities in a global police state. As I will discuss in more detail below, global police state refers to three interrelated developments. First is the ever-more omnipresent systems of mass social control,

product, digitalisation encompasses the entire global economy, from manufacturing and finance to services, and in both the formal and informal sectors. Corporations are now dependent on digital communications and data for all aspects of their business. Data has increasingly become a central resource for businesses if they are to remain competitive and has become central to all of the processes associated with the global economy, from controlling and outsourcing workers, the flexibility of production processes, global financial flows, the coordination of global chains of supply, subcontracting and outsourcing, record keeping, marketing and sales, and to war and repression.

On the other hand, a general digitalisation of global capitalism accelerates the predominance of relative surplus value over absolute surplus value. It allows the TCC to develop new modalities for organising the extraction of relative surplus value from workers as it appropriates the 'general knowledge' of society. Apologists for the current ruling order claim that the digital economy will bring high-skilled, high-paid jobs and resolve problems of social polarisation and stagnation. But everything indicates quite the opposite: the digital economy will accelerate the trend towards ever-more mass un- and under-employment along with precarious and casualised forms of employment. We are poised to see the digital decimation of major sectors of the global economy. Anything can be digitalised, and this is increasingly almost everything. Automation is now spreading from industry and finance to all branches of services, even to fast food and agriculture as members of the TCC seeks to lower wages and outcompete one another. It is even expected to replace much professional work such as lawyers, financial analysts, doctors, journalists, accountants, insurance underwriters, and librarians. Founder and chairman of the World Economic Forum Klaus Schwab, amongst others, has estimated that some one-half of all jobs in the United States is at risk of being automated and that the destruction of jobs will take place at a much faster pace than such shifts experienced during earlier industrial-technological revolutions under capitalism.[23]

In the US the net increase in jobs since 2005 has been almost exclusively in unstable and usually low-paid work arrangements. Amazon, with a workforce of 230,000 and tens of thousands of seasonal workers, is notorious for brutal sweatshop-like labour conditions in its warehouses and logistical networks, described as 'the future of low-wage work'[24] (meanwhile, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos became the richest man in the world in 2017, with a net worth of over $100 billion, whilst thousands of Amazon employees require food stamps to make ends meet). Indeed, digital-driven production seeks to lower wage, capital, and overhead costs – ultimately to achieve what the Nike Corporation refers to as 'engineering the labor out of the product'.[25] Revealingly, the US labour market added 9.1 million jobs between 2005 and 2015, including 9.4 million precarious jobs, so that the net increase in jobs since 2005 has been solely in these unstable work arrangements.[26] A billion dollar data centre built in 2011 by Apple in North Carolina created a mere fifty full-time positions.[27] In the Philippines, 100,000 outsourced

workers earn a few hundred dollars a month searching through the content on social media such as Google and Facebook and in cloud storage to remove offensive images.[28] Yet they too stand to be replaced by digital technology, as do millions of call centre, data entry and software workers around the world, along with their counterparts in manufacturing and in other service sector jobs.[29]

Ultimately, digitalisation to the extent that it replaces labour with technology pushes costs down towards zero. All of the contradictions of capitalism become intensified. The rate of profit decreases. The realisation problem is aggravated. Hence the emerging digital economy cannot resolve the problem of overaccumulation. Where can the TCC turn to continue to unload ever-rising amounts of surplus accumulated capital? Can investment in global police state resolve the system's dilemma?

Digital warfare and global police state

In the wake of the 2008 financial meltdown I turned my attention to theorising the concept of global police state as part of my research on global economic crisis.[30] It occurred to me that new modalities of social control and repression were becoming interwoven with another round of world economic restructuring, both ushered in as a response to the crisis, to an extent that we have not previously seen. This concept of global police state allows us to identify how the economic dimensions of global capitalist transformation intersect in new ways with political, ideological, and military dimensions of this transformation. Global police state, to reiterate, refers to three interrelated developments. First is the ever-more omnipresent systems of mass social control, repression, and warfare promoted by the ruling groups to contain the real and the potential rebellion of the global working class and surplus humanity. Second is how the global economy is itself based more and more on the development and deployment of these systems of warfare, social control, and repression simply as a means of making profit and continuing to accumulate capital in the face of stagnation – what I term *militarised accumulation*, or *accumulation by repression*. And third is the increasing move towards political systems that can be characterised as twenty-first century fascism, or even in a broader sense, as totalitarian.

As digitalisation concentrates capital, heightens polarisation, and swells the ranks of surplus labour, dominant groups turn to applying the new technologies to mass social control and repression in the face of real and potential resistance. CIT has revolutionised warfare and the modalities of state-organised violence. The new systems of warfare and repression made possible by more advanced digitalisation include AI powered autonomous weaponry such as unmanned attack and transportation vehicles, robot soldiers, a new generation of 'superdrones' and 'flybots', hypersonic weapons, microwave guns that immobilise, cyber attack and info-warfare, biometric identification, state data mining, and global electronic surveillance that allows for the tracking and control of every

movement. State data mining and global electronic surveillance are now expanding the theatre of conflict from active war zones to militarised cities and rural localities around the world.[31] These combine with a restructuring of space that allow for new forms of spatial containment and control of the marginalised. The dual functions of accumulation and social control are played out in the militarisation of civil society and the crossover between the military and the civilian application of these advanced weapons, tracking, security, and surveillance systems. The result is permanent low-intensity warfare against communities in rebellion, especially racially oppressed, ethnically persecuted, and other vulnerable communities.

In short, digitalisation allows for the creation of a global police state. The circuits of militarised accumulation coercively open up opportunities for capital accumulation worldwide, either on the heels of military force or through states' contracting out to transnational corporate capital the production and execution of social control and warfare. Hence the generation of conflicts and the repression of social movements and vulnerable populations around the world becomes an accumulation strategy that conjoins with political objectives and may even trump those objectives (see below). This type of permanent global warfare involves both low- and high-intensity wars, 'humanitarian missions', 'drug interdiction operations', 'anti-crime sweeps', undocumented immigrant roundups, and so on. Militarised accumulation and accumulation by repression – already a centrepiece of global capitalism – may become ever-more important as it fuses with new fourth industrial revolution technologies, not just as means of maintaining control but as outlets for accumulated surplus that stave off economic collapse.

News headlines abound with daily examples of militarised accumulation and accumulation by repression. The war on immigrants in the US provides a textbook example. The day after Donald Trump's November 2016 electoral victory, the stock price of Corrections Corporation of America (CCA, which later changed its name to CoreCivic), the largest for-profit immigrant detention and prison company in the US, soared 40 per cent, given Trump's promise to deport millions of immigrants. Earlier in 2016, CCA's CEO Damon Hiniger reported a 5 per cent increase in first quarter earners as a result of 'stronger than anticipated demand from our federal partners, most notably Immigration and Customs Enforcement', as a result of the escalating detention of immigrant women and children fleeing violence in Central America.[32] The stock price of another leading private prison and immigrant detention company, Geo Group, saw its stock prices triple in the first few months of the Trump regime (the company had contributed $250,000 to Trump's inauguration and was then awarded with a $110 million contract to build a new immigrant detention centre in California).[33] Hundreds of private firms from around the world put in bids to construct Trump's infamous US-Mexico border wall.[34] Every phase in the war on immigrants has become a source of profit-making, from services inside immigrant detention centres such as healthcare, food, phone systems, to other ancillary activities of the deportation regime,

such as government contracting of private charter flights to ferry deportees back home. In its economic dimension, this war opens vast new outlets for unloading surplus, whilst in its political and ideological dimensions it turns immigrants into scapegoats for the disaffection of downwardly mobile, disproportionately white, sectors of the working class. At the same time, given that such companies as CCA and Geo Group are traded on the Wall Street stock exchange, investors from anywhere around the world may buy and sell their stock, and in this way develop a stake in immigrant repression quite removed from, if not entirely independent, of the more pointed political and ideological objectives of this repression.

Similarly, the farcical 'war on terrorism' amounts to a vast programme for global accumulation through militarisation and repression. Military contractors such as Raytheon and Lockheed Martin report spikes each time there is a new flare-up in the Middle East conflict. Within hours of the 6 April 2017 US tomahawk missile bombardment of Syria, the company that builds those missiles, Raytheon, reported an increase in its stock value by $1 billion. As in the war on immigrants, we see in the 'war on terrorism' an increasing fusion of private accumulation with state militarisation. Global weapons sales by the top 100 weapons manufacturers and military service companies increased by 38 per cent between 2002 and 2016. These top 100 companies across the globe, excluding China, sold $375 billion in weapons in 2016, generating $60 billion in profits, and employing over three million workers.[35] In addition, private military and security (that is, mercenary) firms had outlays of over $200 billion in 2014 and employed some 15 million people.[36] Whilst Blackwater-Constellis Groups and G4S are the most well known, the Pentagon contracted some 150 such firms from around the world for support and security operations in Iraq alone.[37]

The TCC and twenty-first century fascism

Hence, generating war, repression, and systems of transnational social control move to the core of the global economy. Global police state and the rise of the digital economy appear to fuse three fractions of capital around a combined process of financial speculation and militarised accumulation into which the TCC is unloading billions of dollars in surplus accumulated capital. Financial capital supplies the credit for investment in the tech sector and in the technologies of the global police state.[38] Tech firms develop and provide the new digital technologies that are now of central importance to the global economy. Ever since NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden came forward in 2013, there has been a torrent of revelations on the collusion of the giant tech firms with the US and other governments in the construction of a global police state. And the military-industrial-security complex applies these technologies, as it becomes an outlet for unloading surplus and making profit through the control and repression of rebellious populations. The mechanisms of coercive exclusion and accumulation by repression include mass incarceration and the spread of prison-industrial complexes, pervasive policing,

anti-immigrant legislation and deportation regimes, wars on drugs, gangs, and youth, and border and other containment walls involving urban militarisation. The manipulation of space in new ways ensures that both gated communities and ghettos are controlled by armies of private security guards, technologically advanced surveillance systems, and often paramilitarised policing. All this amounts to permanent low-intensity warfare alongside 'hot wars' and counter-insurgency. As private accumulation fuses with state militarisation, the fate of Silicon Valley and Wall Street become tied to that of warfare and repression.

There is also a mobilisation of the culture industries and state ideological apparatuses to dehumanise victims of global capitalism as dangerous, depraved, and culturally degenerate. In this regard, the mass media and entertainment industries become incorporated into global police state. The culture of global capitalism seeks to impose a dull uniformity, to numb the senses, pacify and dull any ability for critical thinking, to sweep up every thought into the logic of the system. In this sense, it is thoroughly totalitarian. The culture industries feed into global police state, glorifying militarisation and legitimating the authoritarianism of the dominant system. For instance, US military and intelligence agencies influenced over 800 major movies and 1,000 television shows from 2005 to 2016, turning Hollywood into a potent propaganda machine for war and repression.[39] The list of films and television shows in which the military and intelligence agencies have exerted influence is simply staggering, ranging from dozens of Hollywood blockbusters such as Top Gun, Windtalkers, An Officer and a Gentleman, Stripes, Independence Day, Jurassic Park, Blackhawk Down, The Hunt for Red October, Patriot Games, the James Bond series, Hulk, Transformers, and Meet the Parents, and TV programmes ranging from America's Got Talent, Oprah, NCIS, Jay Leno, to numerous documentaries aired by PBS, the BBC, and the History Channel.

There is a dangerous spiral here in the contradiction between a digitalisation that throws ever-more workers into the ranks of surplus humanity and the need for the system to unload ever-greater amounts of accumulated surplus. Once masses of people are no longer needed on a long-term and even permanent basis there arises the political problem of how to control this expanded mass of surplus humanity. Greater discipline is required, both for those who manage to secure work under new regimes of precarious employment and super-exploitation, and for those expelled and made surplus. The entire social order becomes surveilled. Systems of state and private surveillance now have the ability to monitor any corner of the world and any transaction that cannot be carefully concealed. The global order as a unity becomes increasingly repressive and authoritarian as a project of twenty-first century fascism gains traction.[40] The militarisation of cities, politics, and culture in such countries as the United States and Israel, the spread of neo-fascist movements in North America and Europe, the rise of authoritarian regimes in Turkey, the Philippines, and Honduras, are inseparable from these countries' entanglement in webs of global wars and the militarised global accumulation, or global war economy.

Fascism, whether in its classical twentieth-century form or possible variants of twenty-first century neo-fascism, is *a particular response to capitalist crisis*. Trumpism in the United States, Brexit in the United Kingdom, the increasing influence of neo-fascist and authoritarian parties and movements throughout Europe and around the world represent a far-right response to the crisis of global capitalism. The fascist projects that came to power in the 1930s in Germany, Italy, and Spain, as well as those that vied unsuccessfully to seize power, such as in the United States, had as a fundamental objective crushing powerful working-class and socialist movements. But in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere, the Left and the organised working class are at a historically weak point. In these cases, twenty-first century fascism appears to be a *pre-emptive* strike at working classes and at the spread of mass resistance through the expansion of global police state. Twenty-first century fascism is centrally aimed at *coercive exclusion* of surplus humanity. States abandon efforts to secure legitimacy amongst this surplus population and instead turn to criminalising the poor and the dispossessed, with tendencies towards genocide in some cases.

Twenty-first century fascist projects seek to organise a mass base amongst historically privileged sectors of the global working class, such as white workers in the Global North and middle layers in the Global South, that are experiencing heightened insecurity and the spectre of downward mobility. As with its twentieth-century predecessor, the project hinges on the psychosocial mechanism of displacing mass fear and anxiety at a time of acute capitalist crisis towards scapegoated communities, such as immigrant workers, Muslims, and refugees in the United States and Europe. Far-right forces do so through a discursive repertoire of xenophobia, mystifying ideologies that involve race/culture supremacy, an idealised and mythical past, millennialism, and a militaristic and masculinist culture that normalises, even glamorises war, social violence, and domination.

Classical twentieth-century fascism in Germany and Italy did offer some material benefits – employment and social wages – to a portion of the working class even as it unleashed genocide on those outside the chosen group. There is now little possibility in the US or elsewhere of providing such benefits, so that the 'wages of fascism' appear to be entirely psychological. In this regard, the ideology of twenty-first century fascism rests on irrationality – a promise to deliver security and restore stability that is emotive, not rational. It is a project that does not, and need not, distinguish between the truth and the lie.[41] The Trump regime's public discourse of populism and nationalism, for example, bore no relation to its actual policies. In its first year, Trumponomics involved deregulation – the virtual smashing of the regulatory state – slashing social spending, dismantling what remained of the welfare state, privatisations, tax breaks to corporations and the rich, and an expansion of state subsidies to capital – in short, neoliberalism on steroids.

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The structural crisis of capitalism in the 1970s launched the world on the path of neoliberal globalisation. The bursting of the dot-com bubble in 2000 then threw

the world into recession. The bursting of the housing bubble in 2008 triggered the worst crisis since the 1930s. Everything indicates that the global economy is headed towards a new crisis, perhaps as a result of the bursting of tech bubbles, perhaps in conjunction with cascading debt defaults. The next major crisis is likely to cement the fusion of digital economy and global police state, absent a change of course forced on the system by mass mobilisation and popular struggle from below.

Here is not the place to discuss the global revolt that has spread around the world since the 2008 collapse, ranging from Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, the immigrant rights movement and the Dakota Access Pipeline protests in the US, to Podemos and Syriza in Europe, the Arab Spring, the Shack Dwellers Movement and other poor people's campaigns in South Africa, the Chilean student movement, and mass worker struggles in Indian and China. Some of these, such as the Arab Spring movements, have taken tragic turns, whilst far-right forces have been able to mobilise mass discontent as well. Yet we must remember that the dictatorship of transnational capital is *reactive*. It is the increasing breakdown of global capitalist hegemony that has prompted the TCC to impose evermore coercive and repressive forms of rule. When the next crisis hits, the Left and resistance forces from below must be in a position to seize the initiative and to push back at global police state. This, in turn, must be informed by an analysis, such as I have aspired to present here, of the current process of global capitalist political and economic restructuring.

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Reviews

RACE & CLASS
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The Impossible Revolution: making sense of the Syrian tragedy
By YASSIN AL-HAJ SALEH (London: Hurst, 2017), 312 pp. Paper £12.99.

In these so-called revolutionary times, could it be that actually revolution is increasingly impossible? If so, Syria provides the symptomatic case, and Yassin al-Haj Saleh's book, *The Impossible Revolution*, the most penetrating analysis. Unlike many other writers on Syria, Saleh is an organic intellectual. The essays in this book are written from inside Syria, with an ambition to 'think with the revolution' as opposed to merely thinking about the revolution.

Thinking with the revolution involves an attempt to give voice to the desires and hopes of revolutionaries, and to relay the contradictions and challenges that developed in the clash with the Syrian regime, the militarisation of the revolution, the growing Islamist dominance, and the imperialist interventions in the conflict by regional and global powers. It is both an intellectual and personal journey through its frenzy and ultimate tragedy, as it developed from a broad popular 'revolution of the common people', as Saleh describes it in the opening essay of June 2011, to become an orgy of 'militant nihilism', the title of an essay written just one year later.

Despite his lack of academic training, Saleh is a towering figure among contemporary Arab thinkers. His thought is shaped by his experience as a communist political activist in his youth, who was imprisoned for sixteen years. Upon his release in 1996, he joined the democratic opposition. Like many of his peers, he wholeheartedly supported the popular uprising in 2011, and went on to become one of its strongest voices. His weekly columns in the London-based newspaper *al-Hayat*, are widely read by Arabs across the world. This book is a selection from hundreds of articles, and only gives a small idea of the breadth of his work, which also includes six books in Arabic.

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In prison, Saleh had ample time to read Hegel, and throughout these essays, both Hegel and Marx are strong influences. In his 2012 book *With Salvation O' Youth*, Saleh described how prison allowed him to read classic social theory carefully, but also cured him of a Hegelian understanding of history. Rather than basing his critique on historical dialectics, he began to think with the present and the real, as he put it. This approach shaped his work before 2011, where he reflected on the social structure of the Syrian regime and society. Still, reading *The Impossible Revolution*, Saleh's philosophical method remains influenced by dialectical materialism. He analyses the political economy that underpins the regime, and the relation between class struggle, violence and sectarian identity. He looks for the social structures and psychological effects that explain the violent manifestation of politics in Syria by grounding his arguments in a concise historical analysis.

His voice is analytical, sociological and political. In several of the essays he adopts the 'we' of the revolution. This is no detached, outside account of the uprising, but nor is it a mere testimony. Thinking with the revolution is a radical method that requires one to walk the tightrope between sound analysis and political jingoism. At the same time, it is not a method that anyone consciously chooses, but rather arises from a situation he and many other Syrian intellectuals have been thrust into. Here, Saleh succeeds in using the revolutionary experience to paint a picture of the complex nature of the events that have, since 2011, tragically torn the country apart and changed the world. His book resonates with the work of Frantz Fanon and C. Wright Mills, who also wrote piercingly about the revolutions they were part of.

How did Syria's revolution and the war turn out so badly? First of all because of the regime's violent response to what was initially a peaceful call for reforms. Violence against opponents of the Assad regime, as Saleh knows from his time in Hafez al-Assad's penitentiary system, has undergirded the Syrian state since 1970. It was often invisible, carried out in detention centres far from the public eye. Nevertheless, this threat of violence structured what political scientist Lisa Wedeen calls the politics of dissimulation, whereby Syrians pretended to support the often spurious claims of the ruler, and in this way became complicit in an untruthful social construct.

When ordinary people broke this wall of fear, it became a popular revolution that surprisingly quickly drew in people from all areas, sects and classes, threatening the legitimacy of the regime. The act of speaking truth – of breaking the complicity in violence and distorted reality – was liberating and propelled people to participate despite the obvious danger. The violent response that followed went beyond clashes between revolutionaries and the Syrian army. Regime thugs, the dreaded *shabiha*, acted on their own, sadistically and efficiently targeting supporters of the revolution. Whereas most people see the *shabiha* as an instrument of the regime, Saleh analyses them as symptomatic of Assad's state, the '*shabiha* state' that appropriates rather than produces wealth; that practises repression rather than politics; and that lies endlessly. The aim of the revolution, Saleh wrote hopefully in 2011, must be to facilitate a politics based on a truthful rendition of social facts. By

doing so, it would restore the value of material, moral and political production: 'a grand re-establishment project'.

Saleh's critique of the regime also takes aim at its particular version of Arabism, going back to Hafez al-Assad and his appropriation of Arab nationalist thought. In its idealised form, the Syrian Baathist brand of Arab nationalism retains the original impulse of the 1950s and 1960s to unite Arabs against imperialist aggression. In the real world, the regime that prides itself on being 'the beating heart of Arab nationalism' criminalises dissent and manipulates sectarianism, fracturing rather than uniting the body politic.

Bashar al-Assad in the 2000s appeared to be changing the absolutism of his father to a lighter authoritarian neoliberal form of government that allowed certain freedoms of association and speech. However, from his catastrophic speech on 30 March 2011 onwards, in which he branded all dissenters terrorists and Islamists and blamed the popular protests on a foreign conspiracy, he has increasingly reverted to the same ideological core as his father, stressing local homogeneity, external conspiracies, accusations against traitors, and – together with President Sisi of Egypt – a muscular authoritarian secularism that appeals both to the nationalist Right and the anti-imperialist Left in the West.

Indeed, one could argue that Assad's crony capitalism has been a good match with a rebooted militant Baathism. In times of extreme uncertainty, national unity, militarised leadership and protection of minorities (including Christians and Druze) appeals. At the same time, the protection of crony interests in the war economy ensures the loyalty of broad sectors of the politically relevant elites.

Saleh does not shy away from blaming Islamists themselves and their supporters in the region for having contributed to the catch-22 in which the revolution has found itself since 2015. Nor does he have much complimentary to say about the deeply divided and inefficient opposition outside Syria. This opposition failed to gain legitimacy and representation from the local co-ordination committees that organised local governance and protests in the liberated areas.

But rather than just pointing the finger, Saleh analyses the conditions that shaped this tragic train of events. First and foremost, extreme violence such as torture, random shelling, barrel bombs, and pure urbicide in large cities like Hama and Aleppo created intense shock and anger, particularly among Sunni Muslims. Various militias, some of them funded by Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, gave an outlet for this brutalised society and its dreams of vengeance. This has led to a situation where the primary armed forces facing Assad have an Islamist agenda that is impossible for the West to support.

Secondly, the world failed to act. When faced with the most extreme violations of the Geneva Convention, the UN and the global powers produced a weak response that resulted in a drawn-out mediation with no end result. Officially, western donors supported 'non-lethal' aid for local governance; meanwhile, the US played a role in facilitating military aid though two large Joint Operations centres in Turkey and Jordan. Even if it did not provide the weapons, the CIA sat at the table where decisions were made to provide arms. In this way, the US may

have played more than a small role in creating the hyper-militarisation of the conflict. Much more needs to be said about this, in a way that maintains Saleh's analysis of Assadist violence and does not reduce it to an afterthought to facile anti-imperialist rhetoric.

Either way, the fact is that Syria became a theatre of narrow national interest and imperial ambitions, and that it remains, at the time of writing in spring 2018, stuck in this deadly pattern. Violence, social disruption, retrenched authoritarianism and a misguided, unco-ordinated and largely cynical response from the outside world torpedoed the revolution. As a conflict that now involves the world, we need to find a truthful way to think about it and talk about it. *La révolution dévore ses enfants*. Luckily, it spat out the bits that were left and gave us Saleh's indispensable work.

Roskilde University SUNE HAUGBOLLE

Race and America's Long War
By NIKHIL PAL SINGH (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 296 pp. $24.95, £20.00.

Until recently, US academia maintained a strong division between the analysis of racism and the analysis of capitalism. The former flourished within certain limits while the latter was neglected; each was artificially separated from the other. But that is no longer true. A body of work has emerged in the last few years that draws on Cedric Robinson's concept of racial capitalism, a term he used to emphasise capitalism's inability to universalise waged labour and the related racialisation of 'unfree' labouring populations. No doubt the term's recent prominence among scholars and activists is driven by the search for a politics that can align the two most energetic of recent Left movements in the US: the new iteration of the black freedom movement that finds expression in Black Lives Matter and the movement against neoliberalism that runs through Occupy Wall Street and the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign.

Singh's *Race and America's Long War* will be regarded as a major text within this body of work. It attempts to develop an analytical framework that connects US state violence to capitalism, race to class, and what Singh calls the 'inner wars' of settler colonialism, slavery and their domestic afterlives with the 'outer wars' of US colonialism and imperialism beyond North America. Singh's argument is organised around the long intertwining of these inner and outer wars and their capacity to constantly renew a racial ordering of capitalism. In this way, he sets out to overcome not only the separation of race analysis from class analysis but also the separation of questions of race from questions of international relations and foreign policy within US academic work. Doing so makes visible the global projection of US racism and the fabrication of racial enemies within by US colonialism and imperialism.

James Baldwin wrote in 1967 that: 'A racist society can't but fight a racist war – this is the bitter truth. The assumptions acted on at home are also acted on abroad.' But, for all the current scholarly attention paid to the history of black struggle, little remains of the movement's ability, for most of the twentieth century, to organically link the struggle within the urban colonies of the US to the struggles for national liberation in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Singh's work is exceptional in its willingness to connect the militarised killing of black people on the streets of US cities with the militarised killing of Muslims in the 'ungoverned spaces' of Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia, and to trace the links between the prison-industrial complex within the US and the 'black sites' of War on Terror incarceration without. His work starts from the assumption that the inner and outer wars can still only be understood in terms of each other, even though 'national liberation' is no longer an adequate term for empire's antagonists.

Singh provides us with an elaborate and wide-ranging account of how such connections might be rethought in the context of the Trump presidency. Ranging from the frontier wars of the colonial period to the 'war on terror', he traces the 'affinities between war making and race making' (p. xii), arguing that racism in the United States is sustained through the constant marking out of enemies along internal and external racial borders. The 'war on drugs' and the 'war on terror' are thus episodes in a longer history of racial wars that stretches back to before the founding of the United States. Within this longer history, 'foreign policy and domestic politics develop in a reciprocal relationship and produce mutually reinforcing approaches to managing social conflict' (p. 8).

Thus William Casey was not only the architect of the Phoenix Program during the Vietnam war and Reagan's director of the CIA but also a co-founder of the Manhattan Institute thinktank, a key vector for the introduction of 'broken windows' policing in US cities. Over the same period, Daryl Gates, who had studied counter-insurgency and guerilla warfare, transformed the Los Angeles Police Department into a military-style fighting force, stating: 'The streets of America's cities had become a foreign territory' (p. 9). The application of military vocabulary to tackling crime did not begin with Nixon's 'war on drugs'; Lyndon Johnson spoke in 1967 of a 'war within our borders' (p. 6). The use of the military to quell the uprising in Detroit that year showed that the 'war on the home front was not a metaphor' (p. 7) nor an 'analogy' but a 'homology': 'a single mode of rule' (p. 62), informed by theories of counter-insurgency, applied across different contexts. Policing and war-making are merged together in the reproduction of racism.

With the 'war on terror', the celebratory photographs of brutalised prisoners at Abu Ghraib were reminiscent of postcards of lynching parties from a century before. And the search for precedents for the use of exceptional violence against 'savage' enemies ran the gamut of the history of US colonialism. For Iraq-war advocate Robert Kaplan and Jay Garner, the first administrator of the US occupation, the model for what to do in Iraq in 2003 was what the US did in the Philippines a century earlier. Kaplan adds: 'The war on terrorism was really about taming the frontier' (p. 16). Yale University professor of military history John Lewis Gaddis

argued that the US's 'preventive' war in Iraq had its origins in the wars that cleansed the US frontier of 'native Americans, pirates, marauders, and other free agents' (p. 108). When Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo wrote his 2003 memo seeking to justify torture, he turned to an 1873 case of Modoc Indian prisoners for a legal precedent. Not for nothing was the operation to kill Osama bin Laden known as Geronimo.

Singh argues that the US has never stopped fighting 'savages' at its frontiers, even as these racial enemy figures took on new forms with 'the ebb and flow of animus against migrants, the more recent rise of Islamophobia, or the periodically renewed ambit of antiblackness from slavery and Jim Crow to mass imprisonment' (p. xvi). In each case, the racial enemy is described as incapable by nature of following 'civilised' rules of conflict and therefore can legitimately be denied substantive rights and confronted with exceptional force. 'Policing makes race when it removes barriers to police violence. War makes race when it relieves legal barriers to war's limitation' (p. 68). Fascism in the US is best understood, he suggests, not in terms of neo-Nazis entering the White House but as the permanent state of emergency that abrogates liberal norms within racially defined spaces, such as frontiers, plantations, reservations, borders, internment camps, occupations, prisons and ghettoes – the necessary but disavowed shadow of the official proclamations of liberal rights and freedoms. Indeed, the freedom and property of those deemed capable of rational self-rule are directly tied to 'a moral and legal right to murder or sequester racial outsiders – designated as savages and slave' (p. 37).

The components of this story have been told separately elsewhere; Singh's achievement is to synthesise a broad swathe of scholarship into a singular sweeping argument. But what makes *Race and America's Long War* especially significant is its attempt to relate this history of racial violence to the history of class relations and the accumulation of capital. In an elegant and insightful chapter that draws on recent work on primitive accumulation, Singh rereads Marx's *Capital, Volume 1* to challenge accounts, such as Robert Brenner's, that see the capitalist relations of production born in the English countryside of the 1500s as enabling extra-economic coercion to be dispensed with in a radically new system of class rule. On these accounts, capitalists dominate, for the most part, through what Marx called the 'silent compulsion of economic relations' acting upon the 'free' waged worker. Slavery under capitalism then appears as an anomaly indicating the survival of pre-capitalist histories rather than as an expression of capitalism itself. Along with other scholars working within the racial capitalism perspective, Singh critiques these accounts, arguing that they imply slavery and racism can only appear as irrational archaisms operating according to a non-capitalist logic, such that questions of race and class become isolated from each other theoretically and practically.

Singh notes that Marx's own approach to these questions is more ambiguous. On the one hand, Marx repeatedly used slavery as a metaphor for the exploitation of waged workers who, he says, are subjected to a 'veiled slavery' that is different in appearance only from the real thing: coercion is not absent from

waged work but just takes a more abstract form. And Marx writes straightforwardly of capitalism's dependence on the plunder of slavery and colonialism. On the other hand, he also describes capitalism and slavery as expressions of separate historical epochs, each following distinct logics. Singh wants to dispense with those strands of Marx's thought that imply a sequential relationship between slavery and capitalism and instead bring out those that suggest simultaneity: capitalism, on this view, constantly recreates itself through differentiations of waged and unwaged labour (slavery is one example), which in turn are associated with racial 'divisions between productive humanity and disposable humanity' (p. 89). The violence of state racism can then be explained in terms of the 'cutting-edge techniques of control, surveillance, and sanctioned killing' (p. 90) needed to manage the continuous 'armed appropriation' (p. 92) of 'the enslaved, segregated, undocumented, colonized, and dispossessed' (p. xi) without which capitalism's sphere of wage exploitation could not exist.

Coherence is a problem for any work of synthesis such as this and at times there is an element of haziness in the various ways in which Singh characterises race – generally emphasising the discursive, sometimes the socio-economic. And this is exacerbated by the sense that, in Singh's picture of racial capitalism, the ruling class is not foregrounded as a dynamic force and, hence, the question of how capital and the state are related. The passive voice prevails: we learn more about techniques of domination that are used than about who uses them. How the discursive matrix that produces racial enemies is tethered to the interests of particular groups is unclear. An almost exclusive emphasis on the signifying field of domination tends to mute the agency of groups in political struggle and their opposing interests.

Singh draws on Stuart Hall et al.'s classic *Policing the Crisis* to support his argument but, in this respect, there is a significant difference. For Hall, the construction of racial enemies involved the displacement of class antagonisms onto the plane of race. The logic is one of fantasy but with a real basis: the fear of the black mugger is actually the displaced fear of the black radical which, in turn, is the displaced fear of insurgency against the ruling class. This is what is meant by saying 'black crime becomes the *signifier* of the crisis' (p. 339). Likewise, the figure of the 'Muslim terrorist' was not conjured out of nothing in national security think-tanks, but is a displaced response to actual political movements, most significantly the Palestinian national movement. Lacking this link back to an actual crisis or insurgency, Singh's account tends towards solipsism. This means he is unable to derive from his broader analysis a meaningful programme of political action; instead there are platitudes, like the call to win over white people to 'a nonracist politics centered on economic justice' (p. 176).

Nevertheless, *Race and America's Long War* effectively consolidates the existing scholarship on racial capitalism and opens up new avenues of exploration in connecting racism and war. For these reasons, it is a remarkable work.

New York University ARUN KUNDNANI

Your Silence Will Not Protect You
By AUDRE LORDE (London: Silver Press, 2017), 230 pp. Paper £12.99.

Lorde's words resound with power and clarity, and the quotable simplicity of her language has resulted in some of her phrases becoming mantras within activist circles, feminist conferences and discussions on social justice. Despite the pervasiveness of a quote or two – 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house', 'caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and this is an act of political warfare', 'revolution is not a one time event' – Lorde's words are often decontextualised from her body of work. Silver Press, a new London-based feminist publisher, brings together a selection of her poetry, speeches and essays into one volume, *Your Silence Will Not Protect You*, for the first time in Britain. It is a valuable book that makes clear the connectedness of her prose and poetry, and encourages readers to engage with Lorde's words in context. Echoes of the same themes resound throughout the collection: the importance of shifting language into action, silence as a form of violence and the importance of history; conveyed with a depth of feeling through which radical action can take shape.

Lorde described herself as 'Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet'. Born to Caribbean immigrants from Barbados and Grenada who settled in Harlem, she dedicated her life to confronting and addressing injustices of racism, sexism and homophobia. Her 1982 biomythography, *Zami: a new spelling of my name*, documents much of her early life. Lorde was committed to a transnational, anti-racist feminism: she set up Sisterhood in Support of Sisters in South Africa for those living under Apartheid, and was a founding member of the Women's Coalition of St. Croix, an organisation dedicated to those who have survived sexual abuse. A prolific speaker and essayist, much of her formative prose from her 1984 collection, *Sister Outsider*, is republished in this collection. She died of cancer at the age of 58 in 1992, a struggle that she documented in *The Cancer Journals*.

'Poetry is not a luxury,' Lorde writes, 'it forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams towards survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into action.' It is poetry that 'lays the foundation for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before', which can lead to revolutionary action. She published numerous poetry collections and, from 1991 until her death, she was the New York state poet laureate. The best thing about the Silver Press edition is that, for the first time in the UK, her poems are published alongside her speeches and essays. Her prose converses with her poetry, and her poetry enacts her prose. Lorde continually returns to the need to speak out in order to spark action against injustice, which is introduced in the first essay that begins the collection, 'the transformation of silence into language and action is a self-revelation ... we can sit in our safe corners mute as bottles, and we will still be no less afraid'. She returns to this belief in her poem, 'A Litany for Survival':

and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid.
So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive.

There is an immediacy to her words that evokes an active presence, in which she is speaking *with* us, rather than to us. This communal dialogue is sustained throughout the collection with the pronouns 'we' and 'ours', which engage the reader in a conversation that is never one-sided.

Lorde writes with a sense that life is tenuous, 'I am standing here as a black, lesbian poet and the meaning of all that waits upon the fact that I am still alive and I might not have been'. Her awareness of the fragility of life is rooted in the lived experience of the racist, and often brutal, reality facing African Americans in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1973 in New York, Clifford Glover, a 10-year-old black boy, was shot dead by Thomas Shea, a white on-duty undercover policeman. Upon hearing that the officer involved had been acquitted, Lorde describes her anger, 'a kind of fury rose up in me; the sky turned red', which she transformed into the poem 'Power':

I am trapped on a desert of raw gunshot wounds
and a dead child dragging his shattered Black
face off the edge of my sleep

Stripped of punctuation, the poem evokes a palpable feeling of urgency, anger and pain. The jury for the trial of Shea was made up of eleven white people and one black woman, who as Lorde says, had been 'dragged over hot coals / of four centuries of white male approval / until she let go / the first real power she ever had'. Her poems and prose return to the voices of black people who have lost their lives. In the poem 'Need: a choral of black women's voices', 21-year-old Patricia Cowan, who was killed in Detroit in 1978, and 34-year-old Bobbie Jean Graham, one of twelve black women murdered within a three-month period in Boston in 1979, speak from beyond the grave, and challenge the reader to form a collective voice that stands against violence towards women.

History is important, and actively engaging with it in the present is essential. Without this continuity, Lorde muses, 'my power too will run corrupt as poisonous mould/or lie limp and useless as an unconnected wire'. Mostly written in the 1980s, her work is still as relevant today as ever, and continues to reverberate with the current times. In a world where the younger generation

are at risk of losing their connection to past struggles and forgetting their own history, her words, which emphasise the need for an active connection to the past, ring true:

> So often we either ignore the past or romanticise it, render the reason for unity useless or mythic. We forget that the necessary ingredient needed to make the past work for the future is our energy in the present, metabolising one into the other. Continuity does not happen automatically, nor is it a passive force.

As well as connecting to history, she emphasises connecting across differences: 'can anyone here still afford to believe that the pursuit of liberation can be the sole and particular province of any one particular race, or sex, or age, or religion, or sexuality, or class?'. In a time where internal identity politics often take precedence over solidarity with each other, her words feel necessary and urgent. This new edition of Lorde's work encourages readers to synthesise her essays, poetry and speeches, 'make the past work for the future in our energy in the present' and actively work for transformative change.

Institute of Race Relations SOPHIA SIDDIQUI

Deport, Deprive and Extradite: 21st century state extremism
By NISHA KAPOOR (London: Verso, 2017), 240 pp. Hardback £16.99.

Nisha Kapoor's latest book *Deport, Deprive and Extradite* is terrifying. At points, it was difficult to read – cases of those impacted by citizenship removal and extradition were so horrific. The author intricately weaves together the way that the global counter-terrorism matrix, which has been firmly embedded in everyday life since 9/11, is based on racialised and orientalist tropes, connecting the histories of colonialism to the present day. The book moves from viewing current state practices as being unique to the exceptional circumstances of the 'war on terror', to helping readers understand these as extensions of former disciplinary techniques.

The UK's counter-terrorism strategy has evolved enormously, especially since 9/11 and the subsequent 'war on terror'. Various laws and measures have been introduced, ranging from hard powers such as control orders and TPIMs (Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures), to 'softer' approaches such as the Prevent programme, implementation of which is now mandatory in public sector institutions. Kapoor argues that the state is orchestrating a campaign of strategic violence against those accused of terrorism, whether indirectly through the enactment of certain laws or directly, through physical intervention by its agents. The book begins with an overview of counter-terrorism policies and measures enacted primarily in the US and UK, going on to explore the connections between racism, citizenship, empire and terrorism. Divided into five chapters,

each revolving around the cases of those impacted by citizenship removal and extradition, it suggests that these practices constitute state extremism. Indeed, the term extremism itself demands to be questioned, given how recklessly it is used in daily discourse, without much critical attention. Kapoor makes clear that the designation of people and organisations as extremist and terrorist sympathisers, which she explores in her case studies of former NUS president Malia Bouattia and CAGE in chapter five, is used by the government and others to delegitimise and depoliticise communities.

Kapoor brings history and geography together to illustrate how the current strategies and processes of systematic dehumanisation – the 'unmaking' of a human being – have been developed and shows how state practices have relied on racial hierarchy to maintain order and control of the Other. And she highlights the way in which the deprivation of individuals caught in today's securitised matrices is rooted in the histories and geographies of colonialism and terrorism. Drawing on the works of Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben, Kapoor demonstrates how western notions of superiority and legitimacy are integral to the formulation of counter-terror policing of Muslim communities. Depriving supposedly 'threatening' individuals of their rights and stripping them down to 'bare life' as seen in chapters one and two means removing them from the polity of rational discourse and placing them in liminal positions and spaces, from where their fate is meted out by secret courts using secret evidence. Perhaps the title of the book should rather have been 'Deprive, Deport and Extradite' – the stages gone through in legal challenges – since it is on that initial deprivation of all rights and support that the other stages depend.

Navigating and accessing the research material would have undoubtedly been a challenge for Kapoor, considering the difficulties encountered by researchers working on similar restricted settings and documents. The breadth and depth of the empirical research in this book must be credited. Along with the securitisation of everyday life, scholars researching similar material are faced with a 'suppression of what can be known and who can know it' (p. 18). Kapoor's book connects the stories of individuals to policies and limited data and, despite the barriers to collecting and collating the material, she has produced an impressive and comprehensive account. Her examination of the different levels at which the counter-terrorism nexus operates is particularly valuable to further debate. From focusing on the human body as a site of violence, as documented in the case of Babar Ahmad, who sustained physical injuries from police during his arrest, to the macro-policing and micro-surveillance of communities, Kapoor reveals the invasive nature of measures that permeate society at all levels.

This is an essential text which documents the contradictions and complexities of terrorism legislation. The extensive bibliography indicates how far-reaching *Deport, Deprive and Extradite* is – ranging from postcolonial theory to security studies to international relations. Looking across race, class and gender to situate how these factors often impact and influence counter-terrorism judgements, the author

carefully unpacks a range of arguments. Kapoor concludes with a poignant quote from the late A. Sivanandan which captures the purpose and bravery of her book: 'The function of knowledge is to liberate, to apprehend reality in order to change it.'

Queen Mary University of London SHEREEN FERNANDEZ

Post-Soviet Racisms
By NIKOLAY ZAKHAROV and IAN LAW (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 250 pp. Hardback £72.00.

Post-Soviet Racisms by Nikolay Zakharov and Ian Law is a recent volume within the 'Mapping Global Racisms' series, edited by Professor Ian Law of the University of Leeds, which aims to expand the study of race and racisms to non-western forms of racialisation. As racism is not solely a product of the West, deconstructions of racial logics need, according to Law, to go beyond the focus of the operations of western modernity.[1] The idea of plural, diverse and co-evolving modernities is therefore utilised to reconfigure and decentre global race theory and address racialisation in non-Eurocentric contexts by understanding it as an 'interactive, relational process of polyracism across varieties ... of contexts and states'.

This particular volume, therefore, specifically looks at Soviet modernity as distinct, and at its shaping of contemporary racisms in the fourteen successor states (excluding the Russian Federation[2]). It is indeed unique in its comprehensive addressing of contemporary operations of race and racisms in this region. Based on research conducted between 2013 and 2015, including the collection and analysis of new primary data resulting from qualitative fieldwork and analyses of social and news media, the authors explore the historical context and role of Soviet conceptions of race and racisms in the formation of states, identities and social order, and the evident legacies of this in post-Soviet states today.

It is important to note that Soviet socialist modernity was distinct from, but not separate from, western capitalist modernity. There was interaction and co-evolvement. As Madina Tlostanova summarised it: the USSR 'appropriated and transmuted (not always consciously) the basic aspects of the western empires of modernity ... generating mutant forms of the main vices of modernity – secondary Eurocentrism, secondary orientalism, secondary racism'.[3] Officially, racism in the Soviet Union 'didn't exist' – it was something that was located elsewhere, especially America. Through claims of pseudo-internationalism, as well as the official, intricate organisation of religion and ethnicities, the USSR attempted to mask the racisms operating in the region. Zakharov and Law argue that race, in Marxist-Leninist terms, was presented as socio-historical backwardness rather than biological inferiority – the socio-cultural practices and aspects of non-white,

non-Russian groups were constructed as pre-modern and negative, reminiscent of a feudal past, and as obstacles on the way to a modern, socialist society. Through such a configuration the Soviet Empire embarked on a programme of what the authors call 'state-sponsored evolutionism', whereby a particular hierarchy was constructed between Slavic and all other peoples in the Soviet Union. The practice of 'assimilation' or 'Sovietisation' was the Soviet Union's version of a paternalistic, racialised civilising mission. For example, the Roma populations were pushed towards 'disappearing into the proletariat', and Africans were presented as 'backward' and helpless victims of capitalism.

The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in a number of heterogeneous, independent states, each of which then refigured these Soviet discourses of race within their own contexts. In *Post-Soviet Racisms*, Zakharov and Law explore how the previous hierarchies constructed by the USSR, in which the white, Slavic Russian was in a position of power, resulted in a widespread (though uneven) sense across these successor states that they had been victims of colonisation, and that this victim status equated to a non-existence of racism. Thus racial denial became official discourse, despite prevailing and obvious racisms operating throughout the regions. Conversely, in some regions, Soviet discourses were vindictively flipped, and discourses of biological racisms, grounded in skin colour and 'purity of blood', came to the fore. Zakharov and Law discuss each region in turn, grouping them in chapters more or less geographically, highlighting differences and drawing parallels.

Chapter 1 focuses on the Baltics – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The authors provide evidence that through this region runs a thread of nation-building discourses grounded in racial differentiation, dialogues of inclusion/exclusion, and the articulations of the connections between race, ethnicity and the nation. Despite such prevalent nationalist discourses, the authors argue that the Baltics utilise their post-Soviet 'victim' status to silence oppressed groups, such as Roma, and to rewrite history in such a way as, for example, to deny any role of the nation in the Holocaust. In their analysis, Zakharov and Law present many examples of racial structures profoundly affecting these societies, whilst at the state level, racism is officially denied as a mainstream problem. Instead, it is presented, and condemned, as a series of unrelated, sporadic incidents of racist violence.

Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine are grouped together in the next chapter. The authors discuss how the Soviet experience still defines ethnocultural policy in these countries, though officially denied. Especially in Moldova and Ukraine, anti-Semitic, anti-Roma and anti-Black sentiments are widespread. The official blame for racist discourses and violence is put on far-right parties, although racism is in fact all-encompassing throughout society.

The book then turns to how racisms operate in the southern Caucasus region – Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan – in a complex and interwoven way. The southern Caucasus is tied up in the historical legacies of Ottoman, Turkish and Soviet political projects, and constitutes a spatial intersection between Eastern Europe,

Russia, and Western Asia. The authors argue that such a historical and spatial position results in the region experiencing a convergence of racial Europeanisation, the resurrection of Russian racialised modernity and local racial nationalisms. For Zakharov and Law, the racial discourses that prevail in these regions are grounded in Soviet traditions of primordial, ethnicity-focused nation-building, which are supported by racialised academic disciplines such as 'physical anthropology' that are closely bound up with western racial science. Yet, despite these generalised shared conditions, the specific conditions in each country have created distinct racial processes and outcomes in each of the states, and after delving into the details of how racialisation has operated in each of the three countries, the authors conclude that the southern Caucasus region is a clear example of multiple modernities and polyracism, with no uniform similarity in the ways in which these states have interacted with and operationalised racialisation.

In the final chapter, race and racisms in the Central Asian former Soviet republics – Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan – are explored. The operation of racisms in these areas is presented as particularly complex, and at times contradictory. The dominant ethnocentric discourses of nation-building are at odds with the systems of political autocracy, whereby the leaders of the state are officially prioritised over ethno-nationalism, as well as with discourses of Pan-Turkism and the internationalising influence of Islam. However, after an in-depth and fruitful exploration of the operation of racism in each of the states, the authors are able to identify three main patterns of racial exclusion in post-Soviet Central Asia. Firstly, regionalism and clannism are strong divisive forces in Central Asia, and any attempts at nation-building based on common blood or ancestry lead to resistance and the formation of alternative ethno-racial discourses. Secondly, the imposition of racialised identities has occurred through the process of mass labour migration to Russia. In Russia, the natives of Central Asia are not only victims of racism and subsequent racist violence, but they also internalise these racist discourses and convey them back into Central Asia, where they are modified and adapted into local conditions and contexts. Lastly, nominating a national hero or leader has been key in the construction of the titular nation and of its racialisation – the racial discourse is formed to match the image of the leader of the nation.

Through a clear analysis of race and racisms in post-Soviet countries, Zakharov and Law provide a historically and geographically localised example of the benefits of applying an approach which shifts the focus from *Modernity* to *modernities*. By decentring western modernity and taking into account multiple modernities, the book allows for a growing understanding of how diverse racisms are constructed and interwoven, and thus contributes to a more complete global view of racial formations and how they operate.

University of Edinburgh MARTA KOWALEWSKA

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Alt-America: the rise of the radical Right in the age of Trump
By DAVID NEIWERT (London: Verso, 2017), 456 pp. Hardback £20.00.

The first thing to be said about this fascinating account of the state of Alt-America is that it really needs its comprehensive index. For more than two decades, investigative journalist David Neiwert has been keeping tabs on the far Right and the twenty-two pages of cross-referencing that conclude *Alt-America: the rise of the radical Right in the age of Trump* are vital if the reader is to be kept focused. Neiwert's narrative does not always proceed in a straightforward linear fashion. It shifts back and forth, from the Tea Party to the Patriot movements, from border militia to neo-confederate organisations, from white supremacist Christian identity movements to Three Percenters, Oath Keepers, Truthers and Birthers. For those not overly familiar with US far-right politics, or who aren't glued to the television each time armed groups and federal agents, whether at Ruby Rich, Montana, or Waco, Texas, are involved in a shoot-out, the number of threads interwoven into an exposé that displays both simplicity and complexity, can be daunting. But for those who persist, the rewards are many. Neiwert, whose reports on the far Right have appeared in *American Prospect* and the *Washington Post*, has an in-depth knowledge of its various factions, as well as their geneses. And in amassing the statistics that prove beyond doubt that far-right terrorism has, over the past decade, surpassed anything inspired by Islamist or any other ideology in the United States, Neiwert does vital public service. From 2008 to 2015, there were 201 cases of domestic terrorism in the US – with 115 crimes committed by right-twing extremists, compared to sixty-three cases of Islamist-inspired terrorism. We are constantly reminded of these cases and the ways in which the far Right is radicalising often disturbed white men. Take 21-year-old Dylann Roof, the perpetrator of the 2015 massacre in Charleston, South Carolina, who left nine black churchgoers dead, or John Russell Houser, a 59-year-old with a history of mental illness, who killed two women and injured nine others after going on a shooting rampage at a cinema in Louisiana.

Alt-America, more reportage than academic tome, is divided into thirteen chapters. In the introductory chapter 'Into the Abyss', Neiwert opens with a discussion of the immediate impact of Trump's candidacy on what was previously a dispirited far-right scene, focusing largely on the relatively recent phenomenon

of the Alt Right. Neiwert's larger concern, which emerges in the chapters that follow, is the convergence since the 1990s between mainstream conservatism and what he describes as 'the beating heart of white America, the ancient drumbeat of white identity politics'. The breakthrough for the Tea Party – which evolved out of the Young Republicans, and various rightwing thinktanks, such as Americans for Prosperity and the Independence Institute – was getting the support of Fox News, whose radio hosts urged people to sign up. Indeed, the Alt Right, so dubbed by Richard Spencer, also emerged as a breakaway from mainstream conservativism. Spencer, then editor of the paleoconservative *Taki's Magazine*, coined the term to explain the rise of a new kind of conservatism, hostile to neoconservatism and open to racialist politics.

In *Alt-America*, Neiwert painstakingly documents the activities of violent far-right groupings within the larger context of this reconfigured conservatism. He outlines the workings of the various citizens' militias and survivalist movements which are, in his view, a continuation of the white supremacist movements of the Civil Rights era, including the White Citizens Councils and the Ku Klux Klan. These militias first came to prominence in the Clinton era, drifting away awhile, before 'roaring back to life' with the nomination of Barack Obama. Likewise, the Patriot movements or Constitutionalists, which hold that most constitutional powers reside in local government and that the sheriff (and not the national constitution) is the primary authority of the land, have been given a new lease of life due to the rise of Trump. Neiwert shows how the influence of the Patriot movements and Constitutionalists is growing amongst law enforcement officers, with the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association and the Oath Keepers seeking to bring county sheriffs and police officers, as well as members of the military, into the constitutionalist belief system.

The idea that all these tendencies can be discussed as discrete phenomena is rebuffed by Neiwert who explains how the Tea Party provided the conduit for a revival of the Patriot movement and its militias. Indeed, it was the accommodation of the Patriot ideology into the programme of the Tea Party that helped channel this far-right tendency into the mainstream of American politics. Neiwert has an equally comprehensive understanding of the paranoia which is central to white identity politics, describing at great length the various conspiracy theories that constitute the mental space of Alt America, beyond fact or logic. The Birthers belief, popularised by Fox News host Glen Beck and then by Trump, that Barack Obama was not an American citizen but was born in Kenya and that his birth certificate was forged, is by now well-known outside the US. But we are perhaps less familiar with other conspiracy theories, such as the idea of a nefarious plot to impose a New World Order on Americans, by confiscating their guns and rounding them up into concentration camps run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), under the control of the Department of Homeland Security.

But if Neiwert proves himself an intrepid investigator of the far-right scene, he is not so perceptive in analysing US politics more broadly. If you are looking for a structural analysis of American capitalism, or to understand the vested interests of the powerful economic elites which backed Trump's presidency, there's not much to get your teeth into here. Corporate America and neoliberalism, are downplayed, to the extent that Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama are breezily described as the kind of liberals that a non-authoritarian electorate would support. And there are also some very careless passages about immigration which could be interpreted as blaming racism on a failure to manage diversity. While we might have much to learn from Neiwert's emphasis on American culture and white identity politics, when culture is divorced from the profound impact of globalisation on the US economy and the social consequences of the hollowing-out of its manufacturing base, the explanations for far-right violence are inevitably found in individual personality traits. Hence, Neiwert reaches out to psychologists, and foregrounds the authoritarian personality as his favoured model of understanding fascism. (One chapter is even entitled 'The Id Unleashed'.) The trouble is that the authoritarian personality explanation for Trumpism does not hold up, even in Neiwert's own terms, given that large number of white working-class voters in the old industrial heartlands, who cast their ballot for Trump, previously supported the 'liberal' Obama. More work needs to be done if we are to understand why large sections of white working-class America, not aligned to any far-right faction, continue to support Trump, despite the fact that his tax cuts, his assault on health care and workers' rights, including the revocation of Obama's 2014 Fair Play and Safe Work Places executive order, are decidedly against their interests.

Institute of Race Relations LIZ FEKETE

Notes to contributors

General

Articles are reviewed on the understanding that they are submitted solely to the journal. *Race & Class* operates a conventional single-blind reviewing policy in which the reviewer's name is always concealed from the submitting author. Each manuscript is reviewed by at least two referees. All manuscripts are reviewed as rapidly as possible, and an editorial decision is generally reached within 6-8 weeks of submission.

We remind contributors that manuscripts should be clear (as opposed to obscure) and free of jargon. Manuscripts should be submitted in double spaced hard copy. On acceptance of articles for publication we require them to be emailed, preferably in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format. Formatting should be kept to the minimum. Articles should be between 5,000–8,000 words; commentary pieces between 2,000–4000.

Please include a brief, two- or three-line author description.

Style points

Race & Class uses minimal capitalisation – e.g. for the first word of a heading, title of an article; lower case for terms like prime minister, mayor, etc.; 'black' is normally lower case, however author's preference will be followed. Exceptions are 'Third World' and 'Left' and 'Right' as political entities.

Use British spelling, not US, except where necessary in quotations. Use -ise form, not -ize.

US, not U.S.; Mr not Mr. but Arthur A. Jones, not Arthur A Jones.

Numbers one to a hundred should be spelt out, otherwise given in figures, except for ages, percentages and statistical material. Use per cent (two words) not %.

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For short quotes, use single quotation marks, except for quotes within quotes, for which use double quotation marks. Punctuation should normally follow quotation marks, except when the quotation itself forms a complete sentence. Quotes of more than three or four lines will normally be indented.

Use square brackets [ ] to indicate matter inserted into a quotation, and a space followed by three stops and a space to indicate matter omitted. Please indicate where emphasis is added in any quotation.

References

Notes and references should be placed at the end of an article, indicated by continuous numbering throughout the text. Reference numbers should be placed after punctuation, except when the reference falls within a bracket. Please note, *Race & Class* follows Oxford University Press styling for endnote references; the author-date or Harvard system is never used. References do not need to be made to every point, though direct quotes and controversial points should be referenced. Separate bibliographies containing material not directly referenced in the text are not normally included.

Please format as follows:

For books: A. Jones, *The Thusness of Thus: an examination* (Place: Publisher, date), p. 21.

For journal articles: A. Jones, 'The thusness of thus: an examination', *Journal of This* 2, no. 1 (1982): pp. 21–29.

Ibid. and op. cit. are no longer used in *Race & Class*; instead use a shortened form of the original entry, e.g., Jones, *Thusness of Thus*.

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