

London School of Economics and Political Science



Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity: Radical Internationalism in the 21st Century

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Ida Danewid

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis interrogates the absence of questions of race, colonialism, and their contemporary legacies in the philosophical literature on global justice and cosmopolitan ethics. What are the ethical, political, and material consequences of these “unspeakable things unspoken”, and what would it mean for cosmopolitanism to take seriously the problem of the global colour line? The thesis provides a tentative answer to these questions through a close engagement with contemporary debates about the meaning and purpose of international solidarity. It demonstrates that critical and liberal approaches often help reproduce and legitimise, rather than challenge and transcend, the current unjust and unequal racialized global order. Drawing on Cedric Robinson and the literature on racial capitalism, it interrogates how solidarity can be decolonised and re-conceived so as to better attend to the materiality of the global colour line. Through a close reading of the European migrant crisis, recent forms of Black-Palestinian solidarity, and the ongoing struggle for decolonisation in South Africa, it identifies an alternative internationalist imaginary that grows out of the solidarities forged in the struggle against imperialism, patriarchy, and racial capitalism. This is a radicalised and decolonised emancipatory project which retrieves the idea of universal history and total critique, but does so without invoking Eurocentric ideas of progress and teleology. In an era of Trump, Brexit, and global fascist resurgence—where the “white working class” frequently is juxtaposed with “immigrants”, and identity politics blamed for the demise of the organised Left—such an internationalist vision is urgently needed.



What can I do?

One must begin somewhere.

Begin what?

The only thing in the world worth beginning:

The End of the world of course.

— *Aimé Césaire*



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INTRODUCTION

In Search of Solidarity

“The radical nationalist movements of our time in Africa and the African diaspora have come at an historical moment when substantial numbers of the world's Black peoples are under the threat of physical annihilation or the promise of prolonged and frightening debilitation. The famines which have always accompanied the capitalist world-system's penetration of societies have increased in intensity and frequency. The appearance of literally millions of Black refugees, drifting helplessly beyond the threshold of human sensibility, their emaciated bodies feeding on their own tissues, have become commonplace. The systematic attack on radical Black politics, and the manipulation of venal political puppets are now routine occurrences. Where Blacks were once assured of some sort of minimal existence as a source of cheap labor, mass unemployment and conditions of housing and health which are of near-genocidal proportions obtain. The charades of neo-colonialism and race relations have worn thin. In the metropolises, imprisonment, the stupor of drugs, the use of lethal force by public authorities and private citizens, and the more petty humiliations of racial discrimination have become epidemic. And over the heads of all, but most particularly those of the Third World, hangs the discipline of massive nuclear force. Not one day passes without confirmation of the availability and the willingness to use force in the Third World. It is not the province of one people to be the solution or the problem. But a civilization maddened by its own perverse assumptions and contradictions is loose in the world. A Black radical tradition formed in opposition to that civilization and conscious of itself is one of part of the solution. Whether the other oppositions generated from within Western society and without will mature remains problematical. But for now we must be as one.”¹

International Political Theory and the Global Colour Line

There is something ghost-like about these words with which Cedric Robinson concludes *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Written almost 40 years ago, they seem to speak directly to our contemporary era of Trumpism, Brexit, mass drownings in the Mediterranean, racialized police brutality, the global “war on terror”, environmental degradation, ongoing settler colonialism, neoliberal restructuring, and widening global inequality. The global colour line, which W.E.B. Du Bois famously described as the problem of the 20th century, still casts its shadow over the world. Indeed, while formal colonial rule ended almost fifty years ago, colonial relations of

1 Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 2 edition (Chapel Hill, N.C: University North Carolina Pr, 2000), 317–8.

power remain significant in a number of ways: the world's eight richest billionaires currently have the same wealth as the poorest half of the world²; 1 out of 10 people live in extreme poverty;³ 815 million of the world's population are chronically undernourished;⁴ 10% of the world's population do not have access to safe and uncontaminated water;⁵ and 21 children die every minute from preventable causes.⁶ That there is something terribly wrong with this world—and that it is structured along lines of race—seems obvious: as clear today as it was in 1983, when Robinson completed *Black Marxism*. And yet, to many it is not.⁷

In this thesis I interrogate the absence of questions of race, colonialism, and their contemporary legacies in the philosophical literature on global justice and cosmopolitan ethics.⁸ While there in recent years has been a post- and decolonial drive for more global, non-Eurocentric scholarship,⁹ the fields of ethical and moral inquiry have

- 2 Deborah Hardoon, “An Economy for the 99%: It’s Time to Build a Human Economy That Benefits Everyone, Not Just the Privileged Few,” Briefing Paper (Oxfam, 2017), <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/an-economy-for-the-99-its-time-to-build-a-human-economy-that-benefits-everyone-620170>.
- 3 See the World Poverty Clock, <https://worldpoverty.io>
- 4 Statistics available at <https://www.worldhunger.org/world-hunger-and-poverty-facts-and-statistics/>
- 5 “Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and Sustainable Development Goal Baselines” (United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), 2017), https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_96611.html.
- 6 See <https://www.unicef.org/mdg/childmortality.html>
- 7 In this thesis I approach race, not as a pre-political, biological characteristic, but a social construct brought into being by social, economic, and political forces. In Nicholas De Genova's apt formulation, “race is not a fact of nature, but a socio-political fact of domination.” Importantly, race thus conceived is not reducible to skin-colour (which is a marker of racism), but instead describes a relation of subordination drawn along the line of the human. See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (Routledge, 2014); Nicholas De Genova, “The ‘migrant Crisis’ as Racial Crisis: Do Black Lives Matter in Europe?,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 0, no. 0 (August 21, 2017): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1361543>. See also Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (University of California Press, 2007), 28.
- 8 Following Thomas Pogge, I refer to cosmopolitanism as both a political project and normative perspective. Thomas W. Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” *Ethics* 103, no. 1 (1992): 48–75. As Patrick Hayden explains, according to cosmopolitanism “international politics should focus first on the interests, rights or welfare of persons, wherever they may reside rather than on the interests of states as such.” Cosmopolitanism is thus “the articulation of a set of moral principles as well as a commitment to the establishment of political institutions that support those principles.” Patrick Hayden, “Cosmopolitanism Past and Present,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Ethics and International Relations*, ed. Patrick Hayden (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009), 43–4.
- 9 Indicatively, see Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, and Robbie Shilliam, *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line* (Routledge, 2014); Gurminder K. Bhambra, *Connected Sociologies* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014); John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Branwen Gruffydd Jones, *Decolonizing International Relations* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); Meera Sabaratnam, *Decolonising Intervention: International Statebuilding in Mozambique* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017); Sanjay Seth, *Postcolonial Theory and International Relations: A Critical Introduction* (Routledge, 2013); Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations, The United States in the World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015). See also the special issue in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* on “Racialized Realities in World Politics”, vol. 45, no. 3.

remained largely insulated from this critique. Race continues to be seen as a domestic issue or historical phenomenon and, thus, as something that is of little or no relevance for addressing questions of justice in 21st century world politics. This is despite the fact that 85% of the world, until not so long ago, was under some form of colonial control; as decolonial theorist Anibal Quijano explains, “if we observe the main lines of exploitation and social domination on a global scale, the main lines of world power today, and the distribution of resources and work among the world population, it is very clear that the large majority of the exploited, the dominated, the discriminated against, are precisely the members of the 'races', 'ethnies', or 'nations' into which the colonized populations, were categorized in the formative process of that world power, from the conquest of America and onward.”¹⁰

These blind spots are not unique to the literature on cosmopolitanism and global ethics. As Sankaran Krishna has shown, “the discipline of International Relations was and is predicated on a systematic politics of forgetting, a wilful amnesia, on the question of race.”¹¹ In recent years scholars such as John Hobson, Branwen Jones, and Robert Vitalis have traced the discipline's imperial and racialized origins. In *White World Order, Black Power Politics* Vitalis documents how, at the moment of its inception, “international relations meant race relations.”¹² The original purpose of IR, he argues, was to help maintain and expand white supremacy; race wars, not inter-state conflict, was what occupied the first IR theorists. In an effort to “white-out” these racial underpinnings, contemporary IR has turned questions of race and colonialism into a “taboo.”¹³ Recent scholarship has described this as an “epistemology of ignorance”¹⁴; as

10 Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (March 1, 2007): 168–9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353> As Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, and Robbie Shilliam make clear, world order is still “constitutively... structured, re-structured and contested along lines of race.” Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, and Robbie Shilliam, “Confronting the Global Colour Line: An Introduction,” in *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line*, ed. Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, and Robbie Shilliam (Routledge, 2014), 7.

11 Sankaran Krishna, “Race, Amnesia, and the Education of International Relations,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 26, no. 4 (2001): 401, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40645028>.

12 Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*, 1.

13 Srdjan Vucetic, “Against Race Taboos: The Global Colour Line in Philosophical Discourse,” in *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line*, ed. Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, and Robbie Shilliam (Routledge, 2014). See also Robert Vitalis, “The Graceful and Generous Liberal Gesture: Making Racism Invisible in American International Relations,” *Millennium* 29, no. 2 (June 1, 2000): 331–56, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298000290020701>.

14 See the collection of essays in Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (SUNY Press, 2007). See also Charles W. Mills, “Global White Ignorance,” in *Routledge International Handbook of Ignorance Studies*, ed. Matthias Gross and Linsey McGoey, 2015.

a “calculated forgetting”¹⁵ or “norm against noticing”¹⁶ through which those with power and privilege tell themselves and others, not only that the world is *postcolonial* and *postracial*, but also that the long history of colonialism, racialized indentured servitude, indigenous genocide, and transatlantic slavery have left no traces in culture, language, and knowledge production. This is not a passive act of forgetting; rather, and as Manu Vimalassery, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Aloysia Goldstein remind us, it is “aggressively made and reproduced, affectively invested and effectively distributed in ways that conform the social relations and economies of the here and now.”¹⁷

In this thesis I argue that these “unspeakable things unspoken”¹⁸ are particularly problematic for cosmopolitan political theory. How can a field which defines itself as a humanistic discourse on global justice and the moral dimensions of world politics have had so little to say about the racial ordering of the international? What has the absence of questions of race and colonialism made possible? And, crucially, what would it mean for cosmopolitanism to take seriously the problem of the global colour line? These are the questions that motivate this study.

Within “Shouting Distance” of Marxism: Racial Capitalism and the Colonial Question

The few attempts that have been made within the cosmopolitan literature to address questions of race and colonialism have predominantly focused on historical responsibility and reparative justice. Charles Mills, for example, has argued that the overall framing of global justice needs to be self-consciously rethought to account for the crimes committed through racial slavery and colonial conquest. Reparative justice—rather than ideal theory and distributive models of justice—is needed to address “the legacy of the unfair global racial structure, established by colonialism and imperialism, white settlement and African slavery, that tendentially privileges whites globally.”¹⁹ A similar argument is made by Daniel Butt in *Rectifying International Injustice*. Butt suggests that the descendants of the victims of past forms of injustice—such as

15 Debra Thompson, “Through, Against, and Beyond the Racial State: The Transnational Stratum of Race,” in *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line*, ed. Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, and Robbie Shilliam (Routledge, 2014), 45.

16 Vitalis, “The Graceful and Generous Liberal Gesture,” 333.

17 Manu Vimalassery, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Aloysia Goldstein, “On Colonial Unknowing,” *Theory & Event* 19, no. 4 (2016).

18 Toni Morrison, *Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature* (University of Michigan, 1989).

19 Charles W. Mills, “Race and Global Justice,” in *Domination and Global Political Justice: Conceptual, Historical, and Institutional Perspectives*, ed. Barbara Buckinx, Jonathan Trejo-Mathys, and Timothy Waligore (Routledge, 2015), 198.

transatlantic slavery and other forms of colonial domination—are entitled to compensation.²⁰ These interventions are not without merit; however, they construct the time of the “now” as separate and distinct from the “past.” By focusing on past wrongs, they thus treat the problem of the global colour line as a historical issue *only*.

In contrast to this literature, in this thesis I approach race and colonialism, not as discrete events that belong to the past, but as enduring forms of structural injustice.²¹ Drawing on Cedric Robinson—with whose haunting words I opened this chapter—I develop a materialist conception of the global colour line. As Robinson reminds us, capitalism has always been racial capitalism.²² The accumulation of capital has historically operated through racial projects that assign differential value to human life and labour, such as chattel slavery, settler colonial dispossession, racialized indentured servitude, and exploitation of immigrant labour. The history of capitalism began with the slave trade and not with the factory system; in fact, there was never such a thing as capitalism without slavery, and “the history of Manchester never happened without the history of Mississippi.”²³ As Lisa Lowe explains, the concept of racial capitalism thus captures “that capitalism expands not through rendering all labor, resources, and markets across the world identical, but by precisely seizing upon colonial divisions,

20 Daniel Butt, *Rectifying International Injustice: Principles of Compensation and Restitution Between Nations* (OUP Oxford, 2009). See also Catherine Lu, “Colonialism as Structural Injustice: Historical Responsibility and Contemporary Redress*,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 261–81, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2011.00403.x>.

21 Structural injustice, as theorised by Iris Marion Young, refers to social processes that “put large categories of persons under a systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time as these processes enable others to dominate or have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising their capacities.” Iris Marion Young, “Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model,” in *Justice and Global Politics: Volume 23*, ed. Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller Jr, and Jeffrey Paul (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 114. Young’s concept of structural injustice is similar to Johan Galtung’s theorisations of structural violence, which refers to a de-personalized form of violence that is built into social arrangements. See Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (September 1, 1969): 167–91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>.

22 Robinson, *Black Marxism*. See also Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*; Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin, *Futures of Black Radicalism* (Verso Books, 2017); Robin D. G. Kelley, “What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?,” Text, Boston Review, January 12, 2017, <http://bostonreview.net/race/robin-d-g-kelley-what-did-cedric-robinson-mean-racial-capitalism>; Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Duke University Press, 2015); Jodi Melamed, “Racial Capitalism,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 76–85, <https://doi.org/10.5749/jcritethnstud.1.1.0076>; David Roediger, *Class, Race and Marxism* (Verso Books, 2017).

23 Walter Johnson, “To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism, and Justice,” Text, Boston Review, October 19, 2016, <https://bostonreview.net/race/walter-johnson-slavery-human-rights-racial-capitalism>. See also Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*; Johnson and Lubin, *Futures of Black Radicalism*; Kelley, “What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?”; Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*; Melamed, “Racial Capitalism”; Roediger, *Class, Race and Marxism*; Robin D. G. Kelley, “Introduction,” in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, by Cedric J. Robinson, 2000.

identifying particular regions for production and others for neglect, certain populations for exploitation and still others for disposal.”²⁴ Race, then, is neither reducible to class, nor is it a separate form of oppression. Instead, capitalism relies upon the elaboration, reproduction, and exploitation of racial difference: on the invention of what Robinson calls “the universal Negro.” Capitalism is ultimately racial, not merely because people racialized as non-white are disproportionately impacted and disadvantaged by the “free” market, although this is true as well.²⁵ More fundamentally, racial differences are constitutive of capitalism because processes of capital accumulation are themselves predicated on the devaluation of Black and other non-white people. Hence the term *racial capitalism*.

To read the global colour line in this way—through the lens of historical materialism and political economy—is at once a critique of liberal scholarship that tends to confine colonialism to a distant time and era, *as well as* of postcolonial approaches that often privilege cultural and intertextual analysis over and above the structural and the material. Before the emergence and consolidation of postcolonial studies as an academic field in the 1970s and 80s, anti-colonial thinkers and revolutionaries predominantly framed their struggle against racial violence and colonial domination through a Marxist lens. This relationship was never easy, as George Ciccariello-Maher has shown, because orthodox Marxism's Eurocentrism, historical determinism, and singular emphasis on the (white) proletariat as the revolutionary class of history often seemed out of touch with the struggles against racism and colonialism.²⁶ Nonetheless, in confronting these limitations and blind spots, thinkers such as Cedric Robinson—alongside W.E.B. Du Bois, Aimé Césaire, Oliver Cromwell Cox, Angela Davis, Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, Claudia Jones, Huey Newton, and many others—pushed Marxist thinking in new and innovative directions that linked the critique of economic exploitation to the critique of racial-colonial oppression, at home *and* abroad. In the aftermath of the events of 1989 when, in Eduardo Galeano's striking phrase, we were all “invited to the world burial of socialism”,²⁷ this focus on racial capitalism faded into the background. Where Black radicals and anti-colonial thinkers had turned to Marx and historical materialism, today's postcolonial theory has predominantly come to rely on the linguistic and

24 Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*.

25 For example, see Akwugo Emejulu and Leah Bassel, “Minority Women, Austerity and Activism,” *Race & Class*, October 2, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396815595913>.

26 George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics* (Duke University Press, 2017).

27 Galeano, quoted in Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus, *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

culturally inflected analysis of poststructuralism. The result has been a jettisoning of political economy, a failure to interrogate the ways in which race and colonialism are part of the historical unfolding of capitalism, and a relative detachment from emancipatory politics; feeding a growing consensus “on the political left as well as the right—that capitalism is an untranscendable horizon.”²⁸ In this climate, Black and other minority ethnic struggles against racism have largely been reconfigured as identity-based mobilisations for recognition, alongside feminist, environmental, LGBTQ, and other social movements. As Satnam Virdee explains,

“Since the 1990s, research within the field of racism and ethnicity studies has tended to focus on the cultural at the expense of the economic; on the theory and politics of recognition and understanding difference rather than the theory and politics of inequality and redistribution. Sustained accounts of racism and its articulation with class development of capitalism in the age of globalism are rare... reflecting this altered state of affairs has been the almost wholesale abandonment of the workplace and its institutions as a legitimate site of study to explore how racism works. And with it of course have gone the workers—black, brown and white.”²⁹

To counter this trend, in this thesis I develop a global political economic critique of race and racism. Remaining within “shouting distance” of Marxism, as David Scott so aptly has put it³⁰, I reconceptualise the global colour line as a racial ontology that enables the hyper-exploitation of non-white peoples and lands, while privileging others. As critical race theorist George Lipsitz explains, “the racisms that shape social relations around the globe are remnants of previous systems of servitude and segregation, to be sure, but they are also products of contemporary capitalism's ability to profit from new forms of differentiation that permit the exploitation of gendered and racialized labor within and across regional and national sites.”³¹ In this thesis I focus on two key aspects in which racial capitalism reproduces the global colour line: first, the violent surplussing of populations racialized as non-white; and second, the racialized violence of the penal

28 For a materialist critique of postcolonial studies, see—indicatively—Bartolovich and Lazarus, *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*; Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (Verso Books, 2013); Neil Lazarus, “What Postcolonial Theory Doesn’t Say,” *Race & Class* 53, no. 1 (July 1, 2011): 3–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396811406778>; Sandro Mezzadra, “How Many Histories of Labour? Towards a Theory of Postcolonial Capitalism,” *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 151–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2011.563458>; Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (Routledge, 2004).

29 Satnam Virdee, “Challenging the Empire,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 10 (August 24, 2014): 1827, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.932408>.

30 David Scott, “Stuart Hall’s Ethics,” *Small Axe* 9, no. 1 (2005): 4.

31 George Lipsitz, “Abolition Democracy and Global Justice,” *Comparative American Studies An International Journal* 2, no. 3 (August 1, 2004): 283, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477570004047906>.

and national security state. While the neoliberal reordering of the world economy has led to a reconfiguration of these dynamics, racialized (and gendered³²) forms of domination continue to pattern global politics—albeit in new forms, fit for the postcolonial and multicultural present.

Race and the Politics of Solidarity

What would it mean for the philosophical literature on global justice and cosmopolitan ethics to take seriously the enduring logic of race and the many afterlives of historical and ongoing colonialism? In this thesis I provide a tentative answer to this question through a close engagement with contemporary cosmopolitan debates on the meaning and purpose of international solidarity. Solidarity provides a particularly useful lens for analysing cosmopolitanism's racial caesuras. This is not only because all cosmopolitan approaches are underpinned by some form of solidaristic commitment, but also because the concept of solidarity has gained a sense of urgency over the last few years. In the wake of the global migrant crisis, the movement for Black lives in the United States and beyond, #StandWithStandingRock, the ongoing occupation of Palestine, and the rise of populist, far right, anti-immigrant, xenophobic, and racist political parties throughout the global North, a growing number of academics, activists, and artists have called for solidarity with the plight of migrants, racialized minorities, and Indigenous peoples. In the field of IR, the cosmopolitan literature on solidarity has “ballooned” since the early 1990s, in part because of the public adoption of the term in global activist and civil society campaigns, but also because of the renewed philosophical interest in questions of global ethics and responsibility.³³ There is of course no such thing as *a* cosmopolitan conception of solidarity: definitions range from

32 While in this thesis I predominantly focus on race and class, there is much to suggest that this analysis can be extended to gender. The regulation of intimacy, sexuality, desire, and female reproductive labour is not only central to the process of capital accumulation, but should also be seen as central to the (re)production of the global colour line. For a more detailed discussion, see the section on “Reproductive Racial Capitalism” in chapter 3. See also, indicatively, Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2000); Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Falling Wall Press Ltd, 1975); Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Duke University Press, 2008); Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (Zed Books Ltd., 2014); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011); Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West* (University of California Press, 2012); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (University of California Press, 2002).

33 Sally J. Scholz, “Seeking Solidarity,” *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 10 (2015): 725–35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12255>.

“the disposition to act towards vulnerable others without the anticipation of reciprocation”³⁴ (Chouliaraki); the obligation “to help people who are beyond one’s own borders”³⁵ (Coicaud and Wheeler); the preparedness of “taking responsibility” for one who “has formed his identity under completely different circumstances”³⁶ (Habermas); a general feeling of sympathy or empathy for others³⁷ (Rorty); a precondition for global democracy³⁸ (Brunkhorst); “a struggle against powerful tendencies in the modern age to divide the world into camps and to idealise one camp as much as we demonise the other”³⁹ (Fine); and the inclination to view all human lives as equally grievable⁴⁰ (Butler). In spite of these differences, these cosmopolitan approaches all put forward a vision of solidarity that transcends historical, cultural, and territorial borders, and that offers an alternative to communitarian and nationalist accounts that limit solidarity to those bound by common nationality, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, and so on. As Vivienne Jabri explains, cosmopolitan theories of solidarity are based on “the assumption that the realm of the international, a location defined in terms of sovereign statehood, is somehow reined in, challenged, by another realm, that of the human.”⁴¹ Ultimately, for these thinkers a global, cosmopolitan solidarity is necessary to confront the large-scale dilemmas of the contemporary world, including global poverty, widespread human rights abuse, international mass migration, environmental catastrophes, civil wars, and the ever-present growing disparity between the privileged and the poor.

In this thesis I explore the limits and possibilities of such calls for solidarity beyond borders. In the first part I examine how, why, and with what effect questions of race and colonialism continue to be silenced in discussions about international (or cosmopolitan) solidarity. I argue that liberal as well as critical approaches work to reproduce and legitimise, rather than challenge and transcend, the current unjust and

34 Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 106.

35 Jean-Marc Coicaud and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *National Interest and International Solidarity: Particular and Universal Ethics in International Life* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2008), 3.

36 Jürgen Habermas, *Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 29.

37 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

38 Hauke Brunkhorst, *Solidarity: From Civic Friendship To A Global Legal Community* (MIT Press, 2005).

39 Robert Fine, “The Idea of Cosmopolitan Solidarity,” in *Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies* (Routledge, 2012), 384, <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203837139.ch31>.

40 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010).

41 Vivienne Jabri, “Solidarity and Spheres of Culture: The Cosmopolitan and the Postcolonial,” *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 4 (2007): 714, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210507007747>.

unequal racialized global order. While cosmopolitan calls for solidarity with the vulnerable, downtrodden, and marginalised peoples of the world might give the appearance of contributing to an emancipatory political project, in reality they obfuscate how the modern world system was founded on, and continues as, a hierarchical racial order. Like the civilising missions of the 19th century, these discourses are heavily dependent on a racialized and gendered “imaginative geography”⁴² that divides the world into “the third world individual living within a nation of danger and the first world rescuers residing in a space of safety and enlightened freedom.”⁴³ By addressing the first world as a bystander to, rather than beneficiary of, current injustices, cosmopolitan calls for solidarity not only produce the first world as intrinsically “good”, “ethical”, and “humanitarian”, but they also render invisible the continuities between past and current forms of violence and privilege. The result is a grand narrative structured around binaries of good/evil and saviours/victims which, as Stephen Hopgood has argued, “gives an ideological alibi to a global system whose governance structures sustain persistent unfairness and blatant injustice.”⁴⁴

In the second half of the thesis, I demonstrate that a materialist reading of the global colour line opens up space for *new* forms of solidarity and internationalism—beyond the “master’s tools”, in Audre Lorde’s famous formulation. The concept of racial capitalism demonstrates how different systems of oppression rely on one another in complex ways: racism, sexism, and classism are not separate forms of oppression that sometimes intersect, but an entangled and constitutive part of the capitalist world system. This does not deny the uniqueness and specificity of local struggles, but highlights their transnational character. That is, while the struggles against empire, white supremacy, settler colonialism, gender subordination, and workers’ exploitation are not the same, they are fundamentally *interlinked*. By reconnecting and aligning different struggles—struggles which might seem distinct and unrelated but which, when viewed through the lens of racial capitalism, turn out to be closely related—a materialist reading of the global colour line thus points to the importance of addressing racism, patriarchy, settler colonialism, imperialism, and other interlocking violences simultaneously.⁴⁵

42 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014), 49.

43 Randall Williams, *The Divided World: Human Rights and Its Violence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 28.

44 Stephen Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (Cornell University Press, 2013), 2.

45 As I argue in chapter 4, this is not the same as intersectionality. Used to highlight the intersection of “multiple oppressions” as experienced by individuals, contemporary formulations of intersectionality are often delinked from the systemic critique of capitalism. Where the vocabulary of class figures, it is, as Delia Aguilar has argued, “merely designating income, occupation, or lifestyle”, and ultimately

The solidarity that emerges from this analysis is fundamentally different from cosmopolitanism. In cosmopolitan scholarship, the question of solidarity has typically been understood as a problem of how to overcome difference. While different thinkers disagree on the exact foundation for solidarity, they typically understand it as a universalising relation: as something that unfolds from the belief that all human beings have equal moral standing within and belong to a single world community. In contrast to these perspectives—which, as I argue in chapter 1, are haunted by a colonial logic—a materialist reading of the global colour line opens up space for a different kind of solidarity, based not on sameness but the struggle against interlocking oppressions under racial capitalism. This is a *revolutionary* solidarity anchored in the intersectionality of freedom struggles, rather than on abstract notions of what it means to be human. The overall goal here not the creation of some form of a universal community based on law, rights, and citizenship, as it is for many cosmopolitan thinkers. Instead, and as Bradley Macdonald has argued, it seeks “to articulate localized issues and struggles into an overall internationalism... It sees the necessity of understanding each particular struggle in the world as part of larger drama.”⁴⁶ Consequently, where cosmopolitan perspectives often depict solidarity as a one-way street whereby powerful and privileged actors extend empathy and charity to silent victims, solidarity thus conceived figures subalterns as agents in a collective struggle against interlocking systems of oppression under racial capitalism. While this is a project that is underwritten by universalism, it is not one that follows from any supposed unity of humankind. Instead, I suggest, it arises in opposition to the universalising thrust of racial capitalism—including the way in which it depends on gender subordination, border-making practices, ongoing primitive accumulation, the production of surplus populations, and the growth of a global “security archipelago.”⁴⁷

Radical Internationalism in Dark Times

The revolutionary solidarity outlined in this thesis has much to offer in our

“detached from mooring in the social relations of production.” This stands in sharp contrast to earlier formulations of intersectionality, such as that of the Combahee River Collective, Angela Davis, Selma James, and Maria Mies, which understood race and gender as constitutive elements of the inner logic of capital. See chapter 4 and Delia D. Aguilar et al., “Tracing the Roots of Intersectionality,” *MR Online* (blog), April 12, 2012, <https://mronline.org/2012/04/12/aguilar120412-html/>.

46 Bradley J. Macdonald, *Performing Marx: Contemporary Negotiations of a Living Tradition* (SUNY Press, 2012), 147.

47 Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* (Duke University Press, 2013).

contemporary era of Trumpism, Brexit, and global fascist resurgence. As Kyriakides and Torres make clear, ours is an age where solidarity has come to seem difficult at best; where older visions of Third World, non-aligned, and coalitional politics have fractured into multiple “ethnically determined subjects of identity in competition not only for a shred of an ever-shrinking economic settlement but for recognition of their suffering conferred by a nation-state in which the Right won the political battle and the Left won the culture war.”⁴⁸ The juxtaposition of the “white working class” with “immigrants” offers one of the starkest example of this fracturing of solidarity. Indeed, according to hegemonic narratives white workers were not only responsible for the Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump, but are also the main engine behind the rise of populist, far-right, anti-immigrant, xenophobic, and racist political parties throughout the global North. The rise of fascist populism, it is often argued, has to be seen as a counter-revolution to the post-WWII period, which has privileged identity politics at the expense of socio-economic inequality, and thus paid too much attention to questions of race, gender, and sexuality, and not enough to class. A *New York Times* column by Columbia professor Mark Lilla published shortly after the US presidential election captures this sentiment: a focus on identity politics, Lilla argued, had cost the Democrats the election.⁴⁹ By emphasising difference at the expense of commonalities and fetishising the virtues of minorities, identity politics had alienated “the demos living between the coasts” and undermined the possibility of creating a progressive coalition based on class. “Left behind” by deindustrialisation, globalisation, affirmative action, and identity politics, white workers had increasingly begun to feel like “strangers in their own land.”⁵⁰ In 2016 they thus voted to take back control.

This narrative is problematic for a number of reasons, as several commentators

48 Rodolfo Torres and Christopher Kyriakides, *Race Defaced: Paradigms of Pessimism, Politics of Possibility* (Stanford University Press, 2012), 119.

49 Mark Lilla, “Opinion | The End of Identity Liberalism,” accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/the-end-of-identity-liberalism.html>. The argument is expanded in Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics* (HarperCollins, 2017).

50 Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New Press, The, 2016). See also, indicatively, Justin Gest, *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality* (Oxford University Press, 2016); David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2017); Lisa McKenzie, “‘It’s Not Ideal’: Reconsidering ‘anger’ and ‘apathy’ in the Brexit Vote among an Invisible Working Class,” *Competition & Change*, April 13, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1024529417704134>; Wolfgang Streeck, “Trump and the Trumpists,” *Inference: International Review of Science*, accessed March 21, 2018, <http://inference-review.com/article/trump-and-the-trumpists>; Joan C. Williams, *White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America* (Harvard Business Press, 2017); Robert Wuthnow, *The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Rural America* (Princeton University Press, 2018).

have shown: indeed, the vote to leave the European Union was delivered by the propertied, pensioned, well-off, white middle class based in southern England, and *not* the working class in the North⁵¹; similarly, the swing to Trump was predominantly carried by the white middle class, and *not* the white working class.⁵² In attributing Brexit and the Trump vote to the white working class, this widespread narrative not only contradicts the available empirical evidence. By scapegoating minorities—women, Blacks, immigrants, refugees, etc.—it also suggests that class and race (and gender and sexuality) are distinct and separate, and thus need to be ranked in order of importance. As Frederick Douglass once argued, to insist on such divisions is to overlook that it is in the interest of capital to pit white workers against black workers; “The slaveholders, by encouraging the enmity of the poor laboring white man against the blacks, succeeded in making the said white man almost as much of a slave as the black himself.” In fact, “both are plundered by the same plunderer.”⁵³

Taking issue with this narrative of the “left behind”, this thesis argues that it is a mistake to separate anti-capitalist politics from the struggle against white supremacy,

51 “Brexit: The Decision of a Divided Country,” *Danny Dorling - 丹尼·道灵* (blog), July 7, 2016, http://www.dannydorling.org/?page_id=5564.

52 Pew Research Center, “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites Are Worlds Apart,” *Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project* (blog), June 27, 2016, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/on-views-of-race-and-inequality-blacks-and-whites-are-worlds-apart/>. Similarly, the idea that economic decline has uniquely affected whites is not born out by the data. In the United States, the unemployment rate of Blacks is nearly twice that of Hispanics and more than double that of whites. See David Roediger, “Who’s Afraid of the White Working Class?: On Joan C. Williams’s ‘White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America,’” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, accessed November 26, 2017, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/whos-afraid-of-the-white-working-class-on-joan-c-williamss-white-working-class-overcoming-class-cluelessness-in-america/>. See also Gurinder K. Bhambra, “Brexit, Trump, and ‘Methodological Whiteness’: On the Misrecognition of Race and Class,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 Suppl 1 (November 2017): S214–32, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12317>; Robbie Shilliam, “Beware of Those Who Use ‘the People’ to Drive through Brexit,” *The Policy Space* (blog), April 11, 2017, <http://www.thepolicyspace.com.au/2017/11/182-beware-of-those-who-use-the-people-to-drive-through-brexit>.

53 Quoted in Ahmed Shawki, *Black Liberation and Socialism* (Haymarket Books, 2005), 46. Writing in 1870, Marx arrived at a similar conclusion: “Every industrial and commercial center in England possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude is much the same as that of the ‘poor whites’ to the ‘niggers’ in the former slave states of the USA. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and stupid tool of the English rule in Ireland. This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist maintains its power. And that class is fully aware of it.” See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Road Map to History’s Most Important Political Document* (Haymarket Books, 2005), 164.

patriarchy, settler colonialism, and empire. A materialist reading of the global colour line uncovers the political possibilities that are inhibited by theoretical frameworks and political elites that insist on a neat separation between “race” and “class.” Race-making practices are fundamental (not epiphenomenal) to the operation of capital, because racism supplies the precarious and exploitable lives capitalism needs to extract land and labour. Consequently, where hegemonic narratives imply that countering right-wing populism necessitates a privileging of the needs of the white working class, a focus on racial capitalism reveals that there can be no politics of class that is not already racialized. As Robbie Shilliam has recently argued, “this blunt demographic sensibility entirely obscures the operation of power, which is always to cut the social fabric at its weakest, i.e. through the bodies of those racialized, gendered and nationalized as undeserving.”⁵⁴ Rather than separating race and class—which post-Brexit and post-Trump commentary insists that we should—a materialist reading of the global colour line thus points towards the necessity of weaving together anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-capitalist critique. A focus on race (and gender) need not detract attention from questions of class: quite the opposite, a truly anti-capitalist politics *has* to be anti-racist, anti-sexist, *and* internationalist.

These are not novel insights—forgotten, perhaps, but they are not new. Stuart Hall and the wider collective at the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies had already in the late 1970s began to understand race as “the modality in which class is lived” and “the medium in which class relations are experienced.”⁵⁵ Previous generations of radicals and revolutionaries—from the Black feminism of the Combahee River Collective to the Black Panther Party, the strikers at Grunwick, and Third World anti-imperial internationalism—similarly recognised these linkages, and thus imagined themselves as part of a larger community of resistance. As Malcolm X declared in a 1962 speech, “The same rebellion, the same impatience, the same anger that exists in the hearts of the dark people in Africa and Asia is existing in the hearts and minds of 20 million black people in this country who have been just as thoroughly

54 Robbie Shilliam, “Race and the Undeserving Poor,” *The Disorder of Things* (blog), 2018, <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2018/06/27/race-and-the-undeserving-poor/>. Reading historical class formation through the lens of empire, Shilliam argues that “The ‘white working class’ is not a natural or neutral category of political economy. As a constituency, the ‘white working class’ has rarely been self-authored, self-empowered or self-directed. This constituency must be apprehended principally as an elite artefact of political domination.” See also the excellent book Robbie Shilliam, *Race and the Undeserving Poor: From Abolition to Brexit* (Agenda Publishing, 2018).

55 Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 55.

colonized as the people in Africa and Asia.”⁵⁶ For many of these radicals, capitalism, racism, (settler) colonialism, and patriarchy had to be understood within a shared circuit and thus resisted simultaneously: as the women of Combahee explained, “the liberation of all peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy.”⁵⁷

Such solidarities are not a thing of the past, but are indeed still in the making. From the streets of Ferguson and Baltimore to the dark waters of the Mediterranean, to the refugee camps of Gaza and the West Bank, and the townships of Cape Town, they are being re-enacted by a new generation of activists. By linking together seemingly disparate spaces and histories of revolutionary struggles, these groups and movement help us envision what emancipatory politics might look like in these dark times, when established media and right-wing demagogues remain committed to distinguishing between the interests of “material” class and “ideational” race. Marx understood the goal of critical theory as the “self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age.”⁵⁸ This thesis is written with that spirit in mind.

Chapter Outline

This thesis unfolds in three parts and eight chapters. The first part interrogates how, why, and with what effect questions of race and colonialism remain absent from cosmopolitan discussions of global justice and solidarity. The second part explores how it might be possible to stitch these “unspeakable things unspoken” back into the fabric of internationalism. Finally, the third and final section offers a detailed reading of a set of movements, groups, and activists that practice a different form of global solidarity: a revolutionary political solidarity that links together seemingly disparate spaces and histories of struggles—including the migrant crisis in Europe, the movement for Black lives in the United States, the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and the struggle for decolonisation in South Africa. Studying these movements opens up space for imagining what solidarity and emancipatory politics might look beyond the colour line.

56 Quoted on the cover of Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America* (U of Minnesota Press, 2012).

57 The Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement,” 1977, https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf.

58 Cited in Nancy Fraser, “What’s Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender,” *New German Critique*, no. 35 (1985): 97, <https://doi.org/10.2307/488202>.

Chapter 1, “Cosmopolitanism and the Colonial Life of Ethics”, offers a detailed analysis and critique of cosmopolitan approaches to international solidarity. It demonstrates that liberal as well as critical conceptualisations reproduce and legitimise the racial structuring of world politics. Seeking to derive an apolitical understanding of solidarity, cosmopolitan thinkers often privilege ontological reflection above and before analysis of historical relations. This substitutes abstract humanity for historical humanity, and ultimately transforms the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander. The result is a discourse of hospitality, generosity, humanitarianism, and empathy rather than accountability, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform.

Chapter 2, “From Revolution to Ethics: Historicizing the Cosmopolitan Turn”, interrogates the historical, political, and conceptual conditions of possibility of the turn to cosmopolitan political theory and ethics. The rise of cosmopolitan thinking in the 1990s is less a result of a steady, gradual climb towards global justice, and more a product of a set of historical and material conditions which in the late 20th century made it highly desirable for policymakers, activists, and intellectuals to think of world politics as an *ethical* space. A historicization of the cosmopolitan project not only calls into question the ethics/politics distinction on which it is based. In revealing cosmopolitanism as a historically produced discourse—anchored in particular material interests and relations of power—it also demonstrates that the cosmopolitan preference for abstraction, ahistoricism, and anti-politics is an eminently political strategy which helps to uphold, legitimise, and entrench the current unjust and unequal racialized international order.

Chapter 3, “The Political Economy of Race: Rethinking the Global Colour Line”, takes up the task of radicalising and decolonising solidarity. Drawing on Cedric Robinson's 1983 magnum opus *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, I argue that this necessitates that the global colour line be rethought through a materialist lens. In contrast to (postcolonial) scholarship that focuses on questions of Eurocentrism, representation, and cultural difference, such an approach centre-stages the global political economy of race and racism. Unwaged and less-than-free labour—such as chattel slavery, racialized indentured servitude, convict leasing, debt peonage, and gendered forms of caring work and reproductive labour—are not just incidental to capital accumulation, but fundamental to its operations.

Chapter 4, “Identity Politics and the Class Struggle: Towards a New Internationalism”, builds on this to argue that a materialist reading of the global colour

line, and a consequent focus on interlocking forms of oppressions under racial capitalism, opens up space for a different kind of internationalism and politics of solidarity: a *revolutionary* solidarity based on the intersectionality of freedom struggles, rather than on abstract notions of what it means to be human.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 explore what such a solidarity looks like in practice. Chapter 5, “The Drowned and the Saved: Circuits of Resistance in the Black Mediterranean”, explores the links between racial capitalism, imperialism, (neo)colonial dispossession, and migration. Focusing on Black Lives Matter UK and Parti des Indigènes de la République, it examines how some activist groups rupture hegemonic discourses of Western benevolence towards migrants by connecting the mass deaths of migrants during crossings of the Mediterranean to anti-racist struggles *within* Europe. By place the ongoing migrant crisis within a broader analysis of empire, capitalism, labour exploitation, and neocolonialism, these groups open up space for new forms of solidarity: for an internationalism that subverts the national “we” and that brings together migrants, refugees, workers, and European minorities (Blacks, Muslims, women, Roma, Sami, and so on) in a shared struggle.

Chapter 6, “#Palestine2Ferguson: Empire and the Global Security Archipelago”, focuses on recent forms of Black-Palestinian solidarity. Where liberal commentators in recent years have approached Black Lives Matter as a domestic US movement struggling for access and reform—and thus, for a more inclusive American dream—I argue that the violence inflicted on Black people *within* the United States is intimately linked to the racial terror imposed on Brown and Black people *globally*. Focusing on campaigns such as “When I See Them I See Us” and #FreeAhed, I examine how Black-Palestinian activists unravel these links by insisting that the militarisation and neoliberal governance of urban Black America and Palestinian communities must be viewed within a shared circuit.

Chapter 7, “Things Fall Apart: Contesting Settler Colonialism, in South Africa and Beyond”, deepens this analysis of entangled geographies of resistance by putting settler colonial studies into conversation with the literature on racial capitalism. Focusing on the Fallist and BDS movements, I argue that racialized dispossession is a constant feature of capital accumulation. While South Africa now is “free” in the legal sense of the term, the marginalisation and exploitation of the Black poor have in fact intensified since the transition to democracy. The South African experience thus heeds a warning to other groups and movements struggling against (settler) colonialism,

including BDS.

Chapter 8, “Universal History Without Guarantees”, brings these arguments together by showing how the groups and movements discussed in previous chapters help us disentangle emancipatory politics from its historical baggage of Eurocentrism, racism, and empire. If the global struggle against racial capitalism is a universalist project, then how can it avoid relying on the “master's tools” and repeating the moral-political universalism it supposedly wants to challenge? To answer this question—and, thus, to show how it might be possible to retrieve the notion of universal history and total critique, *without* invoking Eurocentric ideas of progress and teleology—this chapter draws on Susan Buck-Morss's re-reading of Hegelian dialectics and Stuart Hall's call for a Marxism “without guarantees.”

The conclusion, “Strikers in Saris: Poetry of the Future”, summarises the argument and contributions of the thesis through a discussion of the migrant women led strike at Grunwick in North London, 1976-8. In our contemporary era of Trump, Brexit, global sweatshops, mass migration, environmental catastrophes, #metoo, racialized police violence, and global fascist resurgence—where “white workers” frequently are juxtaposed with “immigrants”, and identity politics is blamed for the demise of the organised Left—revisiting these “strikers in saris” opens up space for imagining solidarity and emancipatory politics anew.

CHAPTER I

Cosmopolitanism and the Colonial Life of Ethics

“For those who rule, ethics needs to precede politics since they presuppose an already just and humane, although often hidden, environment as the *de facto* context of their inquiry into what ought to be. For those who are oppressed, they regard the appeal to ethics as begging the question of the relevance of good will and argue for the need to shift the conditions of rule, to engage in politics, before addressing an ethics.”

—Lewis Gordon¹

Introduction

“My Dear Sir, I have received your declaration of human rights and want to say frankly that I am greatly disappointed... Under paragraph five you appeal for sympathy for persons driven from the land of their birth; but how about American Negroes, Africans, and Indians who have not been driven from their land of birth but are nonetheless deprived of their rights? Under paragraph six you want redress for those who wander the earth but how about those who do not wander and nevertheless are deprived of their fundamental human rights?... In other words, this declaration of rights has apparently no thought of the rights of Negroes, Indians, and South Sea Islanders. Why then call it the Declaration of Human Rights?”²

These words were written by W.E.B. Du Bois in his 1944 response to the American Jewish Committee's proposal for a “Declaration of Human Rights.” The Declaration, he argued, was framed in the language of universal humanity but in actuality reproduced the existing racial ordering of world politics. While Du Bois was a staunch critic of anti-Semitism, he worried that the effort to enshrine human rights in international law proceeded without confronting empire and the global colour line. A year later he submitted his own proposal to the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco, stating that the “first statute of international law” should read: “The colonial system of government, however deeply rooted in history and custom, is today undemocratic, socially dangerous and a main cause of wars.”³ As it turned out, his proposal never made it to the UN floor.

1 Lewis R. Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 88.

2 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois* (Univ of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 24.

3 Du Bois, 11.

This chapter offers a detailed analysis and critique of cosmopolitan approaches to international solidarity. In recent decades cosmopolitanism has rapidly become a topic of central concern within the scholarly community, in general, and the discipline of IR, in particular.⁴ In suggesting that we think of ourselves as global citizens—as a band of brothers and sisters united by our common humanity—cosmopolitanism is frequently presented as a cure for the worst forms of parochialism and nationalism. In Ulrich Beck's enthusiastic formulation, “citizens of the world, unite!”⁵ Through its focus on human rights, humanitarianism, and international law, cosmopolitanism brings the question of international solidarity into sharp focus. By calling for solidarity with those around the world subjected to violence, oppression, and human rights abuse, cosmopolitan approaches might give the appearance of constituting an emancipatory political project. Nonetheless, and as Du Bois made clear in his 1944 critique of human rights, appeals to common humanity frequently perform an ideological function. In this chapter I argue that cosmopolitan calls for international solidarity obfuscate how the modern world system was founded on, and continues as, a hierarchical racial order. In framing the problem as one of how to shift from solidarity among “friends” to solidarity with “strangers”, these approaches not only rely on a particular reading of present relations that renders invisible the many afterlives of historical and ongoing colonialism; they also obscure how modern understandings of solidarity themselves evolved in the context of European empire-building. By disconnecting connected histories, these perspectives ultimately contribute to an ideological formation that removes from view the global history of empire, colonialism, and transatlantic slavery. In that they turn questions of accountability, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform, into matters of hospitality, generosity, humanitarianism, and empathy.

The chapter develops this argument in four sections. The first section focuses on liberal cosmopolitanism: I argue that the liberal “practical project of an egalitarian and self-determined solidarity with strangers”⁶ is premised on a wilful amnesia that

4 See, indicatively, Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Reprint edition (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007); Daniele Archibugi, “The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy,” Princeton University Press, 2008, <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/8737.html>; Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford University Press, 2008); Richard Beardsworth, *Cosmopolitanism and International Relations Theory* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013); Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (Routledge, 2003); Toni Erskine, *Embedded Cosmopolitanism: Duties to Strangers and Enemies in a World of “Dislocated Communities”* (Published for The British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2008); David Held, *Cosmopolitanism: Ideals and Realities* (Polity, 2010).

5 Quoted in Archibugi, “The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy,” 134.

6 Hauke Brunkhorst, *Solidarity: From Civic Friendship To A Global Legal Community* (MIT Press,

disavows the long history of empire and through that assists in the ongoing consolidation of Western hegemony. More controversially, I suggest that this also holds true for those cosmopolitans, such as Thomas Pogge, who arguably *do* take these aspects very seriously. The second section turns to critical and poststructuralist attempts to rethink solidarity through notions of bodily vulnerability, grief, suffering, pain, loss, and trauma. While these approaches aim to take seriously the silences and exclusions of liberal cosmopolitanism, my analysis shows that they take up the struggle against pain, suffering, and vulnerability without engaging the structures and histories of racial violence that produce these conditions. In the third section I turn to recent attempts within postcolonial theory to derive a rooted, vernacular, and subaltern cosmopolitanism. While these perspectives are highly critical of liberal top-down approaches, I show that they do not so much challenge as supplement them by providing a description of how cosmopolitan sentiments might come into being from below. More problematically, by focusing on questions of cultural identity, Eurocentrism, and representation, these approaches often sideline global structural inequalities and the critique of political economy. By conceiving of colonialism in purely civilisational terms, and Eurocentrism as a mainly cultural force, postcolonial formulations of cosmopolitanism actually help mystify the materiality of the global colour line. The final section ties these argument together by arguing that cosmopolitan solidarity constitutes a “swindle.” The problem with cosmopolitan approaches is not only that they fail to take seriously the racial ordering of world politics: more problematically, they are themselves underpinned by a particular racial logic—based on the desire to protect and offer political resistance *for* endangered others—which makes it possible for the white Western subject to re-constitute itself as “ethical” and “good”, innocent of its imperialist histories and present complications.

Can Solidarity Save Strangers? Liberalism and Empire

Liberal cosmopolitan understandings of solidarity revolve around notions of human rights, international law, universal citizenship, and democracy. Grounded in an ontology centred on the universal, rational, and sovereign subject, liberal cosmopolitanism understands the individual human being as the ultimate object of moral concern in world politics. As Vivienne Jabri explains, for liberal cosmopolitans

2005), 76.

“the realm of the international, a location defined in terms of sovereign statehood, is somehow reined in, challenged, by another realm, that of the human.”⁷ Tracing its lineage to the Cynics and the Stoics and, in particular, to Kant's project of perpetual peace, liberal cosmopolitan approaches typically regard solidarity as an expression of an underlying human essence. Applied to the international, this is taken to imply that it is morally arbitrary to accord “citizens” a higher priority than “strangers.” Variations of this theme can be found in the deontological, utilitarian as well as contractarian models of cosmopolitanism developed by Charles Beitz, Brian Barry, Thomas Pogge, Martha Nussbaum, Peter Singer, and Simon Caney, amongst others.⁸ It also informs English School solidarists such as Nicholas Wheeler and Jean-Marc Coicaud, for whom international solidarity is based on the idea that

“whilst human beings live in a plurality of cultures, which exhibit a range of particular moral practices, all have basic needs and rights that have to be respected. These basic needs and rights, constituting the core commonality of individuals across the world, are also what bring them together and impel them to identify with, and care about, each other's suffering. Violation of these needs and rights calls for a sense of international solidarity. Failing to respond to the plight of the other, failing to show solidarity, diminishes the humanity of all. As such, international solidarity points to the international community's responsibility and obligation toward victims of conflict regardless of their personal circumstances and geographical location. This is how the idea and practice of international humanitarian intervention can be viewed as one expressing an ethics of international solidarity.”⁹

For Wheeler and Coicaud, international solidarity is intrinsically linked to the spread of the “culture of human rights” which, they argue, makes it possible for citizens to imagine themselves in other people's situation; indeed, “the universalization of human rights is a real articulation of international solidarity as exercised in favor of

7 Vivienne Jabri, “Solidarity and Spheres of Culture: The Cosmopolitan and the Postcolonial,” *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 4 (2007): 715, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210507007747>.

8 See Charles R. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, Revised edition (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Brian Barry, *Justice as Impartiality* (Oxford England: Clarendon Press ; New York, 1996); Simon Caney, *Justice Beyond Borders: A Global Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Thomas W. Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*, First Edition edition (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2002); Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (April 1, 1972): 229–43.

9 Jean-Marc Coicaud and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *National Interest and International Solidarity: Particular and Universal Ethics in International Life* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2008), 3.

individuals.”¹⁰

Another set of liberal cosmopolitans conceive of international solidarity, not as an expression of an underlying human essence, but an offshoot of new forms of global governance. Pointing to the process of globalisation, the growth of transnational linkages and international communications, and the global nature of climate change, thinkers such as Danielle Archibugi, Ulrich Beck, Hauke Brunkhorst, David Held, Jürgen Habermas, and Andrew Linklater advocate for the creation of new forms of cosmopolitan democracy. For thinkers such as Held and Archibugi, this entails the creation of an international order based on the principles of liberal democracy and law.¹¹ Others, such as Habermas, adopt a thinner conception of cosmopolitanism premised on the democratic process of establishing law. While some of these thinkers distance themselves from classic appeals to human essence and common humanity, they agree that the ideal of cosmopolitan solidarity is intrinsically linked to the spread of human rights. As Brunkhorst explains, since the French revolution the “normative horizon of the citizen is that of the global citizen” and therefore everyone as a global citizen has the moral duty to realise “[t]he practical project of an egalitarian and self-determined solidarity with strangers.”¹² Cosmopolitan solidarity, he maintains, will unfold as part of the Enlightenment project of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Until such institutions are in place, cosmopolitan solidarity will have “to support itself on the moral universalism of human rights alone.”¹³

For all these liberal cosmopolitans, the problem at hand is that solidarity traditionally has been confined to the territorial nation-state. Viewed from this perspective, the challenge is precisely one of how to extend solidarity beyond the citizen rights of particular nation-states to include a “human-rights patriotism.”¹⁴ As Fukuyi Kurasawa explains, this is why liberal cosmopolitans promote an understanding of solidarity according to which the latter consists of “a process of trickle-down integration of the world's citizens through their adherence to a common political culture composed of universal principles (participatory democracy, human rights, etc.) entrenched in international law and global institutions.”¹⁵ Nonetheless, in framing the problem in

10 Coicaud and Wheeler, 4.

11 Archibugi, “The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy”; Held, *Cosmopolitanism*.

12 Brunkhorst, *Solidarity*, 76.

13 Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 108.

14 Brunkhorst, *Solidarity*, 8.

15 Fuyuki Kurasawa, “A Cosmopolitanism from Below: Alternative Globalization and the Creation of a Solidarity without Bounds,” *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 45,

terms of how to shift from solidarity among “friends” to solidarity with “strangers”, these thinkers both rely on and reproduce a particular (Eurocentric, colonial) reading of history. As scholars working within the post- and decolonial tradition have shown, the world has long been a space of “imperial globality” in which historical trajectories have been intertwined through power relations.¹⁶ In Frantz Fanon's famous formulation,

“In a very concrete way Europe has stuffed itself inordinately with the gold and raw materials of the colonial countries: Latin America, China and Africa. From all these continents, under whose eyes Europe today raises up her tower of opulence, there has flowed out for centuries diamonds and oil, silk and cotton, wood and exotic products. *Europe is literally the creation of the Third World*. The wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from under-developed peoples. The ports of Holland, the docks of Bordeaux and Liverpool were specialised in the Negro slave-trade, and owe their renown to millions of deported slaves.”¹⁷

In a recent book Lisa Lowe follows Fanon in documenting how the coeval global processes of settler colonialism, transatlantic slave trade, and indentured labour were the very conditions of possibility “for British and American national formations for liberty, liberal personhood, society, and government at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.”¹⁸ While modernity typically is understood as a mainly European phenomenon—as a product of the European Renaissance and Enlightenment—in reality Europe's economic and political ascendancy would not have been possible without the establishment of interrelated systems of domination over the peoples of the Americas, Africa, and Asia.¹⁹ As Lowe makes clear, European modernity cannot be disentangled from the histories of dispossession, colonialism, and enslavement: in Aimé Césaire's famous formulation, there is no “civilization *and* colonization”, but they are rather one and the same.²⁰

no. 2 (August 2004): 234, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975604001444>.

16 Julian Go and George Lawson, *Global Historical Sociology* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3.

See also Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (NYU Press, 2000); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000); W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (Cosimo, Inc., 2007); Enrique D. Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “The Other” and the Myth of Modernity* (Continuum International Publishing Group, Limited, 1995); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

17 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 2007, 59.

18 Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Duke University Press, 2015), 21.

19 See Enrique Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures),” *Boundary 2* 20, no. 3 (1993): 65–76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/303341>.

20 Aimé Césaire, “Discourse on Colonialism,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A*

By relying on methodological nationalist accounts that bracket the “international” and the “external”, liberal cosmopolitans thus obfuscate that the modern concept of solidarity evolved in a context characterised, not only by urbanisation, secularisation, and the development of the modern state, but also and crucially by European empire-building.²¹ Indeed, while modern understandings of solidarity “are associated with coming to be on the side of angels”,²² as David Roediger has argued, the origins of the term “are surprisingly entwined with impulses that, if not conservative, are seemingly at odds with the left uses of the word so common today.”²³ As it evolved in the 18th and 19th century, the concept of solidarity is closely linked to the Christian concept of *caritas* with its emphasis on compassion for the poor, the dispossessed, and the wounded.²⁴ This is an abstract, universal, and apolitical understanding of solidarity, a solidarity that embraces all Christians and, in its aspirations, *all* of humankind. As Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez explains, this “implicates notions of solidarity as part of the justification for religious conversion as a central strategy for colonisation.”²⁵ Authors such as Michael Barnett and David Rieff have charted the relationship between colonialism and international solidarity (in its Christian as well as secularised/humanitarian version). From *la mission civilisatrice* to the white man's burden and manifest destiny, colonialism was frequently construed as a charitable and solidaristic mission aiming to rescue backward races from disease, destitution, and depravity.²⁶ As Barnett makes clear, the “commitment to helping distant strangers and deepening new forms of transnational solidarity”²⁷ was an integral aspect of the colonial

Reader, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Routledge, 2015), 172.

21 There are some notable exceptions to this trend; Thomas Pogge, perhaps most famously, includes the history of empire and colonialism as part of his argument for global economic redistribution and institutional reform. Yet as I discuss in more detail in the following pages, Pogge treats this history as a deviation from the key premises of liberalism, and not as something that is constitutive of liberal assumptions about rationality and history.

22 David Roediger, “Making Solidarity Uneasy: Cautions on a Keyword from Black Lives Matter to the Past,” *American Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (June 28, 2016): 225, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2016.0033>.

23 Roediger, 229.

24 See Brunkhorst, *Solidarity*; Michael Hoelzl, “Recognizing the Sacrificial Victim: The Problem of Solidarity for Critical Social Theory,” *Journal for Cultural and Religious Studies* 6 (2004); Steinar. Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511490378>.

25 Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández, “Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (September 8, 2012): 47, <http://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/download/18633>.

26 See Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Cornell University Press, 2011); David Rieff, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (Random House, 2002).

27 Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 55. Anthony Pagden and Craig Calhoun have similarly pointed to the difficulty of disentangling cosmopolitanism from the history of European universalism and its civilizing mission, see Craig Calhoun, “The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers: Towards a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,” in *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice*, ed. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (Oxford University Press, 2002); Anthony

enterprise. Walter Crane's monumental "Imperial Federation Map Showing the Extent of the British Empire", produced in 1886, captures this link between empire and solidarity. Filled with orientalist imagery, exotic animals, and racial stereotypes, the map is crowned by three banners proclaiming the promise of empire: "Freedom", "Federation", and—indeed—"Fraternity", the older word for solidarity.²⁸ Historically the concept of solidarity might thus have done "more for the enforcement of colonial orders than for decolonisation."²⁹



Fig. 1: Walter Crane—Imperial Federation Map Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886

The historical imbrication of solidarity with colonialism should make us cautious about the ways in which cosmopolitan theorists use and understand the concept today. Indeed, as Pierluigi Musarò has argued, contemporary liberal articulations of solidarity continue to be premised on a “religious-salvational narrative of rescue”, based on “the

Pagden, *The Burdens of Empire: 1539 to the Present* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

28 David Roediger discusses Crane's map in detail in Roediger, “Making Solidarity Uneasy,” 234.

29 Gaztambide-Fernández, “Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity.” See also David Roediger's presidential address from ASA 2015, published as Roediger, “Making Solidarity Uneasy.”

noblesse oblige of the powerful (rights holders) toward the powerless (those who cannot enact their human rights on their own).”³⁰ Such understandings are ultimately premised on a certain dislocation from history: it is only by removing from view the long history of empire, transatlantic slavery, and colonial conquest that thinkers such as Brunkhorst, Habermas, and Wheeler are able to formulate the problem of cosmopolitan solidarity as one of how to shift from solidarity among “friends” to solidarity with “strangers.”

The effects of this erasure is clearly visible in contemporary debates about humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect (R2P). At a base level, these discussions revolve around the question if, and at what point, the international community should intervene to stop human rights violation perpetrated by states against their populations. What, in other words, are our responsibilities towards those who are not our fellow citizens? As Anne Orford has argued, these debates take for granted that the people we are concerned to help are “strangers” and, hence, that the choice facing the international community is one between (military) action and inaction, presence and absence. As Orford makes clear, these debates are underpinned by a deeply racialized and gendered “imaginative geography... according to which the international community is absent from the scene of violence and suffering until it intervenes as a heroic saviour.”³¹ Such imaginative geographies sanction the idea that humanitarian crises are inherently “local”, and the exclusive result of homegrown ethnic hatreds and age-old animosities. This obscures the systemic and structural violence that often is complicit in creating the conditions that lead to humanitarian crises. As Robert Meister has argued, this means that the R2P and human rights can oppose genocide, but not the global structures that make such violence possible; indeed, “[a] perverse effect of a globalized 'ethic' of protecting local human rights is to take the global causes of human suffering off the political agenda.”³² For some, including French philosopher Alain Badiou, this is why the liberal paradigm of human rights and humanitarian intervention must be considered the very foundations of imperialism: indeed,

30 Pierluigi Musarò, “The Banality of Goodness: Humanitarianism between the Ethics of Showing and the Ethics of Seeing,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 6, no. 2 (July 23, 2015): 318, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hum.2015.0018>.

31 Anne Orford, *Reading Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 85.

32 Robert Meister, *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 47. For an account of how human rights focus on preventing cruelty and violence in their specific and physical form foremost, rather than the structural violence and social deprivation that make it possible, see also David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1998); Jenny Edkins, *Whose Hunger?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Randall Williams, *The Divided World: Human Rights and Its Violence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

“Who can fail to see that in our humanitarian expeditions, interventions, embarkations of charitable *légionnaires*, the Subject presumed to be universal is split? On the side of the victims, the haggard animal exposed on television screens. On the side of the benefactors, conscience and the imperative to intervene. Any why does this splitting always assign the same roles to the same sides? Who cannot see that this ethics which rests on the misery of the world hides, behind its victim-Man, the good-Man, the white-Man?”³³

The liberal self-congratulatory discourse on moral responsibility, Badiou argues, ultimately amounts to little more than a “sordid self-satisfaction in the 'West', with the insistent argument according to which the misery of the Third World is the result of its own incompetence, its own inanity—in short, its own subhumanity.”³⁴

There now exists a well-established feminist, poststructuralist, and post/decolonial literature that critically interrogates the ways in which liberal cosmopolitanism assists in the consolidation of Western hegemony. By calling into question the assumptions about humanity that underlie liberal cosmopolitanism, these critics have demonstrated that the rational sovereign subject must be understood as a reflection of parochial, historically specific values and experiences—typically those of the well-off citizen; a heterosexual, white, urban male. As Enrique Dussel has shown, René Descartes' dictum “I think, therefore I am”—the epitome of the liberal ontology of the sovereign subject—is in fact preceded by 150 years of “I conquer, therefore I am.”³⁵ Descartes formulated his philosophy in Amsterdam at the very moment in the mid-17th century when Holland occupied the core of the world-system. The idolatrous universalism of Cartesian philosophy—which claims to be able to speak from a zero-point, possessing a perspective equivalent to God's Eye—thus arises from a subject whose geopolitical location is determined by its existence as a colonizer/conqueror. The Cartesian subject, Dussel argues, is in fact the Imperial Being: in actual history, the *ego cogito* is not simply the *homo sapiens* but the conqueror. In other words, while liberal cosmopolitanism claims to speak from a neutral and universal perspective, in actuality it reflects parochial interests cloaked in the moral imperative to save other, distant populations. Although liberal cosmopolitanism might give the appearance of contributing to an emancipatory political project that extends solidarity to the poor, the

33 Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (Verso, 2002), 12–13.

34 Badiou, 13.

35 Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*.

vulnerable, and the downtrodden, as Jabri makes clear, in reality it is “a project complicit in the perpetuation of structures of domination generative of the very conditions which are then framed in a discursive politics of human solidarity.”³⁶

The are, of course, notable exceptions to this way of framing the problem of solidarity: indeed, it would be misleading to characterise *all* liberal cosmopolitans as apologists of empire. Thinkers such as Thomas Pogge have arguably been amongst the fiercest critics of Western (neo)colonialism. Pointing to the colonial origins of Third World poverty, Pogge argues that existing inequality is “deeply tainted by how it accumulated over the course of one historical process... that was deeply pervaded by enslavement, colonialism, even genocide.”³⁷ Members of affluent countries not only continue to benefit from these past injustices, but are also actively involved in sustaining Third World poverty by virtue of upholding a harmful global economic order that directly violate the rights of the poor. Because of this they have a moral duty to eliminate poverty—something that, Pogge argues, could be achieved by reforming the international institutions that continue to reproduce poverty.

Despite his critique of colonialism and the role that international institutions play in reproducing global inequalities, there are however a number of problems with Pogge's argument. Throughout his work Pogge has continued to regard the “basic structure” as distinct from white supremacy (and patriarchy).³⁸ As Charles Mills points out, white supremacy is for Pogge a deviation “from a flawed but basically sound institutional architecture” rather than “constitutive of that architecture itself.”³⁹ That is, while Pogge does refer to colonialism as an unjust planetary institution “based upon racial superiority”, he ultimately does not think meaningful global justice requires a more fundamental modification of the world order: indeed, poverty can be eradicated through “minor modifications of the global economic and political order.” Rather than unraveling the complicity of liberalism with empire and colonialism, Pogge ultimately treats them as exceptions to an otherwise peaceful norm: while the history of

36 Jabri, “Solidarity and Spheres of Culture,” 724.

37 Thomas Pogge, “Severe Poverty As A Human Rights Violation,” in *Freedom from Poverty as a Human Right: Who Owes What to the Very Poor?*, ed. Thomas Pogge (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2007), 31. See also Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 2002; Thomas W. Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights* (Polity, 2008).

38 Following Rawls, Pogge understands the “basic structure” as the “primary subject of justice”: it “comprises the main social institutions—the constitution, the economic regime, the legal order and its specification of property, the family in some form, and how these institutions cohere into one unified system of social cooperation.” Thomas W. Pogge, *John Rawls: His Life and Theory of Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 29.

39 Charles W. Mills, “Realizing (Through Radicalizing) Pogge,” in *Thomas Pogge and His Critics*, ed. Alison Jaggar (Polity, 2010), 153.

colonialism, transatlantic slavery, and Indigenous genocide are appalling and should be condemned, for Pogge this does not necessitate a rethinking of liberalism. This is in contrast to a growing literature on liberal visions of empire, spearheaded by scholars such as Duncan Bell, Uday Singh Mehta, and Jennifer Pitts. As these thinkers make clear, far from contradicting the key tenets of liberalism, empire and colonialism actually stem from deeply liberal assumptions about rationality and historical progress.⁴⁰

Responding to this critique in recent years a variety of critical, feminist, and poststructuralist thinkers have sought to derive an alternative conceptualisation of solidarity that goes beyond the pitfalls of liberalism. These thinkers argue for a new humanism based, not on the rationalist sovereign subject central to liberal political theory, but on notions of loss, grief, relationality, and bodily vulnerability. Nonetheless, and as we shall see in the next section, they frequently end up reproducing the underlying assumptions of the liberal cosmopolitan solidarity they seek to critique and transcend.

Solidarity of the Shaken: Poststructuralism and Colonial Unknowing

“The scream that goes through the house is the heartbeat that makes audible, at last, who we are, how resonant we are, how connected we are.”
—Arnold Weinstein⁴¹

Questions of ethics, solidarity, and humanism have come to occupy an increasingly central position in contemporary poststructuralist and feminist theory. Where there was once a relative consensus that the philosophical tenets of poststructuralism—anti-foundationalism, the emphasis on the multiplicity of possible readings or interpretations, and the critique of subjectivity—rule out an engagement with concrete ethical issues and the articulation of substantive responses to them, recent years have witnessed a poststructuralist “turn to ethics.” Building on the works of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas, thinkers such as Judith Butler, Simon Critchley, David Campbell, François Raffoul, Stephen White, and Ewa Ziarek have

40 See, indicatively, Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2016); Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*; Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

41 Arnold Weinstein, *A Scream Goes Through the House: What Literature Teaches Us about Life* (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2004), xii.

argued for an ethics characterised by infinite responsibility to the Other.⁴² This is a cosmopolitan genre that seeks to forge bonds of solidarity on the level of affect, and which is grounded in shared experiences of mourning, pain, suffering, and loss. Bonnie Honig describes this as a “turn to Antigone”, highlighting how these thinkers seek to counter sovereign violence and rationality (identified with Oedipus) with a new humanism grounded in exposure, ek-stasis, mortality, and vulnerability (identified with Antigone). Humanism, Honig argues, has thus made a comeback: this is “not the rationalist universalist variety discredited by post-structuralism and the horrific events of the twentieth century, but a newer variant that asserts that what is common to humans is not rationality but the ontological fact of mortality, not the capacity to reason but vulnerability to suffering.”⁴³

Judith Butler has been at the forefront in theorising such a cosmopolitan ethics centred around notions of vulnerability to suffering. In *Giving An Account of Oneself*, *Precarious Life*, and *Frames of War* she calls for a “reconceptualization of the Left” based on precariousness as “a shared condition of human life.”⁴⁴ As she explains, “we are, as it were, social beings from the start, dependent on what is outside ourselves, on others, on institutions, and on sustained and sustainable environments, and so are, in this sense, precarious.” She argues that mindfulness of this ontological vulnerability can serve as a new basis of political community, enabling a “we” to be formed across cultures of difference. The experience of loss and mourning is central to this project because, as Butler explains, it unravels the precariousness of life and our vulnerability to the Other, showing that we are never completely autonomous “bounded beings”⁴⁵ but always already linked to others, to strangers. Indeed, “many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility.”⁴⁶

42 See Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004); Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (Verso Books, 2013); Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity and Justice in Bosnia*; David Campbell and Michael Shapiro, *Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999); François Raffoul, *The Origins of Responsibility* (Indiana University Press, 2010); Stephen K. White, *The Ethos of a Late-Modern Citizen* (Harvard University Press, 2009); Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, *An Ethics of Dissensus: Postmodernity, Feminism, and the Politics of Radical Democracy* (Stanford University Press, 2001).

43 Bonnie Honig, *Antigone, Interrupted* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 17.

44 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010), 13–14.

45 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 24.

46 Butler's argument thus stands in contrast to the psychoanalytic tradition of Freud which understands

The immediate problem for such an ethics is that “certain human lives are more grievable than others.”⁴⁷ While precariousness for Butler is an ontological, shared condition of humanity, her work is alert to the various ways in which this vulnerability is differently distributed, rendering some lives more vulnerable than others. In *Frames of War* she explains how the possibility of acknowledging another person's vulnerability and suffering depends on certain “epistemological frames.”⁴⁸ That is, while some lives are constructed as grievable and in need of protection, others are cast as bogus, “collateral damage”, and destructible. As she explains, “[t]hose we kill are not quite human, and not quite alive.”⁴⁹ A simple acceptance of grief is therefore not sufficient to establish bonds of solidarity beyond borders. Rather, the political task consists in organising precariousness in a more egalitarian way, most crucially by devising alternative epistemological frames that enable those that are currently excluded to be recognised as fully human and as lives that matter. When the recognition of corporeal vulnerability is universally extended, or so the argument goes, there is potential for a different kind of global politics.

Butler has not been alone in exploring how the experience of vulnerability, mourning, and suffering can inspire new forms of solidarity. This approach gained particular traction after 9/11, when a diverse array of theorists began to reflect on how universal vulnerability can provide the ground for a renewed cosmopolitanism.⁵⁰ Already in 1989 Richard Rorty argued for a solidarity based on the common human susceptibility to pain and humiliation. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* he suggested that progress in the direction of greater human solidarity is achieved by widening the scope of those who are considered “one of us”, which depends on the “imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers.”⁵¹ More recently, Stephen White has affirmed an ethics based on the “existential realities” of finitude and mortality.⁵² Trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth have similarly argued that trauma can serve as a new humanist universal; witnessing trauma, and acknowledging the capacity for pain that all people share, “may provide the very link between cultures.”⁵³

mourning as a private project. See Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, 22.

47 Butler, 30.

48 Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, 9.

49 Butler, 42.

50 See James Brassett, “Cosmopolitan Sentiments after 9-11? Trauma and the Politics of Vulnerability,” *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies* 2 (2010).

51 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), xvi.

52 White, *The Ethos of a Late-Modern Citizen*; Stephen K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

53 Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (JHU Press, 1995), 11.

Trauma makes us realise the shared humanity that links us to others who suffer; as Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman explain, “the human being suffering from trauma” is “the very embodiment of our common humanity.”⁵⁴ Media and communication scholars Lili Chouliaraki and Susie Linfield have similarly explored how imaginative identification with those who suffer can function as a catalyst for the “cosmopolitanization” of solidarity.⁵⁵ For Chouliaraki and Linfield, stories and images of suffering are the primers for the exercise of our “citizenship of the world”, for the sentimental education of “our moral community”, and for the training of our empathetic, moral imagination.

While this critical turn to suffering and vulnerability has had a pronounced influence on international political theory,⁵⁶ a number of critics have denounced it for reanimating an extra- or pre-political ground for politics; that is, for substituting politics for ethics or ontology.⁵⁷ Honig, perhaps most forcefully, has argued that Butler's ethics of mourning succumbs to a “Hamletization” of politics which transforms “the figure of the avenger into a reflective, self-conscious melancholic’, mournful, and incapable of action.”⁵⁸ A “politics of lamentation”, she suggests, easily slides into a “lamentation of politics” which merely mourns, rather than challenges, sovereign violence.⁵⁹ Whilst some of this critique is overstated, it nonetheless points to a crucial issue: namely, whether an ethics grounded in the generalized suffering of a generic humanity is the best way for counteracting contemporary forms of violence and injustice. Butler, for example, takes it for granted that the contemporary unequal distribution of mourning—whereby some forms of suffering and violence manage to generate mass outpourings of

54 Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry Into the Condition of Victimhood* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 33.

55 Lili Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013); Lili Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (Pine Forge Press, 2006); Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (University of Chicago Press, 2012).

56 For a selection, see Thomas Gregory, “Potential Lives, Impossible Deaths,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 14, no. 3 (September 1, 2012): 327–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2012.659851>; Christina Masters and Elizabeth Dauphinee, eds., *The Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Lauren B. Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence: Theorizing Embodied Subjects in International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2014); Maja Zehfuss, “Hierarchies of Grief and the Possibility of War: Remembering UK Fatalities in Iraq,” *Millennium* 38 (2009).

57 For example, see Ella Myers, *Wordly Ethics: Democratic Politics and the Care for the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Julian Reid, “The Vulnerable Subject of Liberal War,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 3 (June 20, 2011): 770–79, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-1275788>; Antonio Y. Vázquez-Arroyo, “Responsibility, Violence, and Catastrophe,” *Constellations* 15, no. 1 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.2008.00476.x>; Janell Watson, “Butler’s Biopolitics: Precarious Community,” *Theory & Event* 15, no. 2 (2012).

58 Honig, *Antigone, Interrupted*, 41.

59 Honig, 14.

outrage, sorrow, or anguish, while others are barely noticed at all—is best countered by a pronounced emphasis on recognition, cultural difference, and affective identification with the wounds of others: in essence, by compassion, care, and empathy. Her call for an international politics of mourning in this way assumes that “proper” recognition will make the world less violent, and that resistance to normative “frames” will honour and protect the precarious, disposable bodies shattered throughout the world. As Burkhard Liebsch's explains, this is a “grief for strangers”, a mode of mourning that refuses to “abandon the child who dies between boundary stones, the tortured person, the victim of racist violence, or the starving person to a history that heedlessly walks over dead bodies.”⁶⁰ In that, the problem with an ethics of loss, vulnerability, and mourning might not be its lack of political engagement (as suggested by critics such as Honig) but, rather, the particular kind of politics it serves to legitimise and make possible.

In her trilogy on national sentimentality, Lauren Berlant problematises one of the assumptions that underpin the critical turn to ethics; namely, the idea that changes in feeling and identification with pain lead to structural social change.⁶¹ The focus on pain and suffering, Berlant argues, all too frequently works to turn political problems into an affective matter to be solved through proper feeling, which obscures the structural nature of oppression and inequality. In equating structural change with feeling good, the ethics of compassion and sentimental sympathy for the suffering of others come to function as “proleptic shields” and as “ethically incontestable legitimating devices for sustaining the hegemonic field.”⁶² What, Berlant asks, “if it turns out that compassion and coldness are not opposite at all but are two sides of a bargain that the subject of modernity has struck with structural inequity?”⁶³ For Berlant, sentimental politics is an eminently political project, launched on behalf of the beneficiaries of social injustice: it is a “defensive response by people who identify with privilege yet fear they will be exposed as immoral by their tacit sanction of a particular structural violence that benefits them.”⁶⁴ Berlant's critique highlights the trajectory on which ethical conceptions such as those of Butler and Rorty are based: from pain to recognition to solidarity; or, from apathy to empathy to moral action. Such a perspective not only takes for granted

60 Burkhard Liebsch and Donald Goodwin, “Grief as a Source, Expression, and Register of Political Sensitivity,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (October 4, 2016): 242.

61 Lauren Berlant, “The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics,” in *Cultural Pluralism, Identity Politics, and the Law*, ed. Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns (University of Michigan Press, 2001).

62 Berlant, 109.

63 Lauren Berlant, *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (Routledge, 2014), 10.

64 Berlant, “The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics,” 83–4.

that a life that matters is a life that is recognised by “us”—in other words, by those with power and privilege located in the global North. It also fails to move beyond the frame of recognition to interrogate the material structures of oppression that produce pain, suffering, and vulnerability as global and racialized conditions. As Neil Lazarus and Rashmi Varma have argued, these ethical perspectives ultimately call for “minor adaptations” and a passive reconfiguration of the hegemonic order, rather than a revolutionary displacement of the system.⁶⁵ In a series of controversial tweets published in 2012, novelist Teju Cole describes this as a “white-saviour industrial complex”, which allows people with power and privilege to feel outrage at isolated disasters without taking note of the larger disasters behind them. As Cole explains, this is a form of solidarity in which “we can participate in the economic destruction of Haiti over long years, but when the earthquake strikes it feels good to send \$10 each to the rescue fund.”⁶⁶ This form of solidarity produces no action towards justice; instead it is a “non-confrontational politics” which, as James Petras has argued, takes up struggles against injustice without engaging “the social system that produces these conditions.”⁶⁷

In the end, the poststructuralist call for a new form of solidarity turns out to be not all that different from the liberal version it sets out to critique.⁶⁸ While thinkers such as Butler are deeply critical of the abstract subject that anchors liberal ethics, their own ethical formulations operate behind a similar veil of ignorance: namely, behind the generalized and anonymised suffering of a generic humanity. The result is a similar erasure of history, and a transformation of the relation between the oppressor and oppressed into one of the lucky and the unlucky. By substituting abstract humanity for historical humanity, these perspectives ultimately elide the historically instantiated difference between what Sunera Thobani describes as “those doing the occupying and

65 Neill Lazarus and Rashmi Varma, “Marxism and Postcolonial Studies,” in *Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism*, ed. Jacques Bidet (BRILL, 2008).

66 Teju Cole, “The White-Savior Industrial Complex,” *The Atlantic*, March 21, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>

67 James Petras, “NGOs: In the Service of Imperialism,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 29, no. 4 (January 1, 1999): 435, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472339980000221>.

68 In a recent article, Ansems de Vries et al similarly argue that poststructuralist thought, “despite its commitment to critiquing modern, liberal ontologies” often tacitly reproduce “these same ontologies... resulting in a failure to grasp contemporary structures and histories of violence and domination.” See Leonie Ansems de Vries et al., “Collective Discussion: Fracturing Politics (Or, How to Avoid the Tacit Reproduction of Modern/Colonial Ontologies in Critical Thought),” *International Political Sociology* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2017): 90, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olw028>. Robert Meister makes a similar point in *After Evil* when he notes that “like today’s humanitarian politics, the first imperative of Levinasian ethics like humanitarian is to avoid historical contextualization.” Meister, *After Evil*, 2011, 43.

those being occupied.”⁶⁹

So far I have argued that cosmopolitan articulations of solidarity—in its liberal as well as critical-poststructuralist form—often fail to take seriously questions of race, colonialism, and their contemporary legacies. Because of this they frequently fall into the trap of reproducing and legitimising the current unjust, racialized global order. But what about the growing body of literature on postcolonial cosmopolitanism—scholarship that *does* centre-stage the colonial question? In the next section I turn to the work of Kwame Anthony Appiah and Homi Bhabha to show that a postcolonial re-reading of cosmopolitanism “from below” in fact is insufficient to properly address the racial structuring of the international. Postcolonial approaches do not so much challenge as supplement hegemonic forms of cosmopolitanism, offering a description of how cosmopolitan sentiments might come into being from below. As we shall see, in conceiving of colonialism in purely civilisational terms, and Eurocentrism as a mainly cultural force, these approaches ultimately elide the political economy of race and the materiality of the global colour line.

Solidarity From Below: Postcolonialism and the Elision of Political Economy

In recent years postcolonial thinkers such as Kwame Anthony Appiah and Homi Bhabha have sought to derive a rooted, vernacular, and subaltern form of cosmopolitanism. These attempts to rethink cosmopolitanism from the margins emerged as a response to critiques that cosmopolitanism is an elitist project born out of economic, political, and cultural privilege. As Craig Calhoun has famously argued, the culture of cosmopolitanism has historically flourished in locations created by empire and capitalism; today it finds its strongest expression among “the top management of multinational corporations and even more in the consulting firms that serve them.”⁷⁰ Cosmopolitanism, Calhoun concludes, is ultimately no more than a “good ethical orientation for those privileged to inhabit the frequent traveler lounges.”⁷¹

69 Sunera Thobani, “White Wars: Western Feminisms and the ‘War on Terror,’” *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (August 1, 2007): 176, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078140>.

70 Calhoun, “The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers: Towards a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,” 106.

71 Calhoun, 8. Jeremy Waldron similarly defines the cosmopolite as someone who “refuses to think of himself as defined by his location or his ancestry or his citizenship or his language. Through he may live in San Francisco and be of Irish ancestry, he does not take his identity to be compromised when he learns Spanish, eats Chinese, wears clothing made in Korea, listens to arias by Verdi sung by a Maori princess on Japanese equipment, follows Ukrainian politics, and practices Buddhist meditation techniques. He is a creature of modernity, conscious of living in a mixed up world and having a mixed up self.” Jeremy Waldron, “Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative,” *University of*

Responding to this critique, scholars such as Kwame Anthony Appiah, Homi Bhabha, Kobena Mercer, Partha Mitter, Fukuyi Kurasawa, and Srinivas Aravamudan have argued that it in fact is possible to re-conceive cosmopolitanism from the margins. As Robert Holton explains, there exists a “plurality of forms of cosmopolitanisms” which expose “the Eurocentricity of the older unitary Western cosmopolitanisms.”⁷² James Clifford was the first to theorise such a cosmopolitanism from below. In his 1992 article “Traveling Cultures” he contests the idea that cosmopolitans necessarily are members of a global elite. As he explains,

“people have, for many centuries, constructed their sense of belonging, their notions of home, of spiritual and bodily power and freedom, along a continuum of socio-spatial attachments. These extend from local valleys and neighbourhoods to denser urban sites of encounter and relative anonymity, from national communities tied to a territory to affiliations across borders and oceans. In these diverse contact zones, people sustain critical, non-absolutist strategies for survival and action in a world where space is always already invaded. These competencies can be redeemed under a sign of hope as 'discrepant cosmopolitanism.’”⁷³

For Clifford, there are many different cosmopolitan practices, each with their own historicity and distinctive world-view. The project of cosmopolitanism, he argues, need thus not be “class-or ethno-centric.”⁷⁴

Clifford's ideas have been picked up by a range of authors who have put forward their own version of “postcolonial”, “rooted”, “subaltern”, “marginal”, “vernacular”, and “actually existing” cosmopolitanisms.⁷⁵ As Paul Rabinow explains, these

Michigan Journal of Law Reform 25 (1992 1991): 95. Similarly, and as Gurminder Bhambra explains, “being cosmopolitan' (as a practice) is seen as being in the West and cosmopolitanism (as an idea) is seen as being of the West.” Gurminder Bhambra, “Cosmopolitanism and the Postcolonial Critique,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2011), 314.

72 Robert John Holton, “Cosmopolitanism or Cosmopolitanisms? The Universal Races Congress of 1911,” *Global Networks* 2, no. 2 (April 1, 2002): 153, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0374.00033>.

73 James Clifford, “Mixed Feelings,” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (U of Minnesota Press, 1998), 367.

74 James Clifford, “Travelling Cultures,” in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (Psychology Press, 1992), 107.

75 Amongst others, Kobena Mercer has argued for “what could be called a 'cosmopolitanism-from-below', in which perspectives on mass migration, exile, asylum, and border-crossings feature prominently”; Partha Mitter has written about the “virtual” cosmopolitan “who was a native of the peripheries, but who intellectually engaged with the knowledge system of the metropolis”; Uma Kothari has argued that migrants' “lived realities disrupt the predominantly elitist and Eurocentric characterizations of cosmopolitanism”; and Srinivas Aravamudan, in a similar vein, has put forward the idea of the “tropicopolitan” to describe figures such as Olaudah Equiano and Toussaint Louverture who “challenge the developing privilege of Enlightenment cosmopolitans”. See Kobena Mercer, ed., *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (London, England : Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2005); Partha Mitter, “Reflections on Modern Art and National Identity in Colonial India,” in *Cosmopolitan*

perspectives are committed to an understanding of cosmopolitanism as “an ethos of macro-interdependencies, with an acute consciousness (often forced upon people) of the incapacibilities and particularities of place, characters, historical trajectories, and fates.”⁷⁶ The result has been a rapid proliferation of cosmopolitan figures: no longer confined to the elite traveler, the category of the cosmopolitan is now also used to describe refugees, migrants, and the diaspora, as well as “North Atlantic merchant sailors, Caribbean au pairs in the United States, Egyptian guest workers in Iraq, [and] Japanese women who take *gaijin* lovers.”⁷⁷

The idea of a cosmopolitanism from below is perhaps most closely associated with the work of Homi Bhabha and Kwame Anthony Appiah. Bhabha, whose approach is based on the multi-ethnic ethics of British migrants and minorities, has theorised the existence of a “cosmopolitan community envisaged in marginality.”⁷⁸ This is a border zone “between the patriotic and the cosmopolitan, the home and the world”⁷⁹ which he labels vernacular cosmopolitanism. British minorities, he argues, lead a “double life... translating between cultures, renegotiating traditions from a position where 'locality' insists on its own terms, while entering into larger national and societal conversations.”⁸⁰ Vernacular cosmopolitanism is thus to be “on the border, *in between*, introducing the global-cosmopolitan 'action at a distance' into the very grounds—now displaced—of the domestic.”⁸¹

Modernisms, ed. Kobena Mercer (Institute of International Visual Arts, 2005); Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804* (Duke University Press, 1999). See also Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton University Press, 2010); Dipesh Chakrabarty et al., *Cosmopolitanism* (Duke University Press, 2002); Pheng Cheah, Bruce Robbins, and Social Text Collective, *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (U of Minnesota Press, 1998); Uma Kothari, “Global Peddlers and Local Networks: Migrant Cosmopolitanisms,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26, no. 3 (June 1, 2008): 500–516, <https://doi.org/10.1068/dcos2>; FUYUKI KURASAWA, “A Cosmopolitanism from Below: Alternative Globalization and the Creation of a Solidarity without Bounds,” *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie* 45, no. 2 (2004): 233–55, <https://doi.org/10.2307/23999133>; Marianna Papastephanou, *Thinking Differently About Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Eccentricity, and the Globalized World* (Routledge, 2015); Stephanos Stephanides and Stavros Karayanni, *Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination* (BRILL, 2015); Pnina Werbner, *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism: Rooted, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

76 Paul Rabinow, “Representations Are Social Facts,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (University of California Press, 1986), 258.

77 Bruce Robbins, “Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (U of Minnesota Press, 1998), 1.

78 Homi K. Bhabha, “Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism,” in *Text and Nation: Cross-Disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities*, ed. Laura García-Moreno and Peter C. Pfeiffer (Camden House, 1996), 195–6.

79 Bhabha, “Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism.”

80 Bhabha, 139.

81 Bhabha, 196.

Appiah, meanwhile, has called for a “rooted” cosmopolitanism which puts Western and non-Western (in particular, African) values, traditions, and debates about human rights, citizenship, and cultural identity into dialogue.⁸² Reading Western Enlightenment liberal thinkers such as John Stuart Mill alongside Asante philosophy and the political experience of his Ghanaian father, who lived through colonialism and the anti-colonial struggle for liberation and independence, Appiah outlines a new and dialogic cosmopolitanism committed to acknowledging and pursuing difference and cultural hybridisation. In contrast to those who see cosmopolitanism as the antidote to nationalism, he maintains that cosmopolitanism in fact begins from membership in communities that value notions such as toleration and openness to the world and others. He is careful to point out that this is different from communitarianism, because rooted cosmopolitanism “is not the name for a dialogue among static closed cultures, each of which is internally homogenous and different from the others: not a celebration of the beauty of a collection of closed boxes.”⁸³ Rather, it is based on the idea that “localism is an instrument to achieve universal ideals, universal goals.”⁸⁴ On this basis, he goes on to argue, it is possible to construct “a form of universalism that is sensitive to the ways in which historical context may shape the significance of a practice.”⁸⁵

What unites theorists such as Clifford, Bhabha, and Appiah is an emphasis on the non-elite as well as a refusal to choose between postcolonial nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Offering a via media between liberal cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, they seek to combine respect for local differences with universal principles. As Angela Taraborelli explains, “for cosmopolitanism from below, cosmopolitanism and national (or national conscience), global and local are not necessarily mutually antithetical.”⁸⁶ Where liberal versions of cosmopolitanism emphasise the formation of a global culture based on international law and institutions, postcolonial forms of cosmopolitanism thus rely on global pluralism and difference. In

82 Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*. See also Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Reprint edition (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007) and Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Cosmopolitan Patriots,” *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (1997): 617–39, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1344038>.

83 Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, 256.

84 Appiah, 241.

85 Appiah, 256.

86 Angela Taraborrelli, *Contemporary Cosmopolitanism* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 92. Meyda Yegenoglu similarly argues that cosmopolitanism from below is “less dismissive of the need for nationalism in the Third World, a nationalism that is capable of articulating the will of the excluded subaltern populations”. See Meyda Yeğenoğlu, “Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in a Globalized World,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000280030>.

the words of Kurasawa, “transnational social integration along cosmopolitan lines does not require cultural assimilation but, on the contrary, the acknowledgement of global diversity.”⁸⁷

While these approaches have been successful in demonstrating that cosmopolitanism need not be elitist, they are not without their problems. As David Harvey points out, vernacular cosmopolitanisms are more concerned with articulating “locally meaningful, relational futures than with transformation at a systemic level.”⁸⁸ While thinkers such as Bhabha and Appiah are critical of traditional top-down approaches, their rooted and vernacular alternatives do not so much challenge as supplement them, providing a description of how cosmopolitan sentiments might come into being from below. For Harvey, Appiah's call for a rooted cosmopolitanism even “ends up supporting the liberal and neoliberal imperialist practices that reproduce class inequalities, while soothing our nerves with respect to multicultural differences.”⁸⁹ Alfredo Gonzales-Ruibal has similarly argued that postcolonial cosmopolitanisms elide “global structural inequalities, long-term processes of oppression, and the real and traumatic impact that Western culture and politics exercise over the third world.”⁹⁰ Postcolonial versions of cosmopolitanism do not disturb or quarrel with colonial relations of power and the global colour line; quite the opposite, these “liberals on safari”⁹¹ actually sanction the status quo, because they allow Western elites “to keep their lifestyles and worldviews, while at the same time appeasing their consciences.”⁹² The underlying problem, as materialist thinkers such as Benita Parry and Neil Lazarus remind us, is that the field of postcolonial studies historically has overlooked the link between colonialism and the wider history of capitalist development. By conceiving of colonialism in purely civilisational terms, and Eurocentrism as a mainly cultural force, postcolonialism has often helped mystify the larger historical dynamic of global capitalism and its role in reproducing racial differences.⁹³ That is, in approaching race

87 KURASAWA, “A Cosmopolitanism from Below,” 239.

88 David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (Columbia University Press, 2009), 113.

89 Harvey, 115.

90 Alfredo González-Ruibal, “Vernacular Cosmopolitanism: An Archeological Critique of Universalistic Reason,” in *Cosmopolitan Archaeologies*, ed. Lynn Meskell (Duke University Press, 2009), 118.

91 González-Ruibal, 118.

92 González-Ruibal, 118.

93 For a historical materialist critique of postcolonialism, see Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus, *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (Routledge, 2004); Lazarus and Varma, “Marxism and Postcolonial Studies”; Neil Lazarus, “What Postcolonial Theory Doesn’t Say,” *Race & Class* 53, no. 1 (July 1, 2011): 3–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396811406778>; Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (Verso Books, 2013).

through the lens of difference rather than domination, these perspective ultimately evade the materiality of racial hierarchies, including the entanglements of the racialized social order, the spread of empire, and capitalist accumulation. This is in contrast to earlier anti-colonial thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, Claudia Jones, Amílcar Cabral, Cedric Robinson, and Angela Davis, who situated their critiques of colonialism and racial oppression within a historical materialist framework. In chapter 3 I argue that addressing the coloniality of mainstream perspectives requires more than “plural”, “hybrid”, and “diverse” re-readings of cosmopolitanism. As we shall see, it necessitates that the very nature and problem of the global colour line be rethought through a materialist lens, so as to uncover the link between the logic of capital and the production of racial difference. Before moving on to this, we must first consider the ideological work done by cosmopolitan formulations of solidarity, in its liberal, poststructuralist, and postcolonial forms.

The Swindle

In *The Meursault Investigation*, Kamel Daoud offers a postcolonial rejoinder to Albert Camus' absurdist classic *The Stranger*. Told in the words of Harun—the brother of the nameless Arab murdered by Camus' protagonist in the blazing sun on an Algerian beach—Daoud makes us remember what Camus erased: Africa. *The Stranger*, he wants us to understand, is ultimately a “swindle.” It presents itself as an existential reflection on man's absurd condition but is, in actuality, structured by French colonialism and an imperial sensibility that renders native Algerians as faceless puppets and mannequins: as the background against which the adventure of the central, European character unfolds. As Harun tells us:

“The books success is still undiminished, but I repeat, I think it's an awful swindle. After Independence, the more I read of your hero's work, the more I had the feeling I was pressing my face against the window of a big room where a party was going on that neither my mother nor I had been invited to. Everything happened without us. There's not a trace of our loss or of what became of us afterward. No a single trace, my friend! The whole world eternally witnesses the same murder in the blazing sun, but no one saw anything, and no one watched us recede into the distance. No

one! There's good reason to get a little angry, don't you think?"⁹⁴

Like *The Stranger*, cosmopolitan formulations of solidarity can be thought of as a swindle: as structured by a colonial condition they legitimate as they obfuscate. As Sankaran Krishna reminds us in an article from 2001, the whole of IR is “predicated on a systematic politics of forgetting, a wilful amnesia, on the question of race.”⁹⁵ IR's founding narrative of the territorially sovereign state system is kept in place and made possible by the “valorization, indeed fetishization, of abstraction” which removes from view the “violence, genocide, and theft that marked the encounter between the rest and the West in the post-Columbian era.”⁹⁶ In cosmopolitan theorising, this valorisation of abstraction shows up as a preference for what Raymond Geuss has called “ethics-first”: the idea that “there is, or could be, such a thing as a separate discipline called Ethics which... can be studied without locating it in the rest of life, and in relation to claims of history, sociology and economics.”⁹⁷ From this flows the belief that ethical inquiry is separate from moral practice and, thus, that ethics can be abstracted from particular histories and geographical circumstances. As we have seen, liberal, poststructural and, to some extent, postcolonial cosmopolitans all strive for an apolitical understanding of solidarity, one that is grounded in ontology and arise from a pre-existing moral relation—be it rationality, sovereignty, vulnerability, or suffering. This focus on abstraction, ahistoricism, and anti-politics is not innocent: indeed, it contributes to a wilful amnesia on the question of race in world politics. As Krishna makes clear, the “fetish for abstraction [is] deeply political and depoliticizing”⁹⁸ because it brackets questions of history, “of theft of land, violence, and slavery—the three processes that have historically underlain the unequal global order we now find ourselves in.”⁹⁹ As anti-colonial scholars and practitioners such as Césaire, Cabral, and Fanon remind us, wilful amnesia sits at the heart of the colonial project—because it sanctions the idea, not only that the world is *postcolonial* and *postracial*, but also that the long history of colonialism, racialized indentured servitude, Indigenous genocide, and transatlantic

94 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation* (Oneworld Publications, 2015), 64.

95 Sankaran Krishna, “Race, Amnesia, and the Education of International Relations,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 26, no. 4 (2001): 401, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40645028>.

96 Krishna, 401.

97 Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). See also Bernard Williams, *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

98 Krishna, “Race, Amnesia, and the Education of International Relations,” 402.

99 Krishna, 401–2.

slavery have left no traces in culture, language, and knowledge production.¹⁰⁰

Viewed from this perspective, the cosmopolitan disavowal of the global colour line is, as Charles Mills has argued, less the result of a “mysterious omission than a straightforward implication of a framework built on mystifying the past and the present.”¹⁰¹ After all, the act of forgetting is never benign: rather, and as Ann Laura Stoler points out, it is a political condition and a form of “remembering otherwise.”¹⁰² In telling the story of Meursault, Camus forgot nothing; as a settler and *pied-noir* in Algeria, his life was shaped by French colonialism. Colonialism is at once everywhere and nowhere in *The Stranger*. In cosmopolitan formulations of solidarity, it is similarly hidden in plain sight. Indeed, in their desire to carve out a moral, impartial, and ahistorical space beyond ideology and political differences, cosmopolitan thinkers frequently repress the global histories of empire and colonial capitalism. The result is an inherently hierarchical and ahistorical understanding of solidarity, one that is based on the authority of the international and its (supposedly) clean hands. Ultimately, by addressing the “international community” as bystanders rather than beneficiaries (who are not to blame for the excesses and violence of the current order), these perspectives invite the white subject to understand itself as if outside of history, and thus as inherently “ethical” and “good.” The result is a shift in focus, from questions of accountability, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform to matters of empathy, generosity, and hospitality: a politics of pity rather than justice, in the words of Hannah Arendt, and a consequent recasting of the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander.¹⁰³

A swindle, in other words.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that cosmopolitan theories of solidarity contribute

100 Charles W. Mills, “Global White Ignorance,” in *Routledge International Handbook of Ignorance Studies*, ed. Matthias Gross and Linsey McGoe, 2015. See also Barnor Hesse, “Forgotten Like a Bad Dream: Atlantic Slavery and the Ethics of Postcolonial Memory,” in *Relocating Postcolonialism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002); Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (Columbia University Press, 2005); Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Duke University Press, 2016); Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (SUNY Press, 2007); Manu Vimalassery, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Aloysha Goldstein, “On Colonial Unknowing,” *Theory & Event* 19, no. 4 (2016).

101 Mills, “Realizing (Through Radicalizing) Pogge,” 169.

102 See Stoler, *Duress*, especially chapter 4 on the labour of forgetting.

103 For an explanation of the difference between justice and pity, see Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

to an ideological formation that rationalises and legitimises the racial structuring of world politics. In seeking to derive an apolitical understanding of solidarity, these approaches privilege ontological reflection above and before analysis of historical and material relations of power. The cosmopolitan valorisation of ontological thinking—which sees solidarity as arising from a pre- or extra-political moral relation—is not innocent, because it reduces political conflicts “to an ethical narrative structured around binaries of good/evil and saviours/victims. As Meister demonstrates in *After Evil*, cosmopolitan political theory presents itself as having transcended the old politics of revolution and counterrevolution. This is in contrast to revolutionary ideologies which, as Meister argues, typically conceived of “justice-as-struggle.”¹⁰⁴ The goal was not only to overthrow the evil regime but also to force beneficiaries of past injustice to relinquish their illegitimate gains. In contrast, cosmopolitanism rests on a sympathetic identification with innocent victims on *all* sides. At the heart of this is a more narrow understanding of the concept of “evil.” Instead of “a system of social injustice that can have ongoing structural effects, even after the structure is dismantled”,¹⁰⁵ the utmost form of evil is here seen as *physical* violence against the human body. As we shall see in the next chapter, for cosmopolitans stopping evil thus “consists of rescuing those who suffer, even if that suffering is inflicted in the name of revolution.”¹⁰⁶ This shift—from revolutionary justice to an ethics based on putting an end to physical violence—would have been inconceivable without the demise of the global struggles against colonialism and capitalism. In fact, and as Randall Williams has argued, today's cosmopolitanism has not just replaced the Third World decolonising struggles of the 1950-70s, but has “come to *oppose* other progressive forms.”¹⁰⁷

In the end, the problem with cosmopolitan approaches to international solidarity is not only that they substitute ethical truths for political struggle. They also contribute to a wilful amnesia on the question of race in world politics—a point that was made by Du Bois already in 1944. By transforming the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander, these perspectives turn questions of accountability, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform, into matters of hospitality, generosity, humanitarianism, and empathy—a self-congratulatory defense of the racialized unequal and unjust status quo. Framed as a one-way street whereby powerful and privileged

104 Meister, *After Evil*, 2011, 22.

105 Meister, 25.

106 Meister, 20.

107 Williams, *The Divided World: Human Rights and Its Violence*, 16.

actors extend solidarity, compassion, and empathy to those who suffer, the praxis of international solidarity here becomes “a matter of self-empowerment through which the idealized Western subject improves his humanity at the expense of the suffering of others through the practice of deferred complicity.”¹⁰⁸ Cosmopolitan approaches thus turn out to themselves be underpinned by a particular racial logic—based on the desire to protect and offer political resistance *for* endangered others—which enables the white Western subject to re-constitute itself as “ethical” and “good”, innocent of its imperialist histories and present complicities. As we shall see, the cosmopolitan projection of the world as an *ethical* space is ultimately a historically produced discourse, intimately linked to the defeat of the global counterrevolutions to colonialism and capitalism.

108 Gaztambide-Fernández, “Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity,” 55.

CHAPTER 2

From Revolution to Ethics: Historicizing the Cosmopolitan Turn

“In 1968 that word—*revolution*—was on everyone's lips. By the early 1980s and especially by the 1990s, everywhere one turned, there was talk of *ethics*. What had been revolutionized was the very notion of revolution itself.”
—Julian Bourg¹

Introduction

In an article reflecting on the politics of humanitarianism, Didier Fassin argues that the past fifty years have undergone a radical shift in moral outlook; “Whereas, not so long ago, that is until the 1960s, volunteers went off to fight alongside peoples in their liberation struggles, it is now humanitarian workers who go to take care of victims of conflict.”² Indeed, where the language evoked to defend oppressed peoples used to focus on revolution and anti-imperialism, today we favour “the vocabulary of psychology to sensitize the world to their misfortune.”³ In our era, Fassin seems to suggest, it is the “the Holocaust” and not “the Revolution” that has come to define the relation between ethics and politics.

In this chapter I take Fassin's observation as the starting point for deepening my analysis of cosmopolitanism, ethics, and the global colour line. In the previous chapter I argued that cosmopolitan theories of solidarity are premised on the idea that it is possible, and indeed desirable, to separate ethics and politics (or ontology and history). In this chapter I subject this assumption to theoretical and empirical inquiry and challenge. Interrogating the historical, political, and conceptual conditions of possibility of the turn to cosmopolitan political theory, I argue that the meaning of solidarity has undergone a radical transformation since the 1970s, as discourses of ethics, empathy, and suffering have come to displace the language of revolution, liberation, and decolonisation. My analysis reveals that this discursive shift reflects particular historical and material conditions, which include the global defeat of the counterrevolutions to colonialism and capitalism, the transformation of the old (Euro-American) Left, the American search for a new moral vocabulary after Vietnam, and the globalisation of

1 Julian Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought* (McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, 2007), 4.

2 Didier Fassin, “The Humanitarian Politics of Testimony: Subjectification through Trauma in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict,” *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 3 (November 4, 2012): 532.

3 Fassin, 532.

neoliberal capitalism. A critical analysis of these structuring forces not only calls into question the ethics/politics distinction on which the cosmopolitan project is based. As we shall see, it also demonstrates that cosmopolitanism's preference for abstraction, ahistoricism, and anti-politics is an eminently political strategy; a strategy that helps to uphold, legitimise, and entrench the current unjust and unequal racialized international order.

I develop this argument in four sections. I begin with a short introduction to Marxist approaches to political theory in order to answer the question: Why historicize? That is, why subject theoretical texts to historical analysis? Drawing on scholars such as Ellen Meiksins Woods, C.B. Macpherson, and Richard Ashcraft, I argue that political theory needs to be understood as historical product, and as anchored in particular material conditions and relations of power. Building on this, the following sections interrogate the conditions of possibility of the rise of cosmopolitan ethics. My analysis centre-stages the two world revolutions of 1848 and 1968, and shows how these gave rise to moral discourses seeking to legitimise, perpetuate, and entrench the current world order. I begin by detailing the birth and evolution of Victorian humanism, from the foundation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1853 to its apogee with the creation of the League of Nations in 1919. As the global contest between the superpowers built up and Europe lost its empire after the Second World War, these ethical discourses temporarily receded into the background. Sections three and four analyse the structuring forces that returned humanism in the 1970s. I argue that the resurgence of cosmopolitan thinking is intimately linked to the defeat of the global counterrevolutions to colonialism and capitalism, as well as the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism. This propelled a return to Victorian humanist ideas about the white man's burden, and a consequent transformation of the meaning of solidarity. As Kant displaced Marx, and discourses of empathy and suffering superseded the language of struggle and liberation, solidarity would increasingly come to be associated with ethics—and not the revolution.

Why Historicize? A Marxist Approach to Political Theory

The idea that political theory must be historicized is most commonly associated with Marxist methods of interpretation. In contrast to the cosmopolitan thinkers discussed in the previous chapter, Marxist interpretation approaches political theory as

historical product.⁴ Marx developed this idea in *The German Ideology*, where he criticised the Young or Left Hegelians for wrongfully considering thoughts and ideas as freestanding from material surroundings; “It has not occurred to any one of these philosophers”, he argued, “to inquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the connection of their criticism with their own material surroundings.”⁵ For Marx, this was problematic because “[t]he mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general.”⁶ Indeed, “[i]t is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.”⁷ Political theorists such as Ellen Meiksins Wood, C.B. Macpherson, and Richard Ashcraft have extended this idea by highlighting the political and ideological—as opposed to philosophical or idealistic—nature of political theory. Academic theory, they argue, does not exist in a sphere independent of economic, political, and ideological conflicts, but is a reflection of particular historical and material conditions. This means that the goal of the Marxist critic is to expose “the illusion of the epoch” by showing how political theory texts work to universalise particular (class) interests.

In her “social history of Western political theory”,⁸ Ellen Meiksins Wood details the requirements and political stakes of Marxist interpretation. Examining the specific historical contexts in which thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas developed their canonical works, she argues that “the political questions addressed by political theorists are thrown up by real political life and are shaped by the historical conditions in which they arise.”⁹ This might sound similar to the historical approach associated with the Cambridge School. However, unlike Cambridge School scholars such as Skinner and Pocock—for whom political theory needs to be situated in relation to specific texts and intellectual debates of the time—Wood also seeks to unravel the link between material conditions and political ideas. Political theory, she argues, must be analysed in relation to the material and class interests it

4 For a good introduction to Marxian interpretation, see Richard Ashcraft, “Political Theory and the Problem of Ideology,” *The Journal of Politics* 42, no. 3 (August 1, 1980): 687–705, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2130546>; Katherine A. Gordy, “Marxian Interpretations of Political Theory,” in *Interpretation in Political Theory*, ed. Clement Fatovic and Sean Noah Walsh (Taylor & Francis, 2016); Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Citizens to Lords: A Social History of Western Political Thought from Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages* (Verso Books, 2011).

5 Quoted in Allen Oakley, *Marx’s Critique of Political Economy Volume One: Intellectual Sources and Evolution* (Routledge, 2013), 90.

6 Oakley, 103.

7 Oakley, 103.

8 Wood, *Citizens to Lords*.

9 Wood, 8.

serves and from which it emerges. This means interrogating the “relations between people who produce and those who appropriate what others produce”; “the forms of property that emerge from these social relations”; and “how these relations are expressed in political domination, as well as resistance and struggle.”¹⁰

One of the best-known examples of Marxist interpretation in practice is C.B. Macpherson's *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, published in 1962. In this work Macpherson interrogates how and why contractarian thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke embraced an understanding of the individual as “essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them.”¹¹ His analysis details how Hobbes and Locke took this idea from their surrounding capitalist relations, at the same time that they helped justify them. As Macpherson points out, capitalism only makes sense as long as humans are understood as possessive individuals. Through their market assumptions about human nature, Hobbes and Locke thus helped legitimise particular inequalities endemic to market relations because

“the maintenance [of any particular system of property] requires at least the acquiescence of the bulk of the people, and the positive support of any leading classes. Such support requires a belief that the institution serves some purpose or fills some need. That belief requires, in turn, that there be a theory which both explains and justifies the institution in terms of the purpose served or the need filled.”¹²

For Macpherson, this is precisely what possessive individualist theories *do*—and as such political theory is neither neutral nor autonomous.

In the discipline of IR, the best example of Marxist interpretation is perhaps E.H. Carr's classic *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. While Carr often is categorised as a realist thinker—belonging to the same camp as Morgenthau and Niebuhr—his critique of interwar liberal internationalism is in fact an exercise in Marxist interpretation and ideology critique.¹³ Thinkers such as Norman Angell and Leonard Woolf were, according to Carr, exponents of the ideology of the rich and powerful states. Liberal assumptions about the hidden hand—which postulates that the market is what provides

10 Wood, 12.

11 Crawford Brough Macpherson and Frank Cunningham, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

12 Quoted in Peter Lindsay, *Creative Individualism: The Democratic Vision of C. B. Macpherson* (SUNY Press, 1996), 71.

13 For a good overview of Carr's Marxist commitments, see Peter Wilson, “Radicalism for a Conservative Purpose: The Peculiar Realism of E. H. Carr,” *Millennium* 30, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 123–36, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298010300010901>.

the greatest possible freedom, welfare, and peace for *all* humanity as a whole—were, for Carr, the ideological move par excellence. That is, by elevating law, order, and laissez faire capitalism to the status of universal principles, interwar liberals failed to see the self-interested character of their own thought.

To summarise, Marxist interpretation points to the necessity of giving political theory a foundation in history and revealing its ideological function. As Karl Mannheim explained, “there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured.”¹⁴ Political theory does not take place in an autonomous realm, but is a deeply and inherently political exercise.¹⁵ The task, thus, is to situate arguments that present themselves as expressing timeless and universal interests and to expose the particular interests that they serve. The majority of Marxist works of interpretation have so far focused on canonical texts in political theory, with little or no work being done on contemporary political theorising. While scholars such as Anthony Pagden have shown that cosmopolitan discourses historically have flourished in locales of empire, there have been relatively few attempts to historicize the post-1989 revival of cosmopolitan political theory.¹⁶ Seeking to address this lacunae, in what follows I interrogate the historical, conceptual, and political conditions of possibility of the recent turn to cosmopolitanism. What, I ask, would it mean to think of contemporary cosmopolitanism as a historically produced discourse and—crucially—as an ideological reflection of particular material conditions?

Victorian Beginnings: 1848 and the White Man's Burden

The historical roots of cosmopolitanism are often said to reside in Cynic and Stoic philosophy, in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, the French and American Revolutions, in Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* and Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace*. According to standard Whig historiography, these unfolding ideas about justice, freedom, and human dignity came into their own in the post-Cold War era, where they

14 Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (Routledge, 2013), 2.

15 This critique is no longer unique to Marxism. More recently postcolonial, decolonial, and feminist scholars have also challenged the idea that knowledge production can take place outside of history and social relations. Indicatively, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th Anniversary Ed with 1995 Afterword Ed edition (London: Penguin Books, 2003); Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

16 Exceptions include Stephen Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (Cornell University Press, 2013); Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia* (Harvard University Press, 2012). See also Anthony Pagden, *The Burdens of Empire: 1539 to the Present* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 7.

paved the way for cosmopolitan institutions and doctrines such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002 and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in 2005. In what follows I challenge this interpretation by demonstrating that the rise of cosmopolitanism in the 1990s is less the result of a steady, gradual climb towards global justice, and more the product of a set of historical and material conditions which in the late 20th century made it highly desirable for policymakers, activists, and intellectuals to think of world politics as an *ethical* space. To understand what these conditions were we must begin much earlier—in fact, with the revolutions of 1848 and the “enlightened conservatism” to which they gave rise.

In *The Endtimes of Human Rights* Stephen Hopgood details the Victorian origins of contemporary discourses of human rights, humanitarianism, and international law. Victorian humanism, he argues, emerged as a response to the rapid social transformations of the 19th century, including the industrial revolution, the rapid integration of the world markets, the expansion of the European bourgeoisie, and urbanisation on an unparalleled scale.¹⁷ These historical transformations gave rise to a wide array of new social problems which threatened to erupt the fabric of European society. In 1848 revolutions swept across Europe, with over fifty countries affected. The same year Marx and Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto*, declaring that “a spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of Communism.”¹⁸ A few years later, in 1864, the International Workingmen's Association (better known as the First International) was formed in London; and then, in 1871, the Paris Commune demonstrated that the rapidly expanding working class had the capacity to take power in a major European city. Importantly, and as Robin D.G. Kelley observes,

“We tend to picture the 1848 revolutions... as the story of white men in the trenches, red flag unfurled in the name of bearded and proud skilled workers. But the 'colored' world remained a haunting specter in 1848. The Revolution in France resulted in the abolition of slavery in its colonies, forty-four years after African descendants threw them out of Haiti and ended French slavery and colonialism there by combat. The British had abolished slavery fourteen years earlier and were still wrestling their Negro Question: how to turn all this ex-property into willing and docile workers for Britannia.”¹⁹

17 In 1800 only 12% of Europe's population lived in sizeable cities; by 1900 this figure had risen to 30%. See Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, 8; 32.

18 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (The Floating Press, 2009), 4.

19 Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Beacon Press, 2003), 40.

For the ascendant bourgeoisie these developments posed an immanent threat and danger. The question, as Hopgood explains, was how “the contradictions within scientific and industrial progress [could] be reconciled while sustaining public order and avoiding social revolution.”²⁰ The answer came in the form of Victorian moralism, charity, and universal humanist norms. A key figure in this development was the Genevan businessman Henri Dunant.

In 1859 Dunant had traveled to Solferino to negotiate his imperial interests in Algeria with Napoleon III, who at the time was commanding the Franco-Sardinian troops in northern Italy. Dunant arrived in Solferino to find thousands of soldiers lying dead and dying on the battlefield. Appalled by the misery and suffering he witnessed, Dunant joined the local townspeople to provide whatever help he could. He later described his experience in *A Memory of Solferino*, a book which became a European bestseller and spearheaded the birth of humanitarianism. In 1863 Dunant founded the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the world's first official international humanitarian organisation, together with Gustave Moynier, Louis Appia, Theodore Maunoir, and Henri Dufour. A year later he persuaded the Swiss government to host a diplomatic conference, which resulted in the adoption of the first Geneva convention. Gustave Moynier subsequently co-founded the Institut de Droit International (IDI), a standing council of public international lawyers who would act as the guardians of the Geneva Convention. As one of its members explained, the IDI was based on the idea that “protection of the individual is the ultimate purpose of the State and goal of international relations.”²¹ Combining an interest in individual rights with humanitarianism and humanitarian law, these early institutions laid the foundations for 20th century cosmopolitanism.

What united these early pioneers of Victorian humanism—beyond their immediate compassion for the suffering, wounded, and innocent—was that they all came from a narrow and exclusive Geneva-based elite. As Caroline Moorehead has shown, the founders of ICRC all

“belonged to Geneva's oldest, most prosperous families, active over many generations in the law, medicine, the army, and politics, and three of them—Dufour, Moynier, and Appia—were rich enough to not have to work. All were Protestant and practising Christians and shared Dunant's feelings about the ethics of war, 'the moral sense of the importance of

20 Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, 9.

21 Hopgood, 41.

human life, the humane desire to lighten a little the torments' of the wounded.”²²

Hopgood also emphasises the social order on which Victorian humanism was based: it was middle-class, status quo, and socially reformist. Many of its spokespersons were already involved in domestic charity work—Florence Nightingale is the most famous example—and actively campaigned for the importance of education, adequate housing, health care, orphanages, and so on. These campaigns may have given an aura of progressiveness yet were, as Hopgood shows, deeply rooted in class interests, “a product of the 'bourgeois public sphere' and its sense of itself as a distinct class with a distinct sensibility.”²³ The members of ICRC were “cultural Christians, overwhelmingly Protestant and pious, their social lives organized around conventional patriarchal family relations.”²⁴ That they were of Protestant background is not irrelevant, nor that the ICRC chose a Protestant icon—the cross—as its symbol: indeed, Victorian humanism from the very beginning performed the same function that the Christian god had done in the past. The humanitarian hero was, in effect, a secular version of the Good Samaritan, and the suffering, innocent victim a modern take on the crucified Christ.²⁵ That there was a glaring paradox between being a member of the Genevan elite, on the one hand, and affirming the universal bonds of suffering that united humankind, on the other, seems not to have bothered these early humanists. Redistribution of power and resources was after all not part of their agenda, and as such they often found enthusiastic support amongst the European aristocracy; Queen Augusta of Prussia, for example, often wore her Red Cross armband in public and openly spoke of Dunant as a messenger from God.²⁶ As Hopgood rightly notes, Victorian humanism must for this reason be seen as a deeply conservative project that strove “to hang on to transcendent authority in the face of revolutionary social change with a sense of individuals *as individuals*.”²⁷ This took the form of a moral duty—a burden through which the Victorians acquired “a sense of confidence, piety, responsibility, and purpose among themselves”²⁸—to provide civilization and humanitarian assistance to socially backward classes, races, religions, and cultures. It was, of course, an inherently imperial project, based on the bourgeoisie's

22 Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross*, 1st Carroll & Graf ed edition (New York: Carroll & Graf Pub, 1999), 17.

23 Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, 25.

24 Hopgood, 10.

25 Hopgood, 11.

26 John Hutchinson, *Champions Of Charity: War And The Rise Of The Red Cross* (Hachette UK, 1997).

27 Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, 11.

28 Hopgood, 9.

perceived historical destiny to enlighten others. In his monthly periodical *L'Afrique Explorée et Civilisée*, Gustave Moynier, one of the founding fathers of the ICRC and its subsequent first president, declared his support for the civilising mission; “The white race should help the black race... and provide it with the tools held by modern civilization so that it can improve its fate in such a way that coheres with the wishes of providence.”²⁹ As David Theo Goldberg has shown, humanist campaigns such as the abolition of slavery were premised on ideas of racial historicism, on “the set of claims that those not European or descended from Europeans are not inherently inferior but historically immature or less developed.”³⁰ While racial historicist ideas can be found already in the writings of John Locke, they rose to prominence in the mid-19th century as “the violence of an imposed physical repression yield[ed] to the infuriating subtleties of a legally fashioned racial order.”³¹ Popularised by thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte, racial historicism may have been less overtly violent than the ideas associated with natural or biological racism; in reality they nonetheless functioned as a legitimization of the continued expropriation of colonised lands. As Mill made clear in his *Writings on India*, it was through the tutelage of the the white man and the introduction of what the English missionary-explorer David Livingston summed up as the three C's (commerce, Christianity, and civilization) that natives could achieve progress and inclusion in history—an idea that resonated with the socially progressive and reformist Victorians.

Victorian humanism reached the height of its glory after the First World War with the creation of the League of Nations. The League was a *de facto* culmination of the global governance structures that Dunant and his fellow humanists had pioneered: it offered collective security and efforts to disarm; pioneered the WHO, ILO, and UNESCO; introduced committees on opium eradication, and women and child trafficking; established a Permanent Court of International Justice; and, through the Mandate System, an institutional form for civilizing colonial peoples.³² Statesmen of the time variously described the League as an “effective guardian of international right and international liberty throughout the world”³³ (Lloyd George), a “great caravan of

29 Quoted in *The Colonial Legacy in France: Fracture, Rupture, and Apartheid* (Indiana University Press, 2017), 138.

30 David Theo Goldberg, “Neoliberalizing Race,” *Macalester Civic Forum* 1, no. 1 (2009): 78.

31 Goldberg, 79.

32 Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, 42.

33 Quoted in *The League of Nations in Retrospect / La Société Des Nations: Rétrospective: Proceedings of the Symposium Organized by The United Nations Library and The Graduate Institute of International Studies, Genève, 6-9 November 1980 / Actes Du Colloque Organisé Par La Bibliothèque*

humanity”³⁴ (Jan Smuts), and an “attempt to begin building a world society.”³⁵ Nonetheless, and as Hopgood rightly notes, underlying this enthusiasm was “a determination to maintain the structures of power that were integral to the European imperial project.”³⁶ In the words of Mark Mazower, the League was an “eminently Victorian institution” designed to carry out a “global civilizing mission through the use of international law.”³⁷

The outbreak of the Second World War temporarily hampered this project. The ICRC, which controversially had refrained from denouncing the Holocaust (a result of its principle of impartiality), was said to have lost its moral compass. Others, such as E.H. Carr, went further by arguing that utopian humanist thinking had been complicit in creating the conditions that led to the outbreak of war. While the years following the end of the war saw the creation of an impressive array of new institutions and conventions—including the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Military Tribunals at Nuremberg and Tokyo, and the idea of crimes against humanity (genocide) as justiciable international law—humanism and ethics receded into the background.³⁸ As the global contest between the superpowers built up and Europe lost its empire, other internationalist visions flourished, calling, amongst other things, for decolonisation and the creation of emancipated nations in the Third World; for “socialism with a more human face” in the Soviet Union; for world revolution and the spread of Soviet-style communism; and for social democracy and an end to hollow consumerism and middle class conformity in the West.³⁹ As Immanuel Wallerstein has argued, the years 1945-68 was a period of remarkable success for these movements:

“Third International parties came to power, by one means or another, in a series of countries more or less contiguous to the U.S.S.R. (eastern Europe, China, North Korea). Second International parties (I use the term loosely, including in this category the Democratic Party in the United States as Roosevelt reshaped it) came to power (or at least

Des Nations Unies et l'Institut Universitaire de Hautes... (Walter de Gruyter, 1983), 146.

34 Quoted in Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, 43.

35 Charles Howard Ellis, *The Origin, Structure & Working of the League of Nations* (The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 1929), 19.

36 Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, 43.

37 Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 21.

38 Samuel Moyn even suggests that when human rights were popularised in the 1970s, they “emerged... seemingly from nowhere”. Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 3.

39 Moyn, 3.

achieved *droit de cité*, that is, the right of alternance) in the western world (western Europe, North America, Australasia). Nationalist or national liberation movements came to power in most formerly colonized areas in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean, and in somewhat different forms in long-independent Latin America.”⁴⁰

Yet these internationalisms would not last long. Already by the mid-1970s political moralism had begun to resurface, first as a critique of (Soviet) totalitarianism, and later, as a new imperative to bring democracy, development, and human rights to the Third World. To understand how and what made this possible, we need to consider a series of moments, contexts, and events that crystallise around the global revolts of 1968 and their aftermaths—including the transformation of the old Left and the retreat from organised politics; the global defeat of anti-imperialism; the American search for a new moral vocabulary after the Vietnam failure; and the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism. As we shall see, just like Victorian moralism had been a response to the historical transformations that led to the 1848 revolutions, so the turn to cosmopolitan ethics in the latter half of the 20th century was a latent—and indeed—conservative response to the revolts that shook the world in 1968.

The Turn to Ethics: 1968 and the Transformation of the Left

From Paris to Prague, Berlin to Berkeley, Madrid to Mexico City, in 1968 mass protests swept the world: in the United States, protests focused on imperialism, militarism, and racism, against the background of the Vietnam War and the continued denial of civil liberties to African-Americans⁴¹; in Spain and Brazil, students and workers protested against military dictatorship; in Czechoslovakia, protestors took to the streets as more than 200,000 troops of the Warsaw Pact entered the country to put an end to the Prague Spring reforms and “socialism with a human face”; in Calcutta, students protested against inequality, overcrowding, and poverty, as well as the legacies of British colonialism; in Dakar, students, labour union members, and unemployed citizens protested against the betrayals of the postcolonial state; in Mexico City an estimated 300 to 400 protestors were killed by military and police. The ongoing national

40 Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 69.

41 As Max Elbaum documents, in 1968 more American college students (20%) identified with Che Guevara than with any of the candidates for the US presidency. A *New York Times* survey from 1971 indicated that 40% of all students thought that a revolution was needed in the US. See Max Elbaum, “What Legacy from the Radical Internationalism of 1968?,” *Radical History Review* 82, no. 51 (2002): 37.

liberation struggles in the global South were, by many, seen as the cutting edge of what was a worldwide revolutionary movement. As Max Elbaum documents, “it was a time when the Vietnamese and Cuban Revolutions, People's China, and Marxist-led armed movements in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East appeared to mesh into one unstoppable torrent.”⁴² In the global North, the most spectacular of these revolts was the May 1968 protest in France. What began as a spontaneous and sometimes carnivalesque student revolt again against capitalism, consumerism, and imperialism soon spread to a massive general strike. At the height of its fervour, 11 million workers—corresponding to roughly 22% of the French population—went on strike for two weeks, bringing the economy to a virtual standstill and giving political leaders reason to fear civil war and revolution.⁴³ Importantly, and as Wallerstein has argued, the 1968 protests were “simultaneously a *cri de coeur* against the evils of the world-system and a fundamental questioning of the strategy of the old left opposition to the world-system.”⁴⁴ That is, the revolts were targeting *both* the capitalist world system as well as the old Lefts throughout the world. These had not only failed to challenge the capitalist system but had also created alternative state structures with devastating consequences. As Wallerstein explains, by 1968 the old Lefts “were no longer to be considered 'part of the solution.' Rather, they had become 'part of the problem.'”⁴⁵

Scholars such as Julian Bourg, Michael Scott Christofferson, and Antonio Vázquez-Arroyo have analysed how the protests of 1968 radically transformed the European intellectual Left. While the protests in the short term revived the politics of class struggle and equality, in the long term they fuelled a shift from revolutionary fidelity to ethical orientations. As Vázquez-Arroyo explains, “[f]rom 1968 on, in both Germany and France the language of ethics became the favored nomenclature to frame and deal with political questions.”⁴⁶ Ethics, of course, had not been wholly absent before 1968—thinkers such as Albert Camus had long argued for a humanist ethics of non-violence. Nonetheless, after 1968 ethics would increasingly come to replace the concept of revolution in French and German thought. Widespread disappointment and frustration

42 Elbaum, 38.

43 For a good overview of the 1968 protests, see Elaine Carey and Alfred J. Andrea, *Protests in the Streets: 1968 Across the Globe* (Hackett Publishing, 2016).

44 Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins, and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Antisystemic Movements* (Verso, 1989), 101.

45 Immanuel Wallerstein, “1968, Revolution in the World-System,” *Theory and Society* 18, no. 4 (July 1, 1989): 435, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00136434>.

46 Antonio Y. Vázquez-Arroyo, *Political Responsibility: Responding to Predicaments of Power* (Columbia University Press, 2016).

with the failure of 1968 to effect immediate social change led many French intellectuals to doubt the tenets of historical materialism. As Bourg has shown, the ethos of May 1968 entailed a rejection of all law except the Marxist “revolutionary laws of history (class struggle, the proletariat as historical agent, violence as the handmaiden to revolution and so forth).”⁴⁷ When the revolution faded, doubts about these laws of history began to set in. In 1973 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* was published, detailing the horrors of the Soviet labour camps. While the book revealed nothing new—the Gulag camps were not unknown, and testimonies from Trotsky, Victor Serge, and others were both available and read in France—it was to play an important role in discrediting Marxist thought and organized radical politics. Under the banner of “New Philosophy”, thinkers such as Bernard-Henri Lévy and André Glucksmann began to equate Marxism with the Soviet Gulag, and revolutionary politics with totalitarianism.⁴⁸ Lévy explained that Solzhenitsyn had awoken them “from a dogmatic sleep” by tracing the crimes of Stalinism to “the one he dares to denounce for the first time—the founding father in person, Karl Kapital and his holy scriptures.”⁴⁹ In place of the Marxist dream of historical transformation, New Philosophy emphasised the importance of ethical thought and action; not the political ethics of Sartre and Beauvoir, but Kant's ethics of individual responsibility and Lévinas's ethics of alterity. In *Barbarism With a Human Face*, Lévy outlined an ethical project based on the defense of human rights, the primacy of the individual, and the critique of the political; “the only successful revolutions have been totalitarian”, he argued, and as such “we no longer have politics, a language, or a recourse. There remain only ethics and moral duty.”⁵⁰ Glucksmann similarly argued for the need to break with politics and revolutionary visions. In *The Master Thinkers* he asserted that the writings of Fichte, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche had been a pre-condition for the Holocaust, the Gulag, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution; “the sixty million deaths of the gulag are the logical application of

47 Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics*.

48 Kristin Ross summarises the prevailing sentiment as “revolution = communism = totalitarianism.” Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 152. Nonetheless, and as Christofferson explains, “in ideological debates of the late 1970s, the gulag was less a revelation than a metaphor, the one word that could represent and legitimize the emerging radical repudiation of communism and revolutionary politics.” Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left: The Antitotalitarian Moment of the 1970's* (Berghahn Books, 2004), 90.

49 Bernard Henri Lévy, *Barbarism with a Human Face* (Harper & Row, 1980), 154.

50 Quoted in Tamara Chaplin, *Turning On the Mind: French Philosophers on Television* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), 152.

Marxism.”⁵¹ By connecting the critique of revolutionary politics with the ethics of human rights, New Philosophy was thus able to give old anti-communist themes a new, libertarian cloak. In the autumn of 1977, they were introduced to the wider public through a *Time Magazine* cover-story declaring that “Marx is dead!” As a group of young, handsome, and anti-Marxist French intellectuals, their arguments “chimed perfectly with the American ideals of free enterprise and individualism.”⁵²

While the turn to ethics was spearheaded by thinkers such as Glucksmann and Lévy, it was not unique to New Philosophy. As Richard Wolin has shown, thinkers such as Sartre also concluded that “fraternity could no longer be produced by 'politic.' From Robespierre to Lenin to Mao, the political dreams of the Left had all been stillborn. Its new guarantor was ethics.”⁵³ A variety of thinkers—ranging from Derrida to Deleuze to Foucault—soon came to embrace ethics. Derrida would draw on Lévinas to demonstrate that deconstruction could be understood as an ethical practice; Foucault turned to Greek philosophy to derive an ethics based on “care of the self”; and Deleuze argued for an immanent ethics. By the early 1980s, the idea that was once so central to the French Left—namely, that history unfolds according to the dialectic of revolution and counterrevolution—had been largely abandoned, with nearly everyone championing the priority of ethics over politics. Anti-Marxism was prominent, leading Perry Anderson to declare Paris—which had been the capital of the European Left after WWII—the “capital of European reaction.”⁵⁴ Bourg summarises this remarkable transformation when he notes that

“the Cold War ended in Paris before the Berlin Wall fell. Remarkably, radical politics had provided some of the most important resources for overcoming radical politics: Marxism was present at its own funeral.”⁵⁵

The German experience of 1968 was markedly different from the French one; yet here, too, ethical theorising emerged victorious. While students and workers in Paris had rebelled against the autocratic style of de Gaulle, the young Germans who came to be known as the “1968 generation” or the *Achtundsechziger* saw themselves as rebelling

51 Quoted in Michael Scott Christofferson, “Foucault and New Philosophy: Why Foucault Endorsed André Glucksmann’s *The Master Thinkers*,” in *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, ed. Daniel Zamora and Michael C. Behrent (John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 186.

52 Dominique Lecourt, *The Mediocracy: French Philosophy Since the Mid-1970s* (Verso, 2002), 61.

53 Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton University Press, 2012), 226.

54 Quoted in Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 1.

55 Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics*.

against Nazism and the complicity of their parents in the Nazi crimes. As Hans Kundnani explains, “[w]hereas young people in some other countries were driven by a dream of creating a better society, in West Germany they were driven by a nightmare.”⁵⁶ The German 1968, he argues, was first and foremost a reckoning with “the Auschwitz generation.” Unlike France, 1968 was therefore “a moral movement before it was a political one.”⁵⁷ Yet like France, the following decade would see an intellectual retreat from the historical materialism of Marx and Marxism, and a philosophical turn towards abstraction and intrasubjectivity.⁵⁸ As Lecourt concluded, “[t]he return to morality unquestionably correspond[ed] to the retreat of the political vision of the world that had crystallized around the idea of revolution.”⁵⁹

At the same time that French and German intellectuals were retreating from revolutionary critique into ethical theorising, dissidents in the Soviet Union enacted their own ethical turn. The Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 demonstrated that “socialism with a human face” would not be tolerated by Moscow. In its wake many dissidents began to argue for a shift from politics to ethics. As Andrei Sakharov, the influential Soviet dissent and co-founder of the Committee on Human Rights in the Soviet Union, explained:

“I am convinced that under the conditions obtaining in our country a position based on morality and law is the most correct one, as corresponding to the requirements and possibilities of society. What we need is the systematic defense of human rights and ideals and not a political struggle, which would inevitably incite people to violence, sectarianism, and frenzy. I am convinced that only in this way, provided there is the broadest possible public disclosure, will the East be able to recognize the nature of our society; and that then this struggle will become part of a world-wide movement for the salvation of all mankind. This constitutes a partial answer to the question of why I have (naturally) turned from world-wide problems to the defense of individual people.”⁶⁰

56 Hans Kundnani, *Utopia Or Auschwitz?: Germany's 1968 Generation and the Holocaust* (Columbia University Press, 2009).

57 Kundnani, 11.

58 Jürgen Habermas, who grew up in Nazi Germany and witnessed the brutalities of the Nazi regime, offers a striking example. As several commentators have noted, Habermas's attempt to reconstruct Enlightenment arguments for reason and universalism can be understood as an attempt to provide the normative foundations capable of protecting democratic societies from Germany's dark past. Discourse ethics is ultimately a solution to the question: “How can we guarantee that Nazism and the Holocausts will never happen again?” Similar to New Philosophers such as Glucksmann and Lévy, Habermas's search for universal foundations is based on the idea that “in the face of soiled utopias in politics, a nonpartisan morality exist... outside and above them.” Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 132.

59 Bourdieu, *From Revolution to Ethics*, 9. See also Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 12.

60 Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 139.

Sarkhov's belief in the primacy of ethics was echoed by other Soviet dissidents. Key figures such as Anatoly Yakobson, Pavel Litvinov, and Yuri Orlov similarly argued that politics had failed and that dissidence from now on had to take the form of “a moral struggle” based on an “ethics common to all humanity.”⁶¹ As Vaclav Havel argued, there was a danger in “overestim[ing] the importance of direct political work in the traditional sense”⁶²; what was needed, rather, was an internationally defined morality capable of transcending politics.

On the other side of the Atlantic, human rights was quickly becoming a publicly acknowledged buzzword. The publication of John Rawls's *Theory of Justice* in 1971 sparked a renewed interest in individual rights in the Anglophone world. While Rawls himself restricted his analysis to the nation-state, others liberal thinkers such as Ronald Dworkin, Thomas Scanlon, and Charles Beitz soon began to theorise the meaning and nature of international human rights. In 1977 Jimmy Carter was inaugurated as President of the United States, promising a new, moralised foreign policy with human rights as its leitmotif: “Because we are free, we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our moral sense dictates a clear-cut preference for those societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights.”⁶³ Increasingly, human rights were seen as part of the political ideology of modern liberalism, together with democracy, rule of law, and free markets. As Hopgood has shown, this development was a result of elite mobilisation rather than domestic social movement: human rights were rarely invoked by American citizens, but was “*foreign policy* for non-Americans.”⁶⁴ Most importantly, and as congressman Donald Fraser explained, human rights provided a way for “the United States [to] feel better about itself” after “the trauma of the Vietnam War.”⁶⁵ Following Carter's inauguration, the Ford Foundation and other philanthropies began to pour money into human rights initiatives, funding amongst other things the creation of the Helsinki Watch (later Human Rights Watch) and the pioneering Columbia University Centre for the Study of Human Rights. At the same time social movements also began to embrace the language of human rights. In 1977 Amnesty International was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its work to “contribute to the implementation, in every country, of the principles of the Declaration

61 Quoted in Moyn, 136.

62 Quoted in Moyn, 162.

63 Quoted in Peter Van Ness, *Debating Human Rights: Critical Essays from the United States and Asia* (Routledge, 2003), 263.

64 Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, 97.

65 Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue* (Harvard University Press, 2014), 5.

of Human Rights.”⁶⁶ As Jan Eckel has argued, this represented a clear break with the essential elements of earlier forms of activism; rather than “changing ‘the system’” Amnesty limited itself to making “the world a slightly less wicked place.”⁶⁷ Like the New Philosophy sweeping across the European continent, the human rights activism of the 1970s must thus be seen as “the product of a post-revolutionary idealism, growing out of a certain disillusionment about the preceding decade's attempts to bring about political change and jettisoning some of the highest hopes and most optimistic tones which had underlain them.”⁶⁸ However, although human rights were said to offer a “new morality” beyond the logics of Cold War power politics, in reality they frequently functioned as a weapon in the ideological war against communism. As the global struggle against colonialism came to an end in the 1970s, human rights would increasingly begin to travel South, joining hands with discourses of development, democracy-promotion, and humanitarianism. What had begun as a turn to ethics and critique of totalitarianism would soon take the shape of a new white man's burden.

The Humanitarian Melodrama: 1989 and the Rediscovery of the Third World

At the twentieth anniversary of May 1968, Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), appeared in a French television program entitled “Le Procès de Mai” (The Trial of May). The event is recounted by Kristin Ross in *May '68 and Its Afterlives*. Ross explains how Kouchner, who in 1968 had been a militant in the Union des Etudiants Communistes, begins the program by praising the '68 generations' “daring to dream.” His tone of self-satisfaction quickly switches to a posture of self-criticism as he goes on to describe how

“we [the '68 generation] were navel-gazing, we forgot the outside world, we didn't see what was happening in the rest of the world, we were folded in on ourselves.’ He continues, much more triumphantly: ‘We didn't know what we would discover only in the following years: the third world, misery.’”⁶⁹

As Ross explains, Kouchner goes on to

66 See https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1977/press.html

67 Quoted in Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 147.

68 Moyn, 147.

69 Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 156.

“[i]n one fell swoop... assume the power to clear away an entire dimension of the movement: its relation to anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggles in places like Vietnam, Algeria, Palestine, and Cuba. A whole world disappears—the war in Vietnam, the iconography of Che, Mao, and Ho Chi Minh... which is to say a militant or combative third world, so that another can be heroically 'discovered' years later: the third world as figured in the Human Rights discourse, of which Kouchner has by that time emerged as one of the principal spokesmen.”⁷⁰

Ross's analysis reveals how, by the early 1980s, the ethical turn had begun to go global. To understand how and why intellectuals, activists, and policymakers “rediscovered” the Third World as an (un)ethical space, we need to consider two events: first, the defeat of the global struggle against colonialism and, second, the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism.

The Third World was not a place but a project, so Vijay Prashad reminds us. Pursued by a group of recently decolonised states between the mid-1950s and the early 1980s, the Third World project was an attempt to disrupt the global hegemonic order and its continued organisation around relations of race and colour. In Hedley Bull's classical formulation, it was a “revolt against the West”⁷¹ that championed new norms of racial equality, economic justice, and cultural liberation. The term the “Third World” was coined by the French economic historian Alfred Sauvy in 1952, invoking not only an alternative to the First and Second Worlds but also the Third Estate of the French Revolution. As Rahul Rao has explained, the implication seems to have been that, similar to workers and the bourgeoisie in the French Revolution, the newly decolonised states would play a crucial role in transforming the prevailing global order.⁷² While the roots of this project precede the era of decolonisation,⁷³ it was given concrete form at the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia. Attended by 29 Asian and African countries—which, as Rajagopal notes, was of “the then total world number of fifty-nine”—Bandung symbolised a “new spirit of solidarity of the Third World”⁷⁴ and a collective challenge to the racial structuring of world politics. In Robbie Shilliam's

⁷⁰ Ross, 156.

⁷¹ Hedley Bull, “The Revolt Against the West,” in *Great Power Relations, World Order, and the Third World*, ed. SisirGupta et al. (Vikas, 1981).

⁷² Rahul Rao, *Third World Protest: Between Home and the World* (OUP Oxford, 2010), 25.

⁷³ Early manifestations of what later would become known as the Third World project can arguably be found in the 1920 Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East and the 1927 conference of the League Against Imperialism at Brussels, the Communist Internationals, and the numerous Pan-African Congresses held in the first half of the twentieth century. See Rao, 25.

⁷⁴ Balakrishnan Rajagopal, *International Law from Below: Development, Social Movements and Third World Resistance* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 74.

formulation, Bandung was ultimately an attempt by which “the hinterlands of the (post)colonized proposed to break free from the global architecture laid by the colonizer.”⁷⁵ The agenda centred on a loose set of goals summarised by Prashad as a call for “peace, bread, and justice”; peace, understood as cooperation against the arms race between the superpowers; bread, meaning a renegotiation of the economic relationship between the Third and First Worlds; and justice, entailing a more democratic international order and better representation of Third World interests at the decision making table at the IMF, World Bank, GATT, and the UN Security Council. The Third World project reached its peak with the oil crisis of 1972, when OPEC member states proclaimed an oil embargo in protest of states supporting Israel in the Yom Kippur War. The embargo momentarily demonstrated the power of Third World solidarity in upending the terms of global trade. Spurred by this confidence, in 1974 the Declaration of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) was put forward to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The proposal entailed a series of global reforms that codified many of the Third World's long-standing demands, including sovereign debt relief, increased foreign aid, and preferential trade agreements.

In hindsight, this was the high point of the Third World project; a decade later it was dead. While it was hampered by a range of factors—including lack of democracy in some of the new nations, mismanagement of economic resources, and a set of problematic assumptions that sometimes reproduced rather than challenged the logic of the coloniser⁷⁶—it was not these limitations that caused its demise. As Prashad details in *The Poorer Nations*, “[w]hat did it in was the Atlantic project.”⁷⁷ The Atlantic project, he argues, was a co-ordinated effort by the G7 powers to advance a project of neoliberal restructuring launched by “the propertied classes to maintain or restore their position of dominance.”⁷⁸ The project was multi-pronged and involved a variety of strategies, including a new intellectual agenda based on the revival of laissez-faire economics and

75 Robbie Shilliam, “Colonial Architecture or Relatable Hinterlands? Locke, Nandy, Fanon, and the Bandung Spirit,” *Constellations* 23, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 426, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12163>.

76 As Robbie Shilliam has shown, the paradox of the Third World project was “that it took the key method of self-determination from blueprints of the masters’ architecture: the enabling institution was to be the nation-state; and the process was to be development or modernization.” See Shilliam, 426. See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonization and the Politics of Culture,” in *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, ed. Christopher J. Lee (Ohio University Press, 2010); Heloise Weber and Poppy Winanti, “The ‘Bandung Spirit’ and Solidarist Internationalism,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70, no. 4 (July 3, 2016): 391–406, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2016.1167834>.

77 Vijay Prashad, *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* (Verso Books, 2013).

78 Prashad, 47.

the Hayek school of liberalism; a revamping of international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, as well as key United Nations organisations, and a replacement of old Keynesians and developmentalists with monetarists; and—most crucially—a manipulation of the international debt crisis of the 1980s to “open up the countries of the South to the factories of the North.”⁷⁹ At the Uruguay Round of the GATT, a new intellectual property and trade regime was introduced, making reverse engineering or transfer of technology illegal: “The North and its business would be able to outsource the production of commodities to the South, but the bulk of the profits for their sale would be preserved as rent for intellectual property.”⁸⁰ Deregulation, good governance, structural adjustments, balanced budgets, and fiscal responsibility were the pillars of the new era, “a North-led International Property Order” rather than “a South-led New International Economic Order.” “Trade, not aid” became the mantra of the new order, as Reagan chided those who “mistake compassion for development and claim massive transfers of wealth somehow will produce new well-being.”⁸¹ Development, he argued, would be achieved not through regulation or redistribution but by “free people” building “free trade.”

Discourses of human rights, humanitarianism, and democracy were not external to this development. Quite the opposite: the language of moralism emerged as a solution to the postwar era's racial contradictions laid bare by the Third World project. As Jodi Melamed has shown, anticolonial and antiracist movements politicized “the depth and injustices of Western and white supremacy”, demonstrating the hypocrisy of European powers and the United States which

“claimed to be fighting an antiracist and antifascist war [WW2], while practicing racism and fascism against people of color in the United States, Europe, and the colonies... These movements condemned Western imperialisms and recognized white supremacy as an illegitimate and artificial ideology of white and European domination. As the terms of the ideological Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union jelled, racism in the United States and other Western capitalist societies became one of the chief propaganda weapons in the Soviet

79 As Prashad makes clear, the problem was not the debt itself but the power asymmetries built into international financial institutions: “These are not ‘poor’ countries. Over the course of (the past) three decades, the sixty states (have) paid USD550 billion in principle and interest on loans worth USD540 billion. Yet the still owe USD523. The alchemy of international usury binds the darker nations.” Prashad, 276.

80 Vijay Prashad, “Dream History of the Global South,” *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 4, no. 1 (2012): 48–9.

81 Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 186.

Union's arsenal. In order to define successfully the terms of global governance after World War II, U.S. bourgeoisie classes had to manage the racial contradictions that antiracist and anticolonial movements exposed.”⁸²

The language of ethics, human rights, and development emerged as solutions to these contradictions, as they provided a way to safeguard the moral legitimacy of US global leadership in a postcolonial world. As moralism replaced the critique of political economy, not only did race disappear as “a referent for the inequality of the historical development of modern capitalism.” The struggle against inequality, poverty, and racism “now explicitly required the victory and extension of US empire.”⁸³ Political moralism thus rose to power in the very moment that hopes of a new economic world order were abandoned: the humanitarian utopia was effectively one that took both US ascendancy and global capitalism for granted.

This link between ethics, empire, and global capitalism was clearly recognised by the Mont Pelerin Society, whose founding members include Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, and Karl Popper. In its founding statement, the group sought to counter what they perceived as “an ideological movement” threatening “the central values of civilization” with “intellectual argument” centred on “absolute moral standards” such as human dignity, the rule of law, and private property.⁸⁴ That these views were embraced by neoliberal economists might not be surprising, yet by the early 1980s they had become commonplace on the Euro-American Left. As Neil Lazarus has shown, after 1975 the prevailing political sentiment in the West “turned sharply against anticolonial nationalist insurgency and revolutionary anti-imperialism.”⁸⁵ New Philosophers such as Glucksmann and Lévy increasingly began to extend their critiques of totalitarianism to the “tyrannical” and “bloodthirsty” Third World state. The former colonies, they argued, had in the wake of decolonisation reverted back to their former, precolonial state of savagery and barbarism. As Jacques Julliard explained, “[i]t is true that there are two opposing sides in the third world. But they aren't the American and the Soviet sides. They are those of the torturing State and the martyred people.”⁸⁶ The

82 Jodi Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism,” *Social Text* 24, no. 4 89 (December 21, 2006): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2006-009>.

83 Melamed, 6.

84 “Statement of Aims | MPS,” accessed October 14, 2017, <https://www.montpelerin.org/statement-of-aims/>.

85 Neil Lazarus, “What Postcolonial Theory Doesn’t Say,” *Race & Class* 53, no. 1 (July 1, 2011): 3–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396811406778>. See also Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

86 Quoted in Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 160. See also Julian Bourg, “From the Left Bank to Libya:

European Left, he went on to argue, must denounce “power” in the Third World, and aid the victims of famine, flood, and authoritarian state apparatuses. Julliard's remarks are indicative of a discursive shift that had begun to take hold of intellectual life in the late 1970s. In the previous two decades many on the Left had looked to the Third World's struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism, as well as to the writing of Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, and Mao Tse Tung, as a model for Western emancipatory thinking; Sartre's preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* is a typical example of the spirit of this time. With the global defeat of anti-imperialism, and a harshening critique of the Third World state, a new regime of representation began to take hold: no longer a revolutionary leading the way towards worldwide emancipation, the Third World subject was reconstituted as a victim—of overpopulation, famine, flooding, poverty, illiteracy, and so on—urgently in need of Western help.⁸⁷ As Ross explains, the colonial or Third World other of the 1960s was ultimately “transformed from militant and articulate fighter and thinker to 'victim' by a defense of human rights strictly identified as the rights of the victim, the rights of those who do not have the means to argue their rights or to create a political solution to their own problems.”⁸⁸ The result was a humanitarian sensibility and modern-day version of Victorian humanism, emblematised by Kouchner's MSF, which reanimated the moral discourse of the civilising mission and the rhetoric of European civilization versus non European barbarism.⁸⁹ After the Biafra War, Kouchner had left the ICRC which, he argued, took the principle of neutrality to the point of complicity; “By keeping silent we doctors [are] accomplices in the systematic massacre of a population.”⁹⁰ With the foundation of MSF in 1971 he inaugurated a new era of humanitarianism, grounded in the principle of *témoignage*—the French term for testimony, witnessing, and bearing witness. New humanitarianism

The New Philosophy and Humanitarianism,” in *Human Rights and Humanitarian Intervention: Legitimizing the Use of Force since the 1970s*, ed. Annette Weinke, Norbert Frei, and Daniel Stahl (Wallstein Verlag, 2017), 95.

87 As Michael Barnett explains, “Against the backdrop of a newly decolonizing world, many nongovernmental organizations that once had concentrated on Europe now discovered a whole world waiting to be helped.” Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Cornell University Press, 2011), 2. See also Eleanor Davey, *Idealism beyond Borders: The French Revolutionary Left and the Rise of Humanitarianism, 1954–1988* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

88 Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 167. As Arif Dirlik explains, “Within a decade, the 'South' had turned from a possible savior of the world to an object of compassion that must be saved in order for the world to save itself.” Arif Dirlik, *Global Modernity: Modernity in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Routledge, 2015), 14.

89 See Paige Arthur, *Unfinished Projects: Decolonization and the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (Verso, 2010), xxiv.

90 Quoted in Daniel Robert DeChaine, *Global Humanitarianism: NGOs and the Crafting of Community* (Lexington Books, 2005), 70.

successfully drew together intellectuals from all sides of the political spectrum and was, as Glucksmann explained, “the end of the cold war in our heads.”⁹¹ A heterogeneous configuration of intellectuals—including Foucault, Barthes, Sartre, and Aron—in 1979 came together to endorse MSF’s campaign for a “Boat for Vietnam.”⁹² The campaign was a striking symbol of the new intellectual consensus. Sartre and Aron, who had taken opposing positions on almost every issue since their break in 1947, now found themselves brought together over the issue of Vietnamese refugees. The famous photograph from the press conference captures this new, post-ideological consensus; as described by Paul Berman, the picture shows “Sartre side by side with the conservative Aron and a Beatle-haired Glucksmann—three men, representing the old-fashioned left, the old-fashioned conservatives, and the new-fashioned younger generation, all of them united in solidarity with the victims of Vietnamese Communism.”⁹³

Importantly, new humanitarianism was in many ways a media affair. Glucksmann, Lévy, and Kouchner rode the wave of the rapid shift from a literary to media culture, and made extensive use of print, radio, and television media to spread their message.⁹⁴ As Ilan Kapoor rightly notes, the new humanitarian principle of witnessing was, after all, “about witnessing not just on behalf of disaster victims, but also *for* the media/public.”⁹⁵ Through the mediasphere, a new—and highly racialized and gendered—aesthetic of suffering was popularised, bringing Western audiences into contact with faraway conflicts, suffering Brown bodies, and innocent starving children.⁹⁶ These representations were crucial in creating what Meister calls “the humanitarian melodrama,”⁹⁷ a morality play between victims, savages, and heroic rescuers. Such

91 Quoted in James Traub, “A Statesman without Borders,” *The New York Times*, February 3, 2008, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/03/news/03iht-03kouchnert.9691898.html>.

92 See D. Drake, *Intellectuals and Politics in Post-War France* (Springer, 2001), 153–4 and Christofferson, “Foucault and New Philosophy: Why Foucault Endorsed André Glucksmann’s The Master Thinkers.”

93 Paul Berman, *Power and the Idealists: Or, the Passion of Joschka Fischer and Its Aftermath* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2007).

94 Lévy, perhaps better than anyone else, recognised the power of this new media culture. As the journalist Gaby Wood observes, Lévy often presented himself as a rockstar: “his clothes (open-necked white shirts and designer suits), his friends (Yves Saint Laurent, Alain Delon, Salman Rushdie), his homes (the flat in Saint Germain, a hideaway in the South of France, an eighteenth-century palace in Marrakesh that used to belong to Jean Paul Getty) are endlessly commented on.” Gaby Wood, “Je Suis Un Superstar,” *The Observer*, June 15, 2003, sec. Books, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/jun/15/society>.

95 Ilan Kapoor, *Celebrity Humanitarianism: The Ideology of Global Charity* (Routledge, 2012), 92.

96 One of the earliest examples of the link between the television and humanitarianism is the Nigerian Civil War, which drew considerable attention among Western audiences. See Lasse Heerten, *The Biafran War and Postcolonial Humanitarianism: Spectacles of Suffering* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 6; Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 130.

97 Robert Meister, *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights* (Columbia University Press, 2012), 66.

narratives both drew inspiration from and helped reinforce what in the 1970s was becoming a metanarrative about the Holocaust. While modern-day human rights are often considered as the logical culmination of forces that were unleashed in the aftermath of the Second World War, throughout the 1950s and 60s there was a lack of widespread consciousness about the Holocaust. As Peter Novick has argued, it was only with the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 that the Holocaust was introduced to the public lexicon, giving it “the transcendent status as the bearer of eternal truths or lessons that could be derived from contemplating it.”⁹⁸ The killing of six million Jews (alongside Roma, ethnic Poles, gay men, political dissidents, and so on) became the holocaust and then The Holocaust; a narrative that no longer focused on Jewish suffering per se, but on the suffering endemic to humanity. As the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union collapsed, the old discourse of revolution and counterrevolution, which had been so central to the Left since 1789, had largely been superseded by a humanitarian sentiment focusing on suffering. In many ways this was the logical conclusion of the processes that had been set in motion in 1968, culminating in a humanist ideology not very different from that of the Victorians in the long 19th century. For some, such as American political scientist Francis Fukuyama, the crumbling of the Berlin Wall thus constituted much more than the end of the bifurcation of the international sphere: it also signalled “the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”⁹⁹ As a new (but in some respects, old) era dawned on the post-1989 world, the discourse of human rights, humanitarianism, and international law would soon rise to hegemony in the global North. In Alain Badiou's formulation, this is why “the reign of 'ethics' coincides, after decades of courageous critiques of colonialism and imperialism, with today's sordid self-satisfaction in the 'West,' with the insistent argument according to which the misery of the Third World is the result of its own incompetence, its own inanity—in short, of its subhumanity.”¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that cosmopolitan political theory is a historically produced discourse, anchored in particular material interests and relations of power.

98 Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000), 110. See also S.

Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism: Triumphal Failures of Barbaric Thinking* (Springer, 2014).

99 Francis Fukuyama, *End of History and the Last Man* (Simon and Schuster, 2006), xi.

100 Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (Verso, 2002), 13.

Where cosmopolitan theorists typically insist on a distinction between ethics and politics, ontology and history, I have argued that cosmopolitanism is a politically produced discourse that, similar to Victorian humanism in the 19th century, contributes to an ideological formation that gives legitimacy to the unjust, racialized global order. The rise of cosmopolitan thinking in the 1990s is less a result of a steady, gradual climb towards global justice, and more a product of a set of historical and material conditions that in the late 20th century made it highly desirable for policymakers, activists, and intellectuals to think of world politics as an *ethical* space. The global defeat of the counterrevolutions to colonialism and capitalism, the transformation of the old Left, the American search for a new moral vocabulary after Vietnam, the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism, and the invention of a mediatised aesthetic of suffering: these were the social forces that propelled the rise of cosmopolitan thinking in the late 20th century.

Samuel Moyn has argued that the rise of human rights and cosmopolitan political theory in the latter part of the 20th century depended on the collapse of other, prior internationalism such as Marxism and anti-colonial nationalism. Against those who depict history as a “dramatic struggle for human rights across the ages, from the Mesopotamian Codes of Hammurabi to today’s globalization era”,¹⁰¹ Moyn argues that history in fact “left open diverse paths into the future, rather than paving a single road toward current ways of thinking and acting.”¹⁰² While Moyn is right to place the resurgence of cosmopolitanism in the context of the demise of other internationalisms, the story he tells is ultimately one that preserves the innocence of cosmopolitanism: as other internationalisms “imploded” and “collapsed”, Moyn suggests, a vacuum was left behind that cosmopolitanism hesitantly and involuntarily came to fill. In depicting cosmopolitanism as the reluctant heir to past and prior utopias, Moyn therefore cannot explain why it was cosmopolitanism—and not any other internationalism—that rose to hegemony in the late 1980s. In contrast, in this chapter I have argued that cosmopolitanism contributes to an ideological formation that helps to legitimise, perpetuate, and entrench the current world order. The end of the Cold War marked not so much the beginning of a new global era as a return to the North-dominated global order of 1492-1945. As the global counterrevolutions to colonialism and capitalism came to an end and other internationalisms were brutally blocked, the ethical discourses

101 Micheline R. Ishay, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2008), book cover.

102 Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 5.

that in the long 19th century had legitimised the colonial enterprise returned but in updated form. The result was a turn to Victorian humanist ideas about the white man's burden, and a consequent transformation of the meaning of solidarity. As Kant displaced Marx, and discourses of empathy and suffering superseded the language of struggle and liberation, solidarity would increasingly come to be associated with ethics—and not the revolution.

This shift from political economy to the language of moralism has also had pronounced effects on postcolonial theory. As we shall see in the next chapter, the erasure of political economy as a means of understanding and critiquing the global colour line has led to an overwhelmingly focus on questions of cultural identity, Eurocentrism, and representations of Self/Other—ultimately framing race as a question of “difference” rather than “domination.” The project of radicalising and decolonising solidarity thus requires—as a first step—that the problem of the global colour line be rethought through a materialist lens. It is to this that we now turn.

CHAPTER 3

The Political Economy of Race: Rethinking the Global Colour Line

“If their blood has not mingled extensively with yours, their labour power has long since entered your economic blood stream. It is the sugar you stir, it is in the sinews of the infamous British sweet tooth, it is the tea leaves at the bottom of the British cuppa.”
—*Stuart Hall*¹

Introduction

In her classic essay from 1979, self-described “Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet” Audre Lorde argued that “the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.”² Calling on white feminists to confront their racism and homophobia, she asked:

“What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable.”³

While the master's tools “may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game”, Lorde concluded, “they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.”⁴

In this chapter I build on Lorde's provocation to examine what a radicalised and decolonised solidarity might look like and mean—beyond the “master's tools.” How can the theory and practice of internationalist solidarity be reimaged anew, and what would it mean for international political theory to take seriously the racial ordering of world politics? In what follows I argue that answering these questions requires, as a first step, that the nature and problem of the global colour line be rethought. In postcolonial

1 Quoted in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *EMPIRE STRIKES BACK: Race and Racism In 70's Britain* (Routledge, 2004), 283.

2 Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Crossing Press, 1984), 110.

3 Lorde, 110–111.

4 Lorde, 112.

theory, within as well as outside of IR, the racial ordering of the international has predominantly been framed as a problem of cultural difference, Eurocentrism, and representations of the imperial Self and the colonial Other.⁵ While this focus has been successful in bringing certain features of the global colour line into view, it has also left other aspects to the side—in particular, the material and socioeconomic dimensions of race and racism. As Andrew Sartori has argued, postcolonial scholarship has often let “the representational order” take “precedence in the analytical sequence”, thus eliding the question of the materiality of colonial relations.⁶ By conceiving of colonialism in purely civilisational terms, and Eurocentrism as a mainly cultural force, the entanglements between the racialized social order, global empire, and capital accumulation have often tended to fade from view. The result, as Arif Dirlik has argued, has been “a disassociation of questions of culture and cultural identity from the structures of capitalism, shifting the grounds for discourse to the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized, unmediated by the structures of political economy within which questions of culture had been subsumed earlier.”⁷ Consequently, while many IR

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- 5 Indicatively, see John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 1999); Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2016); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton University Press, 2009); Walter Dignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Duke University Press, 2011). To be clear, many postcolonial scholars do emphasise that colonialism often involved different forms of coerced labour and resource extraction; what is missing from this literature, rather, is any kind of deeper analysis of how capital accumulation, race, and physical violence are intertwined. As Ince points out, “this ignominious record congeals into an undifferentiated mass of ‘imperial’ violence that liberal thinkers then rationalize or criticize.” See Onur Ulas Ince, *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 16.
- 6 Andrew Sartori, “The British Empire and Its Liberal Mission,” *The Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 3 (2006): 632, <https://doi.org/10.1086/509149>. This critique is of course not true for all postcolonial scholars. See, for example, Lisa Tilley and Robbie Shilliam, eds., “Special Issue: Raced Markets,” *New Political Economy* 0, no. 0 (December 21, 2017): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2017.1417366>; John Narayan, “The Wages of Whiteness in the Absence of Wages: Racial Capitalism, Reactionary Intercommunalism and the Rise of Trumpism,” *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 11 (November 2, 2017): 2482–2500, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1368012>; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000).
- 7 Arif Dirlik, “Rethinking Colonialism: Globalization, Postcolonialism, And The Nation,” *Interventions* 4, no. 3 (January 1, 2002): 432, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801022000013833>. See also Neil Lazarus, “What Postcolonial Theory Doesn’t Say,” *Race & Class* 53, no. 1 (July 1, 2011): 3–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396811406778>; Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (Routledge, 2004); Sandro Mezzadra, “How Many Histories of Labour? Towards a Theory of Postcolonial Capitalism,” *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 151–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2011.563458>; Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (Verso Books, 2013); Ince, *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism*; Satnam Virdee, “Challenging the Empire,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 10 (August 24, 2014): 1823–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.932408>; Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus, *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). For an account of empire as

theorists recall W.E.B. Du Bois's famous statement, that “[t]he problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line”, few have realised that Du Bois, in the later stages of his life, became convinced that the problem of the global colour line *is* a question of political economy:

“Here then is the fundamental question of our day: How far can nations who are at present most advanced in intelligence... and technique keep their wealth without using the land and labor of the majority of mankind mainly for the benefit of the European world and not for the benefit of most men, who happen to be colored?”⁸

For Du Bois, who sought to reveal the “continuities between prewar colonial capitalism and postwar U.S. global ascendancy and expanding transnational capitalism”,⁹ it was clear that anti-racist politics had to be anti-capitalist.

In this chapter I take up Du Bois's call for a global political economic critique of race and racism. The project of radicalising and decolonising solidarity, I argue, must begin with rethinking the global colour through a materialist lens. Drawing on Cedric Robinson's 1983 magnum opus *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, this chapter reconceptualises the global colour line as a racial ontology that enables the hyper-exploitation of non-white peoples and lands, while privileging others. Building on Robinson's concept of racial capitalism, I demonstrate how race-making practices are constitutive of the logic of capital. The history of capitalism began with the slave trade and not with the factory system; in fact, and as *Black Marxism* demonstrated, there was never such a thing as capitalism without slavery, and “the history of Manchester never happened without the history of Mississippi.”¹⁰ In contrast to

an explicitly capitalist endeavour, see Steven Press, *Rogue Empires: Contracts and Conmen in Europe's Scramble for Africa* (Harvard University Press, 2017); Ince, *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism*.

8 Quoted in Jodi Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism,” *Social Text* 24, no. 4 89 (December 21, 2006): 11, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2006-009>.

9 Melamed, 13.

10 Walter Johnson, “To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism, and Justice,” *Text*, Boston Review, October 19, 2016, <https://bostonreview.net/race/walter-johnson-slavery-human-rights-racial-capitalism>. See also Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (University of California Press, 2007); Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin, *Futures of Black Radicalism* (Verso Books, 2017); Robin D. G. Kelley, “What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?” *Text*, Boston Review, January 12, 2017, <http://bostonreview.net/race/robin-d-g-kelley-what-did-cedric-robinson-mean-racial-capitalism>; Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Duke University Press, 2015); Jodi Melamed, “Racial Capitalism,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 76–85, <https://doi.org/10.5749/jcritethnstud.1.1.0076>; David Roediger, *Class, Race and Marxism* (Verso Books, 2017); Robin D. G. Kelley, “Introduction,” in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, by Cedric J. Robinson, 2000.

conventional Marxist thinking, Robinson's work thus points to the necessity of understanding race and class as co-constitutive. As Lisa Lowe explains, the concept of racial capitalism captures “that capitalism expands not through rendering all labor, resources, and markets across the world identical, but by precisely seizing upon colonial divisions, identifying particular regions for production and others for neglect, certain populations for exploitation and still others for disposal.”¹¹ Race, then, is neither reducible to class, nor is it a separate form of oppression. Instead, capitalism relies upon the elaboration, reproduction, and exploitation of racial difference: on the invention of what Robinson called “the universal Negro.” Capitalism is ultimately racial, not merely because people racialized as non-white are disproportionately impacted and disadvantaged by the “free” market, although this is true as well¹²; more fundamentally, racial differences are constitutive of capitalism because processes of capital accumulation are themselves predicated on the devaluation of Black and other non-white people. Hence the term *racial* capitalism.

By centre-staging the political economy of race and racism, this chapter lays the foundations for my larger project of radicalising and decolonising solidarity. In chapter 4, I show that a materialist reading of the global colour line, and a consequent focus on interlocking oppressions under racial capitalism, open up space for a different kind of internationalism and politics of solidarity, beyond the “master's tools.” The immediate aim of the the present chapter, then, is to interrogate what a rematerialised conception of the global colour looks like and means.

The chapter unfolds in three sections. In the first section I undertake a close reading of *Black Marxism* to put forward a global political economic critique of race and racism. Contra Marxist orthodoxy, Robinson helps us understand that racism is a constitutive feature of capital accumulation, as opposed to a mere residue of pre-capitalist social relations. In the second section I extend this discussion by putting *Black Marxism* in dialogue with feminist theory and activism. Unraveling the centrality of sexuality and gender differences to racial capitalism, I argue that the regulation of intimacy and female reproductive labour is central to the process of capital accumulation. In the third and final section I examine how the rise of neoliberalism has led to a reconfiguration of the global colour line. Racialized and gendered forms of domination continue to pattern global politics but have, as we shall see, evolved to take

11 Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*.

12 For example, see Akwugo Emejulu and Leah Bassel, “Minority Women, Austerity and Activism,” *Race & Class*, October 2, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396815595913>.

on new forms, fit for the postcolonial and multicultural present.

Racial Capitalism and the Global Colour Line

When *Black Marxism* first appeared in 1983 it drew little attention. “It was badly received”, remembers Elizabeth Robinson, the wife of Cedric Robinson, and sometimes “not received at all.”¹³ With its focus on capital and the production of racial difference, it started from coordinates that increasingly were seen as marginal and suspicious. With the global defeat of the counterrevolutions to colonialism and capitalism, the transformation of the old (Euro-American) Left, and the rising hegemony of postmodernism and “Theory”, research on race and racism was undergoing a distinct shift, from critiques of political economy towards questions of cultural identity; from “the theory and politics of inequality and redistribution” towards “the theory and politics of recognition and understanding difference.”¹⁴ Political economy was no longer the focus of research on race, as it once had been for Black radicals such as Du Bois, C.L.R. James, Oliver Cromwell Cox, Eric Williams, Stuart Hall, Robert Miles, and A. Sivanandan. As Kunkel recalls, in this period, and especially after 1989, “it often seemed easier to spot the contradictions of Marxism than the more famous contradictions of capitalism.”¹⁵ *Black Marxism* was thus, at least to some extent, impossibly out of tune with its times. And still, the text survived: it traveled with Robinson's students, colleagues, and friends, found a home in activist circles, and was finally republished in 2000. Fred Moten, who came into contact with the text during graduate school, remembers how

“for a long time... it circulated underground, as a recurrent seismic event on the edge of or over the edge of the university, for those of us who valorized being on or over the edge even if we had been relegated to it. There, at least, we could get together and talk about the bomb that had gone off in our heads. Otherwise we carried around its out, dispersive potenza as contraband, buried under the goods that legitimate parties to exchange can value, until we could get it to the black market, where (the) license has no weight, and *hand it around* out of a suitcase or over a kitchen table or from behind a makeshift counter.”¹⁶

13 Johnson and Lubin, *Futures of Black Radicalism*, 103.

14 Virdee, “Challenging the Empire,” 1827. As Dirlik explains, postcolonial scholarship has been “overtaken by cultural nationalisms of one kind or another that take for granted the existing system of political economy and fight out their battles on the grounds of culture.” Dirlik, “Rethinking Colonialism,” 442.

15 Benjamin Kunkel, “Into the Big Tent,” *London Review of Books*, April 22, 2010.

16 Fred Moten, “The Subprime and the Beautiful,” *African Identities* 11, no. 2 (May 1, 2013): 239,

35 years after its publication, *Black Marxism* remains one of the most incisive commentaries on the relationship between racism and capitalism. With its focus on the global political economy of race, it steps into what Walter Mignolo has described as Marxism's "colonial fracture."¹⁷ Where Marx had missed "the colonial mechanism of power underlying the system he critiques"¹⁸, *Black Marxism* challenges "the hegemonic imperial macro-narratives" that privileged the Euro-American proletariat as the revolutionary class of history. In its place it centres the Black radical tradition, "the colonial territories, marginalized colored people of the metropolitan centres of capital, and those Frantz Fanon identified as the 'wretched of the earth.'"¹⁹ Echoing Audre Lorde, Robinson revealed why the master's tools would never dismantled the master's house; and in its place, he examined what would.

Robinson, of course, was not the first thinker to put a spotlight on the link between race and class. *Black Marxism* drew inspiration from a long tradition of scholarship—including the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, Oliver Cromwell Cox, Claudia Jones, Angela Davis, Eric Williams, Walter Rodney, and Stuart Hall—who had held Black radicalism and organised Marxism in uneasy yet productive tension.²⁰ Hall's

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2013.797289>.

17 Walter D. Mignolo, "Delinking," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162647>. Anthony Bogues describes this as a Black radical heretical practice, through which Black radicals sought to expose Marxism's incompleteness when it came to the non-white and colonial world. As Bogues explains, black heretics entailed "a double operation—an engagement with Western radical theory and then a critique of this theory." Anthony Bogues, *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals* (Routledge, 2015), 13.

18 Mignolo, "Delinking," 483.

19 Kelley, "Black Marxism," xii.

20 In recent years a growing body of scholarship have examined how Black radicalism developed as a conversation with, and critique of, Marxist theory and practice. See, indicatively, Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and the Diaspora, 1919-1939* (Africa World Press, 2013); Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Duke University Press, 2008); Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (NYU Press, 2012); Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1995* (University of Illinois Press, 2011); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (UNC Press Books, 2015); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2011); Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Duke University Press, 2011). Sylvia Wynter's apt description of C.L.R. James captures the uneasy yet productive relationship between Black radicalism and Marxims. James, she argues, was "a Negro yet British, a colonial native yet culturally a part of the public school code, attached to the cause of the proletariat yet a member of the middle class, a Marxian yet a Puritan, an intellectual who plays cricket, of African descent yet Western, a Trotskyist and Pan-Africanist, a Marxist yet a supporter of black studies, a West Indian majority black yet an American minority black." For Wynter, these sides of James should not be seen as contradictions or antagonisms, but rather as parts of a unified whole. James refused to choose between "either race of class, proletariat or bondsman labor, or damnes de la terre, Pan-African nationalism or labor internationalism." Instead, "[t]he quest for a frame to contain them all came" to constitute the essence of James's scholarship.

theory of articulation, in particular, opened up space for a non-reductionist understanding of race; race, Hall argued, is not epiphenomenal to capitalist development but a structuring relation. Yet where Hall and others sometimes had fallen back on an easy separation between the materiality of class and the ideology of race, Robinson refused the distinction altogether: race, he argued, is neither reducible to class, nor is it a separate form of oppression. Instead, capitalism relies upon the elaboration, reproduction, and exploitation of racial difference: on the invention of what he called “the universal Negro.” Capitalism has historically operated through racial projects that assign differential value to human life and labour. Marxism, with its valorisation of the proletariat as the universal subject of history, thus failed to grasp that wage labour is not the only form of exploitation on which capitalism depends and thrives. Unwaged and less-than-free labour—such as chattel slavery, racialized indentured servitude, convict leasing, debt peonage, and gendered forms of caring work and reproductive labour—are not just incidental to capital accumulation, but fundamental to its operations. Colonial land grabs, the transatlantic slave trade, native dispossession, and armed trading had historically tied Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa into a differentiated but *unified* whole; indeed, “from its very foundations capitalism had never been—any more than Europe—a 'closed system.'”²¹

Black Marxism arrives at this conclusion through a close study of one of Marxism's key premises: namely, that capitalism emerged as a revolutionary negation of feudalism. Rejecting this idea, Robinson instead charts how capitalism evolved from a European feudal order that was already infused with racialism:

“The bourgeoisie that led the development of capitalism were drawn from particular ethnic and cultural groups; the European proletariats and the mercenaries of the leading states from others; its peasants from still other cultures; and its slaves from entirely different worlds. The tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones. As the Slavs became the natural slaves, the racially inferior stock for domination and exploitation during the early Middle Ages, as the Tartars came to occupy a similar position in the Italian cities of the late Middle Ages, so at the systemic interlocking of

Quoted in Cyril Lionel Robert James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live in* (UPNE, 1953), x.

- 21 Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 2 edition (Chapel Hill, N.C: University North Carolina Pr, 2000), 4. See also Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*; Anibal Quijano and Michael Ennis, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (November 1, 2000): 533–80.

capitalism in the sixteenth century, the peoples of the Third World began to fill this expanding category of a civilization reproduced by capitalism.”²²

While European colonialists would come to associate non-waged labour with Indians, Blacks, and mestizos,²³ Robinson shows how the racialization of the labouring classes in fact begun *within* Europe, long before Europe's colonial encounter with the global South. The first European proletarians were racial subjects—including the Irish, Slavs (*the* slaves), Roma, and Gypsies—and they were subject to dispossession, enclosure, and slavery *within* Europe.²⁴ Alongside “indentured peasants, political outcasts produced at varying times by national and civil wars, and poor or orphaned females”²⁵, Irish immigrant workers formed a particularly important element in the English working class; in 1841, there were 400.000 Irish immigrants living in Great Britain, constituting “the cheapest labour in Western Europe.”²⁶ Consequently, and as Robinson makes clear,

“The English working class was never the singular social and historical entity suggested by the phrase... The negations resultant from capitalist modes of production, relations of production, and ideology did not manifest themselves as an eradication of oppositions among the working classes. Instead, the dialectic of proletarianization disciplined the working classes to the importance of distinctions: between ethnics and nationalities; between skilled and unskilled workers; and... in even more dramatic terms, between races. The persistence and creation of such oppositions within the working classes were a critical aspect of the triumph of capitalism.”²⁷

While racial ideologies justified low wages and mistreatment, they were—importantly—not invented by the emergent bourgeoisie; rather, racialism already saturated European civilisation, and thus came to shape “the process of proletarianization and the formation of working-class consciousness.”²⁸ In other words, capitalism was less a

22 Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 26.

23 As Quijano points out, from the very beginning of the colonisation of America, Europeans associated non-paid or unwaged labor with Indigenous peoples because they were “inferior” races. Quijano and Ennis, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” 538.

24 Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 3. As Robinson explains, racism “was not simple a convention for ordering the relations of Europeans to non-European peoples but has its genesis in the 'internal' relations of European peoples.” Kelley, “Black Marxism,” 2.. See also Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

25 Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 116.

26 E.P. Thompson, quoted in Robinson, 39.

27 Kelley, “Black Marxism,” 42.

28 Kelley, xiii. As Kelley explains: “Capitalism was 'racial' not because of some conspiracy to divide workers or justify slavery and dispossession, but because racialism had already permeated Western feudal society.”

negation of the feudalist social order, than the global extension of it; in essence, and as Robin D.G. Kelley explains, capitalism and racism “did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of ‘racial capitalism’ dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide.”²⁹ The creation of raced—and, as we shall see in the next section, gendered—subjects organised the capitalist social order by splitting humanity into those associated with property, citizenship, and wages, and those subjected to superexploitation and dispossession.

Marx, of course, was not unaware of the problems posed by this racial world order. He condemned both colonialism and slavery, and called on workers to oppose racism. Nonetheless, by bracketing racial violence as a form of “so-called primitive accumulation”—and, thus, as something that belongs to a separate historical era—he neglected to interrogate the link between racial difference and the logic of capital. Rather than a process that is integral to capital accumulation, racism, for Marx, was an embarrassment residue of pre-capitalist social relations.³⁰ In his famous formulation,

“The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things that characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.”³¹

Consequently, while Marx condemned colonialism, he ultimately thought that capitalism bore little responsibility for the trade in human bodies, the theft of Indigenous lands and resources, and the colonial genocides committed in the name of Western civilisation. Capital may come into the world “dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt”³² but, he argued, it manages to clean up its act. In contrast, in *Black Marxism* Robinson theorised racial violence as a permanent, rather than anterior, condition of capital accumulation.³³ To consign slavery to a pre-capitalist era, Robinson

29 Kelley, xiii.

30 Marx's notion of primitive accumulation describes the foundational process through which non-capitalist forms of land and labour are incorporated into capitalist social relations. In recent years David Harvey has tried to update this concept; nonetheless, while this work is driven by an interest in questions relating to what Harvey terms the “new imperialism”, race and gender both remain curiously absent from the analysis. See David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (OUP Oxford, 2003).

31 Quoted in Nikhil Pal Singh, *Race and America's Long War* (Univ of California Press, 2017), 82.

32 Quoted in David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (Verso Books, 2010), 300.

33 In recent years a number of theorists have argued that Marx in fact took a great interest in questions of colonialism, imperialism, and slavery, as well as the revolutionary efforts to abolish and overthrow them. See Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western*

argued, is to overlook that “the Atlantic slave trade and the slavery of the New World were integral to the modern world economy.”³⁴ Indeed, “[f]or more than 300 years slave labor persisted beyond the beginnings of modern capitalism, complementing wage labor, peonage, serfdom, and other method of labor coercion.”³⁵ Plantation slavery, territorial expropriation, social displacement, militarised trading, indentured servitude, and resource extraction were all established and organised as building blocks of the global capitalist market. As Robinson concludes, “[f]rom whatever vantage point one chooses, the relationship between slave labor, the slave trade, and the weaving of the early capitalist economies is apparent. Whatever were the alternatives, the point remains: historically, slavery was a critical foundation for capitalism.”³⁶

Crucially, then, and in contrast to Marx's expectation that bourgeois society would eradicate racism from social relations, “the development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions.”³⁷ Violent forms of labour exploitation such as slavery, sharecropping, and indentured servitude are not incidental to capitalism. Rather, capital differentiates between free and less-than-free labour, according to racial, national, ethnic, and—as we shall see, gendered—hierarchies. As Chris Chen elaborates, “[t]he history of capitalism isn't simply the history of the proletarianisation of an independent peasantry but of the violent racial domination of populations whose valorisation as wage labour, to reverse a common formulation, has been merely historically contingent: 'socially dead' African slaves, the revocable sovereignty and terra nullius of indigenous peoples, and the nerveless,

Societies (University of Chicago Press, 2016); Robin Blackburn, ed., *An Unfinished Revolution: Karl Marx and Abraham Lincoln* (London ; New York: Verso, 2011). And indeed, at moments Marx did recognise the centrality of slavery to capitalism; he argued that “the veiled slavery of the wagedworkers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world”; that “the business of slavery is conducted by capitalists”; and that “direct slavery is just as much the pivot of the bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the precondition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance.” And yet, in spite of this, Marx consistently failed to develop a theory of the relation between slavery and capitalism. For a thorough critique of Marx's treatment of race, slavery, and colonialism, see Singh, *Race and America's Long War*, 87.

34 Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 4. See also Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (Hachette UK, 2016); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014); Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Harvard University Press, 2009); Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Lulu Press, Inc, 2015).

35 Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 4.

36 Robinson, 116 . For a similar argument on the colonial appropriation of Indigenous lands see Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Duke University Press, 2018).

37 Kelley, “Black Marxism,” 2.

supernumerary body of the coolie labourer.”³⁸ Contra Marxist orthodoxy, capitalism did not create the European proletariat as a universal subject. Rather, capitalism emerged—and continues to operate—through racial projects that assign differential value to human life and labour. Race-making practices are intrinsic to capital accumulation, because racism supplies the precarious and exploitable lives capitalism needs to extract land and labour. In Jodi Melamed’s formulation,

“Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups—capitalists with the means of production/workers without the means of subsistence, creditors/debtors, conquerors of land made property/the dispossessed and removed. These antinomies of accumulation require loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires.”³⁹

In other words, there can be no capitalism without racializations: hence *racial* capitalism.

The concept of racial capitalism helpfully highlights the underlying materiality of the global colour line. In contrast to postcolonial scholars that predominantly have focused their analysis on questions of Eurocentrism, representation, and cultural difference, Robinson’s analysis encourages us to take seriously the historical and ongoing global political economy of race and racism. The production of racial (and gendered) differences is ultimately how capital manages the contradiction “between the promise of political emancipation and the conditions of economic exploitation.”⁴⁰ As Silvia Federici explains,

“capitalism, as a social-economic system, is necessarily committed to racism and sexism. For capitalism must justify and mystify the contradictions built into its social relations—the promise of freedom vs. the reality of widespread coercion, and the promise of prosperity vs. the reality of widespread penury—by denigrating the ‘nature’ of those it exploits: women, colonial subjects the descendants of American slaves, the immigrants displaced by globalization.”⁴¹

38 Chris Chen, “The Limit Point of Capitalist Equality,” *Endnotes* 3, accessed May 13, 2018, <https://endnotes.org.uk/issues/3/en/chris-chen-the-limit-point-of-capitalist-equality>.

39 Melamed, “Racial Capitalism,” 77.

40 Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Duke University Press, 1996), 23.

41 Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Autonomedia, 2004), 17.

Before exploring how these structures continue to pattern global politics, we must first account for the role of gender and sexuality in racial capitalism.

Reproductive Racial Capitalism

Black Marxism has rightly been praised for bringing anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist critiques into productive conversation. It has, however, also faced criticism for being an overtly masculine text.⁴² Critics have called out Robinson for centre-staging the work of three male thinkers—Du Bois, C.L.R. James, and Richard Wright, as opposed to, say, Ella Baker, Sojourner Truth, or Ida B. Wells—and for eliding the question of gender and sexual differences.⁴³ In what follows I argue that Robinson's work, in spite of these blindspots, can be put into fruitful dialogue with feminist theory and activism. As we shall see, doing so not only unravels the ways in which the regulation of intimacy and female reproductive labour is central to the process of capital accumulation; it also pushes us to take seriously the role of gender in producing and reproducing the global colour line.

Women of colour feminists such as Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Selma James, Claudia Jones, Maria Mies, Angela Davis, and the Combahee River Collective have highlighted the various ways in which the home and housework function as foundations of the capitalist social order.⁴⁴ In their influential *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* from 1972, Dalla Costa and James challenged the idea that sexism (like racism) is a residue of pre-capitalist social relations. The exploitation of women, they argued, is central to the process of capital accumulation. Through their household work and other forms of unwaged work, women are the producers and reproducers of capitalism's most crucial commodity: namely, labour-power. Anticipating Robinson's insight that capital depends on the existence of a large pool of workers who

42 For example, see H. L. T. Quan, "Geniuses of Resistance: Feminist Consciousness and the Black Radical Tradition:," *Race & Class*, June 30, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396805058081>.

43 In an interview with Christina Heatherton and Jordan T. Camp, Robinson admits to having left out the question of gender from the analysis in *Black Marxism*. It should be noted that Robinson's other books, most crucially, *An Anthropology of Marxism*, do offer an extensive discussion of women's activism, including that of Fanny Lou Hamer and Ella Baker. See Christina Heatherton and Jordan T. Camp, "The World We Want: An Interview with Cedric and Elizabeth Robinson," in *Futures of Black Radicalism*, ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (Verso, 2017).

44 See, indicatively, Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Falling Wall Press Ltd, 1975); Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*; Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (Zed Books Ltd., 2014); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011); Combahee River Collective, *The Combahee River Collective Statement: Black Feminist Organizing in the Seventies and Eighties* (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1986).

stand outside of the formal wage relation, Dalla Costa and James demonstrated how the home is one of the pillars of capitalist social relations.⁴⁵ Next to the slave, colonial subject, coolie, and wageless worker, they thus added another unwaged figure: the proletarian housewife, who reproduces the workforce. The division between “gender” and “class”, they concluded, is ultimately a false dichotomy: “women's history” is a form of “class history”, because gender names a specific form of class relation, rather than a cultural norm or biological reality.

In *Caliban and the Witch*, the Italian feminist Marxist thinker Silvia Federici builds on these insights to rethink the concept of primitive accumulation from a feminist perspective. Examining “the execution of hundreds of thousands of 'witches' at the beginning of the modern era”, she interrogates why “the rise of capitalism demanded a genocidal attack on women.”⁴⁶ The construction of a new sexual division of labour, confining women to reproductive work, required that the “world female subject” be destroyed: “the heretic, the healer, the disobedient wife, the woman who dared to live alone, the obeha woman who poisoned the master's food and inspired the slaves to revolt.”⁴⁷ By destroying the control that women had exercised over their reproductive function, the persecution of witches paved the way for a more oppressive patriarchal regime. The witch-hunt, Federici concludes, was ultimately “as important as colonization and the expropriation of the European peasantry from its land were for the development of capitalism.”⁴⁸

In recent years a growing body of scholarship has highlighted the ways in which the intimate sphere of sexuality, desire, and reproductive labour were central to colonialism and New World slavery. In her influential *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, Ann Laura Stoler demonstrates how “gender-specific sexual sanctions and prohibitions” were crucial for establishing and securing the categories of coloniser and colonised. Focusing on parents and parenting, nursing mothers, servants, orphanages, and abandoned children, she shows how the “troubled intimacies of domestic space” were essential to imperial governance; “[r]ace was a primary and protean category for colonial capitalism and... managing the domestic was crucial to it.”⁴⁹ Similarly, and as

45 Costa and James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. See also Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*.

46 Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, 14.

47 Federici, 11.

48 Federici, 12.

49 Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (University of California Press, 2002), 13. See also Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2000);

thinkers such as Angela Davis, Jennifer Morgan, and Saidiya Hartman have shown, gendered racial violence was one of the pillars of the system of New World racial slavery: slaveowners relied on African captive women, not only for unpaid productive labour, but also for their reproductive capacities. The appropriation of Black women's reproductive labour, Christina Sharpe writes, “turns the womb into a factory reproducing blackness as abjection and turning the birth canal into another domestic middle passage.”⁵⁰ Slaveowners effectively conscripted the womb for their own financial gain; they “‘coupled’ men and women, named them husband and wife, and foresaw their own future in the bellies of enslaved workers.”⁵¹

By reading gender and sexuality into racial capitalism, this diverse array of thinkers unravel the ways in which the regulation of intimacy and women's reproductive labour is crucial to the functioning of the “free” market. Neither race nor gender are accidental features of the global capitalist order, but are constitutive and central to its survival and reproduction. In the next section I consider how the rise of neoliberalism has reconfigured the global colour line. As we shall see, racialized and gendered forms of domination have evolved to taken on new forms, fit for the postcolonial and multicultural present.

Ghettos, Slums, Favelas: Neoliberalism and the Global Production of Surplus Humanity

Over the last two decades, and especially after the election of America's first Black President, the idea of the postracial has risen to prominence. Race, it is frequently claimed, either is or is quickly becoming a thing of the past.⁵² As David Theo Goldberg

Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West* (University of California Press, 2012); Philippa Levine, *Gender and Empire* (OUP Oxford, 2007); Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (UNC Press Books, 2000).

50 Quoted in Saidiya Hartman, “The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women’s Labors,” *Souls* 18, no. 1 (March 14, 2016): 169, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999949.2016.1162596>.

51 Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 105. Hartman similarly concludes: “black women’s domestic labors and reproductive capacities... labor was critical to the creation of value, the realization of profit and the accumulation of capital.” Hartman, “The Belly of the World,” 167. See also Angela Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves,” *The Massachusetts Review* 13, no. 1/2 (1972): 81–100; Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West,” *Signs* 14, no. 4 (1989): 912–20; Darlene C. Hine, “Female Slave Resistance: The Economics of Sex,” *Western Journal of Black Studies*, January 1, 1979.

52 Mark Ledwidge, Kevern Verney, and Inderjeet Parmar, *Barack Obama and the Myth of a Post-Racial America* (Routledge, 2013); N. B. C. News, “Obama: Police Need to Work on Building Trust,” NBC News, April 29, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/baltimore-unrest/obama-police-need-work-building-trust-n350501>; Tim Wise, *Colorblind: The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat from*

explains, the “key conditions of social life”, including education possibility, employment opportunities, and residential location, are increasingly thought to be “less and less... predicated on racial preference, choices, and resources.”⁵³ In parallel, an unprecedented number of women have come to occupy positions of power in the professional-managerial class. As an increasing number of women “lean in” and climb the corporate ladder, they will achieve the liberation that generations of feminists have struggled for—at least if one is to believe Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg.⁵⁴ What, if anything, do these shifting racial-sexual grammars tell us about the current articulation of the global colour line? Has capital stopped operating through racial and gendered logics? If not, what has changed and why?

To answer these questions, it is helpful to consider the genealogy of postracialism. In the previous chapter I traced how the postwar period's anticolonial and civil rights movements produced a crisis in white supremacy. By exposing the racial contradictions of European powers and the United States—which had claimed to fight an antiracist and antifascist war against Germany, while simultaneously practising racism and fascism against people of colour in Europe, the US, and in the colonies—these movements successfully discredited white supremacy as official state policy on both a national and international level. The result was a shift, from overt white supremacy to what Jodi Melamed calls “racial liberalism.”⁵⁵ Racial liberalism differs from white supremacy in so far as it “recognizes racial inequality as a problem” and “secures a liberal symbolic framework for race reform centered in abstract equality, market individualism, and inclusive civic nationalism.”⁵⁶ The shift to racial liberalism discredited scientific racism with its belief in the inherent biological inferiority of non-white peoples. In its place, it centre-staged a cultural paradigm which traced the roots of poverty and inequality to cultural values. The rise of neoliberalism has further reconfigured this framework: under neoliberalism, the determining factor in an individual's life chances is said to be individual choice—as opposed to skin colour, the relative wealth of the families individuals are born into, and so on. As Ashwin Desai and Richard Pithouse note, this has led to a delinking of “the classic racial stereotypes (laziness, dirtiness, dangerous men and willing women etc) that legitimated colonial

Racial Equity (City Lights Books, 2010).

53 David Theo Goldberg, *Are We All Postracial Yet?* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 2.

54 Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (Random House, 2013).

55 Howard Winant, “The Modern World Racial System,” in *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line*, ed. M. Marable and Vanessa Agard-Jones (Springer, 2008).

56 Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism,” 2.

domination from race”, and a subsequent projection of “them onto the global poor of all races in order to legitimate contemporary forms of domination that entrench inequalities that were previously created in explicitly racist terms.”⁵⁷ New categories of privilege and subordination have thus come to blend with older racial categories.

One of the key mechanisms through which this has happened is gender. The post-war entrance of women into the labour market coincided with the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism and the international deregulation of markets. As Nancy Fraser notes, the conscription of women into the paid work force has been essential to the expansion of low-wage work, with women providing the majority of workers in the fastest-growing areas of poorly paid employment.⁵⁸ The new ideal of the modern two-earner family, she argues, has had the effect of squeezing out time for unpaid carework. Women who “lean in” are thus forced to *lean on* other women “by offloading their own care work and housework onto low-waged, precarious workers, typically racialized and/or immigrant women.”⁵⁹

In the neoliberal present neither race nor gender have thus withered away, but very much continue to structure the social and economic processes of capitalism. As Melamed explains, “race remains a procedure that justifies the nongeneralizability of capitalist wealth... organizing the hyperextraction of surplus value from racialized bodies and naturalizing a system of capital accumulation that grossly favors the global North over the global South.”⁶⁰ Under neoliberalism, capitalism's initial division between free and less-than-free labour—in the form of slavery, serfdom, indentured servitude, unpaid reproductive labour, and so on—has been systematised and reconfigured as a racialized division of labour. While the freedoms and rights won by anticolonial and civil rights movements must not be underestimated, racialized domination has simultaneously evolved to take on new forms, fit for the postcolonial and postracial present. In the face of austerity measures and neoliberal restructuring, capitalism's production of surplus populations has both intensified and reconfigured

57 Ashwin Desai and Richard Pithouse, “‘What Stank in the Past Is the Present’s Perfume’: Dispossession, Resistance, and Repression in Mandela Park,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 4 (September 16, 2004): 848–9.

58 See Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (Verso Books, 2013).

59 Nancy Fraser and Gary Gutting, “A Feminism Where ‘Lean In’ Means Leaning On Others,” *The New York Times*, 1444893675, //opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/15/a-feminism-where-leaning-in-means-leaning-on-others/.

60 Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism,” 10; 1.

itself. Today's surplus populations are not “a reserve army of labour” in Marx's sense—namely, workers who are hired and fired in times of economic expansion and decline⁶¹—but a growing mass of humanity that are disposable and yet trapped within the capital relation. Reduced to waste, bare life, and excess, these are the “lumpenproletariat”: those who exist at the margins of the capitalist economy and “whose plight cannot... be meaningfully addressed or meaningfully improved within the neoliberal institutions of global capitalism.”⁶² According to urban geographer Mike Davis, this outcast proletariat today amounts to a staggering 1.4 billion people, making it “the fastest growing... social class on earth.”⁶³ From the ghettos of Los Angeles to the slums in Cairo, the banlieues of Paris, and the favelas of Rio, the global colour line is quickly being reconfigured and hardened along lines of free and less-than-free (including unwaged, coerced, and dependent forms of) labour. As Chris Chen explains,

“At the periphery of the global capitalist system, capital now renews 'race' by creating vast superfluous urban populations from the close to one billion slum-dwelling and desperately impoverished descendants of the enslaved and colonised... As capital sloughs off these relative surplus populations in the core, the surplus capital produced by fewer and more intensively exploited workers in the Global North scours the globe for lower wages, and reappears as the racial threat of cheap labour from the Global South.”⁶⁴

Neoliberalism, thus, reproduces the global colour line in at least two ways: through the hyperextraction of surplus value from racialized bodies, as well as—and in conjunction with—the racialized violence of the penal and national security state. That is, race both manifests itself as “a probabilistic assignment of relative economic value” and “an index of differential vulnerability to state violence.”⁶⁵ This stands in contrast to conventional interpretations of neoliberalism, which often conceptualise it in terms of a withdrawal of

61 In *Capital*, Marx described surplus populations as a structural necessity of the capitalist system; the accumulation of capital, he argued, depends on “a relatively redundant working population, i.e. a population which is superfluous to capital's average requirements for its own valorization, and is therefore a surplus population.” Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Penguin Books Limited, 1976), 782.

62 Michael Cloete, “Neville Alexander: Towards Overcoming the Legacy of Racial Capitalism in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 86, no. 1 (March 10, 2015): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1353/trn.2014.0032>. See also McIntyre Michael and Nast Heidi J., “Bio(necro)polis: Marx, Surplus Populations, and the Spatial Dialectics of Reproduction and ‘Race’ 1,” *Antipode* 43, no. 5 (June 1, 2011): 1465–88, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2011.00906.x>.

63 Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (Verso, 2007), 178.

64 Chen, “The Limit Point of Capitalist Equality.”

65 Chen.

the (welfare) state through privatisation and deregulation. While this is true, neoliberalism also entails a simultaneous roll-out of new forms of state interventionism and social control. As Stuart Hall and his co-authors demonstrated in their 1978 classic *Policing the Crisis*, neoliberalism justifies new ways of regulating class, race, and space through the construction of “moral panics” and an ideology of crisis, in which tough-on-crime policies are seen as the only bulwark against the breakdown of social order.⁶⁶ *Policing the Crisis* offers a critique of the idea that policing and other forms of state violence are inevitable reactions to “threats” to public safety. As Hall et al explain, the penal and national security state emerged as a strategy for “managing” the populations rendered redundant in relation to capital. The slide to authoritarianism in Britain in the 1970s was less the result of an increase in racialized street crime—“mugging”—than of an underlying crisis in hegemony, which saw the state struggle to reproduce itself without “an escalation in the use and forms of repressive state power.”⁶⁷ Consent to these repressive measures were won “through race”:

“A crisis of hegemony marks a moment of profound rupture in the political and economic life of a society, an accumulation of contradictions... Such moments signal, not necessarily a revolutionary conjuncture nor the collapse of the state, but rather the coming of “iron times”... Class domination will be exercised, in such moments, through a modification in the *modes of hegemony*... and the powerful orchestration... of an *authoritarian* consensus... The forms of state intervention thus become more overt and more direct.”⁶⁸

In today's neoliberal present, moral panics around race, crime, security, (dis)order, and law frequently function as legitimating discourses for the state's expanded use of policing, prisons, and bordering practices. As Loïc Wacquant explains, in neoliberalism “the 'invisible hand' of the casualized labor market finds its institutional complement and counterpart in the 'iron fist' of the state which is being redeployed so as to check the disorders generated by the diffusion of social insecurity.”⁶⁹ This “iron fist” manifests itself in a variety of contexts and geographies, some which I discuss in my three case studies: including the mass incarceration and policing of Black and Brown populations

66 Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013). See also Nisha Kapoor, “The Advancement of Racial Neoliberalism in Britain,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 6 (June 1, 2013): 1028–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.629002>.

67 Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 298.

68 Hall et al., 214.

69 Loïc Wacquant, “The Penalisation of Poverty and the Rise of Neo-Liberalism,” *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 9, no. 4 (December 1, 2001): 401–2, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1013147404519>.

in the United States, Brazil, and South Africa, counterinsurgency operations in the Middle East, mass surveillance, and the proliferation of militarised borders alongside the world's North-South equator. IR theory, with its language of borders, frontiers, and territorial sovereignty, is ill-equipped to capture this dynamic—characterised, as it is, by the gradual unravelling of the Westphalian order and the *simultaneous* proliferation of hard, militarised borders. The proliferation of penal and national security measures ultimately constitute a growing “security archipelago”⁷⁰, designed to protect the wealthy and powerful from those rendered surplus by the social and economic dislocations of racial capitalism. For Mike Davis, this is why surplus populations must be considered

“the ghosts at the table of world politics. Every debate about the war on terrorism, the future of the Middle East, the AIDS crisis in Africa, and the international narcotics trade is haunted by their presence and growing desperation. The helicopter gunships that hover over the megaslums of Gaza and Sadr City, the nightly gun battles in the shantytowns of Bogota and Karachi, the bulldozers in Nairobi, Delhi, and Manila—is this not already an incipient world war between rich and poor?”⁷¹

In linking the growth of surplus humanity to the neoliberal reordering of the world economy, Davis gets the broad strokes of the story right. Nonetheless, by centre-staging the political economy of the global colour line, we can be more precise: in fact, is this not an incipient world war between the rich and *the racialized populations rendered superfluous by global capital*?

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the global colour line is best understood as a racial ontology that enables the hyper-exploitation of non-white peoples and lands, while privileging others. In contrast to (postcolonial) scholarship that focuses on questions of Eurocentrism, representation, and cultural difference, a materialist reading of the global colour line centre-stages the political economic critique of race and racism. Unwaged and less-than-free labour—such as chattel slavery, racialized indentured servitude, convict leasing, debt peonage, and gendered forms of caring work and reproductive labour—are not just incidental to capital accumulation, but fundamental to

70 Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* (Duke University Press, 2013).

71 Mike Davis, “Planet of Slums,” *Harper’s Magazine*, June 2004, <https://harpers.org/archive/2004/06/planet-of-slums/>.

its operations. As Aloysha Goldstein summarises,

“Race and gender are not incidental or accidental features of the global capitalist order, they are constitutive. Capitalism emerged as a racial and gendered regime... The secret to capitalism's survival is racism, and the racial and patriarchal state.”⁷²

The neoliberal reordering of the world economy has led to a reconfiguration of these dynamics: while racialized and gendered forms of domination continue to pattern global politics, they have evolved to take on new forms, fit for the postcolonial and multicultural present. How can these processes be challenged? In the next chapter I show that a materialist reading of the global colour line, and a consequent focus on interlocking oppressions under racial capitalism, open up space for a different kind of internationalism and politics of solidarity. In the contemporary era of Trump, Brexit, and global fascist resurgence—where the “white working class” frequently is juxtaposed with “immigrants”, and identity politics blamed for the demise of the organised Left—such an internationalist vision is urgently needed.

72 Aloysha Goldstein, “On the Reproduction of Race, Capitalism, and Settler Colonialism” (Race and Capitalism: Global Territories, Transnational Histories, UCLA Luskin, 2017), 43, <https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2018/04/Race-and-Capitalism-digital.pdf>.

CHAPTER 4

Identity Politics and the Class Struggle: Towards a New Internationalism

“For the vast majority of the planet's peoples, the global economy publicizes itself in human misery. Thus, the simple fact is that liberationist movements abound in the real world—a reason for attention far more weighty than the self-serving conceits of capitalist triumphalism and incessant chants of globalism followed upon the disintegration of the Soviet Union.”
—Cedric Robinson¹

“I think that we have to have a global perspective. We need—we used to call it internationalism... I think we need to create a 21st century internationalism. None of the past struggles in this country, progressive struggles, took place in isolation from what was happening in the rest of this world... I think we need to begin to think in those terms.”
—Angela Y. Davis²

Introduction

In *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker reconstruct the history of the rise of Atlantic capitalism and the revolutionary movements to which it gave rise. As the expansion of trade and colonisation launched the world's first global economy, a vast, landless, and ethnically and racially diverse workforce was born; a motley crew of African slaves, English convicts, conquered Irishmen, indentured servants, conscripted sailors, dispossessed commoners, religious radicals, pirates, witches, and prostitutes. These “planetary wanderers” not only built their own autonomous, multi-ethnic, and cross-gendered communities on the factory-like ships that roamed the Atlantic. They also resisted the brutal conditions of the British transatlantic empire and successfully instigated rebellions ocean-wide. As this “many-headed hydra” disintegrated, “[w]hat was left behind was national and partial: the *English* working class, the *black* Haitian, the *Irish* diaspora.”³

What might it mean to reimagine such a motley crew of “planetary wanderers” in 21st century world politics? In this chapter I argue that a materialist reading of the

1 Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 2 edition (Chapel Hill, N.C: University North Carolina Pr, 2000), xxviii.

2 “Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Angela Davis on Ferguson, Palestine & the Foundations of a Movement,” Democracy Now!, accessed May 29, 2017, http://www.democracynow.org/2016/3/28/freedom_is_a_constant_struggle_angela.

3 Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the*

global colour line provides answers to this question. An analysis of racial capitalism demonstrates that different systems of oppression—based on race, class, gender, and so on—are inherently international and rely on one another in complex ways. While the struggles against empire, white supremacy, settler colonialism, gender subordination, and workers' exploitation are not always and everywhere the same, they are fundamentally interlinked: different fronts of the same war. Where cosmopolitan scholarship typically understands solidarity as a product of commonality—in short, as something that arises amongst people and groups that are alike—a focus on racial capitalism thus opens up space for a different kind of solidaristic politics, centred on an analysis of how different forms of oppression depend on one another. Racism, sexism, and classism are not separate forms of oppression that sometimes intersect, but an entangled and constitutive part of the capitalist global order. This does not deny the uniqueness and specificity of local struggles; instead, in emphasising their international character, it points to the importance of connecting—but *not* unifying—different struggles, projects, and trajectories into a “many-headed hydra”: a radical internationalism for the 21st century.

I develop these arguments in three sections. In the first section I provide an overview of (white) Marxist critiques of identity politics. Scholars such as David Harvey, Nancy Fraser, and Wendy Brown have insisted on a firm distinction between identity politics and class struggle, whereby they separate anti-capitalist politics from the struggle against white supremacy, patriarchy, settler colonialism, and empire. A materialist reading of the global colour line demonstrates why this separation is problematic: race-making practices are intrinsic to capital accumulation, because racism supplies the precarious and exploitable lives capitalism needs to extract land and labour. In eliding this dynamic, critics of identity politics ultimately take it for granted that there exists a variety of different oppressions that are separate from (and less important than) the workers' struggle. The second section challenges this claim by returning to the original formulation of identity politics as theorised by the Black lesbian feminist organisation the Combahee River Collective (CRC). Anticipating Cedric Robinson's analysis in *Black Marxism*, the CRC showed that a focus on race and gender need not detract attention from class: quite the opposite, a truly anti-capitalist politics *has* to be anti-racist, anti-sexist, and, indeed, internationalist. In the final section I argue that such an analysis opens up space for a different kind of internationalism. Where cosmopolitan perspectives often depict solidarity as a one-way street whereby powerful and privileged

actors extend empathy and charity to silent victims, internationalism thus conceived figures subalterns as agents in a collective struggle against interlocking systems of oppression under racial capitalism.

The Colour Line and the Assembly Line

In the late 1960s, a group of working-class white activists called the Young Patriots formed a class-based, multi-racial coalition with the Black Panther Party in Chicago. The Patriots consisted of poor white migrants from the Appalachian region in West Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky that had come to Chicago with the hope of finding work and a brighter future. The actual Chicago was very different from what they had dreamed of: a city characterised by slums, poverty, racism, unemployment, police violence, housing discrimination, and lack of social services. Confined to the economically deprived Uptown neighbourhood, the Appalachian community struggled to find jobs and often found itself stuck in day labour, hustling, domestic work, and social welfare. In this environment, the Patriots organised against the capitalist system and claimed the white southern's right to self-determination, describing themselves as “hillbilly nationalists.” They chose the Confederate flag as their symbol and had it sewed onto their denim jackets and berets—less an endorsement of white supremacy, which they opposed, and more “a blatant middle finger to the student left”,⁴ which they argued was dominated by middle-class students and their contempt for the white poor. In the 1960s they successfully set up the Rainbow Coalition—the “vanguard of the dispossessed”—together with the Black Panther Party. In addition to the Panthers and the Patriots, the Coalition also included the Puerto Rican street-gang-turned-political-organisation the Young Lords as well as other groups organising poor whites, including Rising Up Angry and Jobs or Income Now (JOIN). Despite “the seeming contradiction of confederate flag waving revolutionaries in deep dialogue about Black Power and Third World Liberation”,⁵ the Coalition successfully established a string of community service programs addressing poor people's immediate concerns, including health, welfare, housing, jobs, drug addiction, and police violence.⁶ As Amy Sonnie and James

4 Amy Sonnie and James Tracy, *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power: Community Organizing in Radical Times* (Melville House, 2011), 75.

5 Sonnie and Tracy, 4.

6 For a more detailed account of the Rainbow Coalition, see Sonnie and Tracy, *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power*. See also the webpage: “The Young Patriots and the Original Rainbow Coalition,” accessed November 26, 2017, <http://www.youngpatriots-rainbowcoalition.org/>.

Tracy recount in *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power*, the Coalition “opened direct links to struggles in communities of color, allowing poor and working-class whites to participate as actors, not just allies, in the struggle for racial and economic justice.”⁷ Kathleen Cleaver, who at the time was one of the leading Panther figures, remembers how

“In a world of racist polarization, we sought solidarity... We organized the Rainbow Coalition, pulled together our allies, including not only the Puerto Rican Young Lords, the youth gang called Black P. Stone Rangers, the Chicano Brown Berets, and the Asian I Wor Kuen (Red Guards), but also the predominantly white Peace and Freedom Party and the Appalachian Young Patriot Party. We posed not only a theoretical but a practical challenge to the way our world was organized. And we were men and women working together.”⁸

Five decades later, the Rainbow Coalition—grounded, as it was, in a understanding of the revolutionary struggle as a specifically cross-racial one—seems unlikely if not utopian. As Sonnie and Tracy point out, “[t]here's a reason West Side Story tells a tale of true love tragically divided. Would anyone believe the plot if the Sharks and the Jets had joined forces to fight the police and open a community health clinic? Popular history gives us so many of these stories that tales of racial unity seem romantic at best, propaganda at worst.”⁹

Why have multi-racial alliances like the Rainbow Coalition come to seem so impossible? The standard answer typically centres on the rise of identity politics and the fracturing of old, working class solidarity. As we saw in chapter 2, since 1968 the Euro-American Left has witnessed an intellectual retreat from the historical materialism of Marx and Marxism, and a philosophical turn towards questions of human rights, the primacy of the individual, and the critique of the political. This transformation also gave rise to new social movements, focused on race, gender, nationality, sexuality, ecology, and other issues not explicitly expressed in the language of class. As Wendy Brown explains,

“Where there was once the Movement, there are now multiple sites and modalities of emancipatory struggle and egalitarian protest. Similarly,

7 Sonnie and Tracy, 4.

8 Quoted in Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, *Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Black Panthers and Their Legacy* (Routledge, 2014), 125.

9 Sonnie and Tracy, *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power*, 7.

where there was once a millenarian, redemptive, or utopian project around which to organize the various strategies of the political present, such projects have splintered politically at the same time that they have been quite thoroughly discredited by cultural and philosophical critique.”¹⁰

Calls for revolutionary social change have, according to Brown, today been “diffused into local, issue-oriented, or identity-based struggles that generally lack a strong alternative vision.”¹¹ In short, identity politics has displaced class struggle, and the colour line has supplanted the assembly line as the central category of political analysis. Brown's argument is echoed by a number of contemporary thinkers, including Nancy Fraser, Todd Gitlin, Adolph Reed, Ellen Meiksins Wood, and Slavoj Žižek. Fraser describes the rise of identity politics as a product of the “renaturalization of capitalism” which, in her view, has come to characterise Leftist discourse since the 1970s. In this climate, where “the Right won the political battle and the Left won the cultural war”,¹² “cultural domination” has increasingly supplanted “exploitation” as the fundamental injustice. The result has been a political imaginary centred on notions of “identity”, “difference”, and “recognition”, and a displacement of the socialist imaginary with its framing of “redistribution” as the central goal of political struggle. As the “politics of difference” overtook the “politics of class”, solidarity across divides—such as that enacted by the Rainbow Coalition—has been rendered increasingly suspicious.

To what extent is this a correct description? Critiques of identity politics are of course not without their merit. In some versions, identity politics has indeed functioned as the handmaiden of neoliberalism—exemplified, perhaps most starkly, by Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, which adopted the language of “privilege” and “intersectionality” to combat the left-wing challenge from Bernie Sanders. And yet, critiques of identity politics all too frequently function to police and gate-keep what counts as class struggle “proper.” As Stuart Hall and his co-authors argued in *Policing the Crisis*, what defines an anti-capitalist movement is not necessarily the issue it mobilises around.¹³ In Hall's famous formulation, “[r]ace is the modality in which class is lived, the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and fought through.”¹⁴ Where Marxist orthodoxy often framed the

10 Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 20.

11 Brown, 20.

12 Rodolfo Torres and Christopher Kyriakides, *Race Defaced: Paradigms of Pessimism, Politics of Possibility* (Stanford University Press, 2012), xi.

13 Asad Haider, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (Verso Books, 2018), 16.

14 Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg (University of

struggle against racism as a mere precursor to the real, unified working-class struggle, Hall argued that it in fact is *through* the experience of race and racialization that some groups come to “comprehend, handle and then begin to resist the exploitation which is an objective feature of their class situation.”¹⁵ As we saw in chapter 3, race-making practices are central—not epiphenomenal—to the accumulation of capital: capitalism in fact relies upon the elaboration, reproduction, and exploitation of racial difference. As Harsha Walia summarises, “[r]ace, class, gender, sexuality, and ability are not derivative of capitalism and colonialism; oppression is foundational to the structuring of capitalism and colonialism.”¹⁶ In reducing struggles around race (and gender) to questions of recognition, critics of identity politics thus conceal what arguably is a much deeper elision within the Marxist “politics of class”: namely, the white masculine identity politics on which it *de facto* depends. In conceiving of the spread of working-class consciousness as the basis for revolutionary struggle, Marxist orthodoxy actually frames solidarity as a problem of identity—and, specifically, of masculine class identity.¹⁷ In other words, it is only by separating race, sex, and gender domination from capitalist domination that Marxism can privilege the (white male) proletariat as the (universal, neutral, and general) revolutionary class of history. As Robinson explains, this means that

“Marxism's internationalism was not global; its materialism was exposed as an insufficient explanator of cultural and social forces; and its economic determinism too often politically compromised freedom struggles beyond or outside of the metropole. For Black radicals, historically and immediately linked to social bases predominantly made of peasants and farmers in the West Indies, or sharecroppers and peons in North America, or forced laborers on colonial plantations in Africa, Marxism appeared distracted from the cruelest and most characteristic manifestations of the world economy. This exposed the inadequacies of Marxism as an apprehension of the world economy, but equally troubling was Marxism's neglect and miscomprehension of the nature and genesis of liberation struggles which already had occurred and surely had yet to appear among these people.”¹⁸

Chicago Press, 1996), 55.

15 Quoted in Helen Davis, *Understanding Stuart Hall* (SAGE, 2004), 117.

16 Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (AK Press, 2014), 191.

17 For a more detailed account of this argument, see Chris Chen, “The Limit Point of Capitalist Equality,” *Endnotes* 3, accessed May 13, 2018, <https://endnotes.org.uk/issues/3/en/chris-chen-the-limit-point-of-capitalist-equality>.

18 Robinson, *Black Marxism*, xxx. For a contemporary formulation, see David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Oxford University Press, 2014). Harvey suggests that race (as well as gender) is an external rather than constitutive part of the logic of capital. In contrast, scholars such as Lisa Lowe and David Roediger have argued that Marxism fails to account “for race in

As Robinson makes clear, Marxism has ultimately been mistaken “for something it is not: a total theory of liberation.”¹⁹

In the end, what critics of identity politics overlook is that the 1980s, and the rise of a neoliberal consensus under Reagan and Thatcher, “was a defeat for the new social movements, just as much as it was for organized labour.”²⁰ Indeed, as Salar Mohandesi explains “[w]hat began as a promise to push beyond some of socialism's limitations to build a richer, more diverse and inclusive socialist politics”²¹ were soon appropriated and watered down by political and economic elites, and subsequently used as a strategy to neutralise radical movements. Forgotten in this process is that the original formulation of identity politics emerged from an analysis of interlocking oppressions under racial capitalism. In the next section I turn to the Black lesbian feminist organisation the Combahee River Collective—who coined the term identity politics—to demonstrate how a materialist reading of the global colour line unravels the interconnected, global dimensions of freedom struggles. In contesting the idea that labour and identity-based struggles are qualitatively different, this opens up space for a different kind of *revolutionary* solidarity. As we shall see, it was precisely such a solidarity that brought the Rainbow Coalition into being.

The Common Cause Is Freedom

The concept of identity politics was first introduced by the Combahee River Collective in their now classic “A Black Feminist Statement” from 1978. Formed in Boston in 1974 as a radical alternative to the National Black Feminist Organisation (NBFO), the CRC operated on the premise that the inclusion of race into the feminist

the making of capitalism”, partly because it of its refusal to recognise that “capital has maximised its profits not through rendering labour abstract but precisely through the social production of difference marked by race, nation, geographical origins and gender.” Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Duke University Press, 1996), 28. See also David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (Verso, 1999) and David Roediger, *Class, Race and Marxism* (Verso Books, 2017).

19 Robin D. G. Kelley, “Introduction,” in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, by Cedric J. Robinson, 2000, 451.

20 Haider, *Mistaken Identity*, 99.

21 Salar Mohandesi, “Identity Crisis,” Viewpoint Magazine, March 16, 2017, <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2017/03/16/identity-crisis/>. As Asad Haider explains, “While the demands of these movements lived on, they grew increasingly detached from the grassroots mass mobilization that could advance the demands as a challenge to the whole system. Enormous progress was made at a cultural level, fundamentally changing our language. But the underlying material structures were spared.” Haider, *Mistaken Identity*, 99.

movement was insufficient to account for the experience of Black women's oppression. In contrast to the NBFO and the white feminist movement, founding members Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, and Demita Frazer openly described themselves as socialists committed to struggling against capitalism. However, “although we are in essential agreement with Marx’s theory as it applied to the very specific economic relationships he analyzed, we know that this analysis must be extended further in order for us to understand our specific economic situation as black women.”²² In particular, Marxist theory was inadequate to explain “our specific economic situation as black women.”²³ Anticipating Robinson's analysis of racial capitalism, the CRC instead sought to formulate a socialist politics which recognised “the real class situation of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers.”²⁴ As the 1978 Statement made clear:

“The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking.”²⁵

Marxism had to be revised in order to account for the simultaneity of racism, class exploitation, imperialist aggression, and gender subordination, because “the liberation of all peoples” necessitates “the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy.”²⁶ Identity politics, in this context, referred not to recognition-seeking struggles or a project of cultural diversity—which is how it is currently understood by critics such as Brown, Fraser, and Harvey. Instead, for the women of the CRC identity politics named the particular politics that emerged from placing their own experience—as Black lesbian women—at the centre of analysis. In Barbara Smith's formulation,

“What we were saying is that we have a right as people who are not just female, who are not solely Black, who are not just lesbians, who are not

22 The Combahee River Collective. As Barbara Smith explains, “the reason Combahee's Black feminism is so powerful is because it's anticapitalist. One would expect Black feminism to be antiracist and opposed to sexism. Anticapitalism is what gives it the sharpness, the edge, the thoroughness, the revolutionary potential.” Quoted in Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Haymarket Books, 2017).

23 The Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement,” 1977, https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf.

24 The Combahee River Collective.

25 The Combahee River Collective.

26 The Combahee River Collective.

just working class, or workers—that we are people who embody all of these identities, and we have a right to build and define political theory and practice based upon that reality... That's what we meant by identity politics. We didn't mean that if you're not the same as us, you're nothing. We were not saying that we didn't care about anybody who wasn't exactly like us.”²⁷

While contemporary critics often dismiss identity politics as divisive and “balkanizing”—in short, as a Tower of Babel—for the members of Combahee it was never exclusionary. Identity politics did not mean that only those who experience oppression can work to overthrow it. The CRC rejected the idea that women should separate from men (as advocated by lesbian separatists at the time) and instead emphasised the importance of building coalitions to expand the fight for equality on multiple fronts. As the Statement made clear: “We feel solidarity with progressive black men and do not advocate the fractionalization that white women who are separatists demand.”²⁸ Rather than a demand for separatism, the CRC thus envisioned identity politics as a way of validating Black women's experience of oppression under racial capitalism, while simultaneously opening up possibilities for connecting their struggle—to the struggles of Black men in the United States, as well as to anti-colonial movements and workers' struggles worldwide. As Keeyanga-Yamahtta Taylor explains, for the Combahee solidarity thus “did not mean subsuming your struggles to help someone else; it was intended to strengthen the political commitments from other groups by getting them to recognize how the different struggles were related to each other and connected under capitalism.”²⁹ Far from a Tower of Babel, identity politics was in fact the very foundation from which solidarity and coalitional politics could be built.

27 As the 1978 statement read, “This focusing on our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression.” The Combahee River Collective.

28 The Combahee River Collective.

29 Taylor, *How We Get Free*, 11. Founding member Demita Frazier elaborates on the importance of coalitions to the work of the CRC: “I never believed that Combahee, or other Black feminist groups I have participated in, should focus only on issues of concern for us as Black women, or that, as lesbian/bisexual women, we should only focus on lesbian issues. It's really important to note that Combahee was instrumental in founding a local battered women's shelter. We worked in coalition with community activists, women and men, lesbians and straight folks. We were very active in the reproductive rights movement, even though, at the time, most of us were lesbians. We found ourselves involved in coalition with the labor movement because we believed in the importance of supporting other groups even if the individuals in that group weren't all feminist. We understood that coalition building was crucial to our own survival.” Quoted in Winifred Breines, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 122.

The women of the CRC are often credited with having laid the foundations for what Kimberlé Crenshaw later would call intersectionality. While there are affinities between these approaches, it is crucial to note that they also differ in important ways. In mainstream discourse, intersectionality is today typically understood as an adding up of independent oppressions; as accounting for race *and* class *and* gender. As Marsha Henry explains, intersectionality is “a way of capturing multiple differences and their effects on individuals.”³⁰ Used to highlight the intersection of “multiple oppressions” as experienced by individuals, the analysis of intersectionality has thus become increasingly delinked from the systemic critique of capitalism. Where the vocabulary of class figures, it is, as Delia Aguilar has argued, “merely designating income, occupation, or lifestyle”, and ultimately “detached from mooring in the social relations of production.”³¹ The concept of intersectionality has thus undergone a transformation: from the CRC's explicitly materialist and systemic critique, in which race and gender were understood as constitutive elements of the inner logic of capital, to the level of discourse and identity—where it is vulnerable to precisely the critique put forward by thinkers such as Brown, Fraser, and Harvey. The contemporary usage of intersectionality thus stands in stark contrast to what the CRC originally had in mind: “We are socialists,” they proclaimed, but “[w]e are not convinced... that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and anti-racist revolution will guarantee our liberation.”³² Hence the original meaning of identity politics: namely, that race, gender, and class oppression are different facets of the *same* system, not separate forms of oppression that sometimes intersect. As Taylor explains, “the CRC statement identified 'class oppression' as central to the experience of Black women... in doing so they helped to distinguish radical Black feminist politics from a developing middle-class orientation in Black politics that was in the ascent in the 1970s.”³³ While later (liberal) theorists of intersectionality have followed the CRC in centre-staging the interlocking nature of multiple forms of oppression, they have often been less interested in how and why these systems of oppression historically came to be articulated together, as well as why they continue to be reproduced together. In contrast, for the women of Combahee the

30 Marsha Henry, “Problematizing Military Masculinity, Intersectionality and Male Vulnerability in Feminist Critical Military Studies,” *Critical Military Studies* 3, no. 2 (May 4, 2017): 186, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2017.1325140>.

31 Delia D. Aguilar et al., “Tracing the Roots of Intersectionality,” *MR Online* (blog), April 12, 2012, <https://mronline.org/2012/04/12/aguilard120412-html/>.

32 The Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement.”

33 Taylor, *How We Get Free*, 9.

simultaneity of oppressions meant that socialism had to be much richer than previously imagined: since capitalism operated through racial and gendered forms of oppression, a socialism which did not centre-stage the struggle against both racism and sexism was impoverished. Accordingly, to focus on Black women was *not* paramount to a rejection of others who also endured economic inequality, as is sometimes suggested by contemporary critics: rather it meant that the struggle for Black women's liberation, by necessity, would destabilise inequality writ large and through that create new possibilities for *everyone*.

In what ways does the Combahee's notion of identity politics help us rethink the problem of solidarity? In highlighting how racial, sexual, and classed oppressions rely on one another in complex ways, the CRC helpfully demonstrates why a focus on race and gender need not detract attention from class: quite the opposite, a truly anti-capitalist politics *has* to be anti-racist, anti-sexist, *and* internationalist. Such a framework—which recognises the global, interconnected character of various freedom struggles—offers a useful corrective to what has come to be known as the “Oppression Olympics”, according to which marginalised groups compete against one another to establish who is most oppressed.³⁴ As Taylor rightly notes, such a perspective “miss how we are connected through oppression—and how those connections should form the basis of solidarity, not a celebration of our lives on the margins.”³⁵ Indeed, a materialist reading of the global colour line—grounded in a global political economic critique of race and gender—points to the importance of addressing anti-Black racism, patriarchy, settler colonialism, imperialism and other interlocking violences *simultaneously*. As Paul Gilroy has argued, the value of such an approach is precisely that it renders “the connection between history and concrete struggles, structure and process, intelligible even in situations where collective actors define themselves and organize as ‘races’, people, maroons, ghost-dancers or slaves rather than as a class.”³⁶ This should not be mistaken for a call to homogenise different forms of oppression; rather it highlights the importance of examining how white supremacy, patriarchy, anti-immigrant xenophobia, and settler colonialism interlock and mutually reinforce one another under racial capitalism. The struggles against empire, white supremacy, settler colonialism, gender subordination, and workers' exploitation are not the same—but they are *interconnected*.

34 The original formulation of Oppression Olympics can be found in Elizabeth Martínez, “Beyond Black/White: The Racisms of Our Time,” *Social Justice* 20, no. 1/2 (51–52) (1993): 22–34.

35 Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Haymarket Books, 2016), 187.

36 Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Routledge, 2013), 24.

It was precisely this insight that guided the Panthers and the Patriots when they established the Rainbow Coalition. In a speech given at the Poor People's Convention in 1968, Peggy Terry of JOIN summarised the political commitment that had driven her organisation to join the Coalition:

“Poor whites are here today... to make ourselves visible to a society whose continued existence depend on the denial of our existence. We are here today united with other races of poor people, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, Indians, and Black people in a common cause. That common cause is freedom!”³⁷

Consequently, while the Rainbow Coalition today might “seem romantic at best, propaganda at worst”, it was rooted in a sophisticated analysis of the racial logic of capitalism. As Asad Haider has shown, the Black Panther Party recognised that “if you talked about racism without talking about capitalism, you weren't talking about getting power in the hands of the people. You were setting up a situation in which the white cop would be replaced by a black cop”—and this, in the end, “was not liberation.”³⁸ The Rainbow Coalition thus emerged as a solution to the problem of how to challenge the international, interlocking oppressions of race, class, empire, and gender. In the next section I explore what this means for the theory and practice of internationalism.

Revolutionary Solidarity and the Politics of Internationalism

In chapter 1 I argued that cosmopolitan theories are rooted in particular conceptions of solidarity: indeed, the problem for cosmopolitan thinkers is precisely one of how to shift from solidarity among “friends” to solidarity with “strangers.” Solidarity thus understood is a question of how to overcome difference. While different cosmopolitans disagree on whether solidarity stems from a common human essence or shared set of experiences, they typically conceive of solidarity as something that arises (or that should arise) amongst people and groups that are alike. As Michael Principe explains, most theorisations of solidarity implicitly agree that “one will be responsible for those with which one has something in common.”³⁹ In short, we stand in solidarity

37 Quoted in Richard Moser, “Radical White Workers During the Last Revolution,” *Counterpunch*, September 12, 2017, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/09/12/radical-white-workers-during-the-last-revolution/>.

38 Haider, *Mistaken Identity*, 18–19.

39 Michael A. Principe, “Solidarity and Responsibility: Conceptual Connections,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 31, no. 2 (2000): 139–45, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0047-2786.00035>.

with those that are “like us.”

In contrast to these perspectives, a materialist reading of the global colour line opens up space for a different kind of solidarity: a *revolutionary* solidarity based on the global, interconnected character of geographically dispersed freedom struggles, rather than on abstract notions of what it means to be human. This is a solidarity which is inherently internationalist in orientation: a solidarity which is made rather than found; historically generated rather than ethically universal; and a doing rather than being. Solidarity thus conceived offers a radical alternative to the (cosmopolitan) idea that solidarity must be anchored in preexisting commonalities, and instead redefines it as a relation forged in political struggle. Where cosmopolitan approaches often depict solidarity as a one-way street whereby powerful and privileged actors extend solidarity to those who suffer, this is a solidarity which is formed from the “ground” up and which ultimately frames subalterns as agents rather than victims. Chandra Mohanty captures the essence of what such a revolutionary solidarity might entail in her *Feminism Without Borders*, where she argues for a coalitional politics grounded in “communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together.”⁴⁰ In contrast to cosmopolitan approaches—which typically conceive of solidarity as something that arises from pre-political, ontological, and ahistorical universalism—this is a solidarity which is “forged on the basis of memories and counter narratives, not on an ahistorical universalism.”⁴¹ This is not a simplistic call for recognising common experiences of oppression and marginalisation, but “an argument for recognizing (concrete, not abstract) ‘common interests’ and the potential bases of cross-national solidarity—a common context of struggle.”⁴² That is, in place of a solidarity that grows out of ethical universals and pre-political identification, such a solidarity is politically and historically generated: a coalitional politics “that has to be worked for, struggled toward—in history.”⁴³ As Sriram Ananth summarises, this means that “the realization of solidarity has to be grounded in, emerge from, and evolve within real-life struggles. It must acknowledge flesh-and-blood people who, despite all their differences, are finding common ground to wage a liberatory struggle.”⁴⁴

40 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders : Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2003), 7.

41 Mohanty, 117. See also David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (Zed Books Ltd., 2012).

42 Mohanty, 143.

43 Mohanty, 116.

44 Sriram Ananth, “Conceptualizing Solidarity and Realizing Struggle: Testing against the Palestinian Call for the Boycott of Israel,” *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 6, no. 2 (2014):

In recent years a number of scholars have sought to recover a variety of such revolutionary or “subaltern solidarities”⁴⁵, ranging from the Bandung spirit and tricontinentalism, to the interactions between the Black radical imagination and the Muslim Third World, to feminist Black internationalism, and the “deep relations” between African and Maori anti-colonial struggles.⁴⁶ Capturing the political and historical character of these solidarities, Vijay Prashad notes how, in the era of anti-colonial and Third World national liberation struggles,

“[u]nity of the people of the Third World came from a political position against colonialism and imperialism, not from any intrinsic cultural or racial commonalities. If you thought against colonialism and stood against imperialism, then you were part of the Third World.”⁴⁷

Solidarity, in these contexts, was organised around the idea of a shared *global* struggle, and entailed a weaving together of revolutionary world-views and radical traditions. In the words of Linda Tabar, “‘international’ was not a pre-determined group” but “something that you became, in the praxis of struggle for a different world and an alternative global order.”⁴⁸

Crucially, the concept of revolutionary solidarity opens up space for a different kind of cosmopolitan theory and practice: namely, for an oppositional or insurgent

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45 Mustapha Kamal Pasha, “The ‘Bandung Impulse’ and International Relations,” in *Postcolonial Theory and International Relations: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Sanjay Seth (Routledge, 2013), 154. See also Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 133 for a formulation of “subterranean solidarity.”

46 Indicatively, see Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America* (U of Minnesota Press, 2012); Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1995* (University of Illinois Press, 2011); Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (UNC Press Books, 2014); Vijay Prashad, *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* (Verso Books, 2013); Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Beacon Press, 2002); Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015); Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Harvard University Press, 2012); Darryl C. Thomas, *The Theory and Practice of Third World Solidarity* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001).

47 Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (ReadHowYouWant.com, 2010), 34. As Arif Dirlik explains, “the idea of the Third World pointed to the necessity of a common politics that derived from a common positioning in the system (rather than some homogeneous essentialized common quality, as is erroneously assumed these days in much postcolonial criticism).” Arif Dirlik, “Rethinking Colonialism: Globalization, Postcolonialism, And The Nation,” *Interventions* 4, no. 3 (January 1, 2002): 433, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801022000013833>.

48 Linda Tabar, “From Third World Internationalism to ‘the Internationals’: The Transformation of Solidarity with Palestine,” *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (February 1, 2017): 418, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1142369>.

internationalism. If different forms of oppression interlock under racial capitalism, then a revolutionary solidarity must necessarily be internationalist in its orientation. Steven Salaita gestures towards precisely such an internationalism in his comparative work on the national liberation movements of Palestinians and Indigenous peoples in North America. He posits “inter/nationalism” as a certain kind of decolonial thought and practice which “at its most basic... demands commitment to mutual liberation based on the proposition that colonial power must be rendered diffuse across multiple hemispheres through reciprocal struggle.”⁴⁹ This is an internationalist theory and practice which aspires to connect—rather than unify—different projects and trajectories in a global process of decolonisation. Boaventura de Sousa Santos work on the anti-globalisation movement and the World Social Forum develops a similar conception. Calling for “a new kind of situated, insurgent, decolonial, intercultural, bottom-up, cosmopolitan culture and politics”⁵⁰, Santos argues that there is an ongoing counter-hegemonic globalisation from below that links together “social groups, networks, initiatives, organisations and movements” struggling against neoliberal globalisation.⁵¹ This, he maintains, represents an internationalism from the South, where the South expresses “not a geographical location but all forms of subordination (economic exploitation; gender, racial and ethnic oppression and so on) associated with neoliberal globalization.”⁵² Such an insurgent or oppositional internationalism must ultimately be understood as an emancipatory project in which oppressed groups “organize their resistance and consolidate political coalitions on the same scale as the one used by the oppressors to victimize them, that is, the global scale.”⁵³ The overall goal here is not the creation of some form of a universal community based on law, rights, and citizenship, as it is for the cosmopolitan thinkers discussed in chapter 1. Instead, and as Bradley

49 Steven Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, 1 edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2016), ix.

50 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Routledge, 2015), 68.

51 Santos insurgent cosmopolitanism seeks to address the needs of those “groups whose aspirations are denied or made invisible by the hegemonic use of the concept but who may be served by an alternative use of it”. “Who needs cosmopolitanism?” he asks. “The answer is simple: whoever is a victim of intolerance and discrimination needs tolerance; whoever is denied basic human dignity needs a community of human beings; whoever is a noncitizen needs world citizenship in any given community or nation. In sum, those socially excluded victims of the hegemonic conceptions of cosmopolitanism need a different type of cosmopolitanism. Subaltern cosmopolitanism is therefore an oppositional variety.” Santos, 135.

52 Boaventura de Sousa Santos and César A. Rodríguez-Garavito, “Law, Politics, and the Subaltern in Counter-Hegemonic Globalization,” in *Law and Globalization from Below: Towards a Cosmopolitan Legality*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos and César A. Rodríguez-Garavito (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 14.

53 Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 135.

Macdonald has argued, it seeks “to articulate localized issues and struggles into an overall internationalism... It sees the necessity of understanding each particular struggle in the world as part of larger drama.”⁵⁴ This does not deny the uniqueness and specificity of local struggles; instead it emphasises their international character and thus points to the importance of connecting—but *not* unifying—different struggles, projects, and trajectories under racial capitalism.

David Theo Goldberg's concept of relational racisms helpfully demonstrates the methodological and political stakes of such an analysis. As Goldberg makes clear, the prevailing paradigm for studying race and racism has historically been comparative. Whether focused on Britain, the US, Canada, Australia, or South Africa, such analyses have typically been framed by methodological nationalism, seeking to reveal similarities and differences between different national expressions of racism. While comparative approaches are not without merit, as Goldberg makes clear, they “actually seem to miss a crucial dimension for comprehending racial significance and racist conditioning in all their complexity”:⁵⁵ namely, the *global* colour line. Taking Gaza and the Warsaw ghetto as an example, he argues that local racisms “are almost always tied to extra- and trans-territorial conceptions and expressions, those that revolve in the wider circles of meaning and practice.”⁵⁶ From a relational perspective, the point is not just that Gaza is *like* (or as some would argue, *unlike*) the Warsaw ghetto but also, and more fundamentally, “that Israeli military officers are on record for explicitly invoking the Warsaw ghetto as a model for thinking about how to regulate the Palestinian refugee camps.”⁵⁷ That is, just as the early 20th century British and German concentration camps in Africa served as models for the Nazi Holocaust, so the Warsaw ghetto provides a model for the occupation of Gaza. Recognising these linkages and interconnected histories and logics, Goldberg argues, can help us understand that “racist arrangements anywhere—in any place—depend, to a smaller or larger degree, on racist practice almost everywhere else.”⁵⁸ The internationalism that grows out of this recognition is thus anchored in an analysis of relational logics—not comparative similarities.

54 Bradley J. Macdonald, *Performing Marx: Contemporary Negotiations of a Living Tradition* (SUNY Press, 2012), 147.

55 David Theo Goldberg, “Racial Comparisons, Relational Racisms: Some Thoughts on Method,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no. 7 (September 1, 2009): 253, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870902999233>.

56 Goldberg, “Racial Comparisons, Relational Racisms.” As Goldberg explains, “local practices that appear homegrown more often than not have a genealogy at least in part not simply limited to the local.”

57 Goldberg, 258.

58 Goldberg, 255.

To conceive of internationalism in this way—as a shared struggle against interlocking oppressions under racial capitalism—is ultimately to enact a shift in focus, from the spectacle of the dying bodies of subaltern others to the structural violence that produces subalternity. As Lawrence Blum reminds us, “there is a difference between solidarity with people suffering from oppression, and solidarity with those actively resisting it.”⁵⁹ From a radical internationalist perspective, the overall goal is not empathy and affective identification with suffering (as it is for many cosmopolitan thinkers) but, rather, collective struggles against systems of oppression. Nikita Dhawan describes this as “a move away from a politics of help that reinforces asymmetrical relations between givers and receivers of solidarity to a subversive listening, wherein global agents are hospitable to the idea of learning from those whose epistemic agency has been historically disregarded.”⁶⁰ In contrast to cosmopolitan approaches that typically foreground the spectacle of the suffering, the poor, and the oppressed, radical internationalism thus shifts the focus to the global material structures that produce “slow death”⁶¹ and suffering. This is not a practice based on “saving” suffering others “out there”, but a relation that grows out of concrete struggles for liberation.

Ken Gonzales-Day's “Erased Lynching” series from 2006 powerfully illustrates what such a shift in focus might look like and mean.⁶² A collection of old postcards and photographs, Gonzales-Day's series explores the history of lynchings in the United States. The pictures depict scenes of mob violence, but without the brutalised bodies in the original images, which have been digitally removed. Left are the crowds of onlookers, laughing and jeering. As Gonzales-Day explains, the purpose of the pictures is to “direct the viewers attention, not upon the lifeless body of lynch victim, but upon the mechanisms of lynching themselves: the crowd, the spectacle, the photographer.”⁶³ By removing the lynched bodies, the pictures refuse to allow violence to define the Black body. Focusing on the perpetrators, they instead raise questions about “the conditions that made these events possible in the first place.”⁶⁴

59 Quoted in Gideon Calder, Magali Bessone, and Federico Zuolo, *How Groups Matter: Challenges of Toleration in Pluralistic Societies* (Routledge, 2014), 176.

60 Dhawan Nikita, “Can Non - Europeans Philosophize? Transnational Literacy and Planetary Ethics in a Global Age,” *Hypatia* 32, no. 3 (May 24, 2017): 502, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12333>.

61 Lauren Berlant, “Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency),” *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 4 (2007): 754, <https://doi.org/10.1086/521568>.

62 The erased lynching series can be viewed on <https://kengonzalesday.com/projects/erased-lynchings/>

63 Quoted in Django Paris, *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry With Youth and Communities* (SAGE, 2013), 241.

64 Marianne Combs, “Artist Finds New Meaning in Images of Lynchings,” accessed September 5, 2017, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2017/01/23/artist-finds-new-meaning-in-images-of-lynchings>.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that a materialist analysis of the global colour line opens up new possibilities for solidarity and emancipatory politics. Groups like the CRC, the Black Panthers, and the Patriots defy any easy distinction between identity politics and class struggle. In linking up the struggles against racism, capitalism, patriarchy, and imperialism, the CRC and the Rainbow Coalition enacted a different kind of solidarity—a “many-headed hydra”—which was based, not on sameness or shared experiences, but on an analysis of interlocking oppressions under racial capitalism. In the same way that Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism* insisted on reading the plantations of Mississippi and the factories of Manchester not as separate systems but as differentiated and complementary parts of the *same* global economy, these groups understood their struggles as mutually constitutive and dialectically entwined.⁶⁵ By reconnecting and aligning different struggles—struggles which might seem distinct and unrelated but which, when viewed through the lens of racial capitalism, turn out to be closely related—they help us re-imagine solidarity and internationalism beyond the “master's tools.”

What, then, does this “many-headed hydra” look like today? In the next three chapters I turn to the violent surplussing and policing of racialized life in a range of contexts—including the migrant crisis in Europe, the movement for Black lives in the United States, the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and the struggle for decolonisation in South Africa—to explore how today's motley crew of “planetary wanderers” are enacting a hydra-like internationalism from below. My analysis specifically highlights four themes: first, the violent surplussing of racialized populations under racial capitalism; second, the growth of the penal and national security state, and how it is designed to police and pacify those rendered surplus by racial capitalism; third, the inherently global dimensions of these violent dynamics; and fourth, how they are being resisted and challenged. As we shall see, in the process of linking together seemingly disparate spaces and histories of revolutionary struggles, the planetary wanderers of today are building a counter-archive of internationalist theory

65 In the words of Huey Newton, “The Black Panther Party is a revolutionary nationalist group and we see a major contradiction between capitalism in this country and our interests. We realize that this country became very rich upon slavery and that slavery is capitalism in the extreme. We have to fight to fight, capitalism and racism. We must destroy both racism and capitalism.” Quoted in Ahmed Shawki, *Black Liberation and Socialism* (Haymarket Books, 2005), 211.

and practice. It is to this archive that we now turn.

CHAPTER 5

The Drowned and the Saved: Circuits of Resistance in the Black Mediterranean

“Political struggles are not fought on the surface of geography but through its very fabrication.”
—Steve Pile¹

“We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us.”
—Popular activist chant

Introduction

On the evening of the 3rd of October 2013, an overcrowded fishing boat carrying more than 500 migrants sank off the coast of the Italian island Lampedusa.² Amongst the 368 found dead was an Eritrean woman who had given birth as she drowned. The divers found her a hundred and fifty feet down in the ocean together with her newborn baby, still attached by the umbilical cord. Her name was Yohanna, the Eritrean word for “congratulations.”³

Over the last 25 years, the turquoise-blue waters of the Mediterranean have been turned into a space of death and suffering, what some describe as “a nautical graveyard”⁴ and a new “frontier of poverty.”⁵ What is typically referred to as the European migrant or refugee “crisis” has provoked numerous responses and activism;

1 Steve Pile, “The Troubled Spaces of Frantz Fanon,” in *Thinking Space*, ed. Mike Crang and N. J. Thrift (Psychology Press, 2000), 273.

2 Sections of this chapter have been published as part of Ida Danewid, “White Innocence in the Black Mediterranean: Hospitality and the Erasure of History,” *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 7 (July 3, 2017): 1674–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1331123>.

3 Yohanna's story is recounted in Frances Stonor Saunders, “Where on Earth Are You?,” *London Review of Books*, March 3, 2016 and Mattathias Schwartz, “Letter from Lampedusa: The Anchor,” *The New Yorker*, April 21, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/04/21/the-anchor>.

4 Liz Fekete, “Death at the Border – Who Is to Blame?” | Institute of Race Relations, accessed August 31, 2016, <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/death-at-the-border-who-is-to-blame/>.

5 Anna Triandafyllidou and Ruby Gropas, *What Is Europe?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 170. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) estimates that between 2000 and 2014, 22,400 migrants died while trying to cross the Mediterranean; in 2015 and the first half of 2016, another 6,600 migrant deaths have so far been reported. See Tara Brian and Frank Laczko, “Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost during Migration” (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2014) and “Missing Migrants and Managing Dead Bodies in the Mediterranean: A Briefing Note” (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2016), <http://iomgmdac.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Mediterranean-Missing-Briefing-Note-June2016.pdf>. IOM's latest figures are available at <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/>

ranging from Ai Wei Wei's life vest installation⁶ to Pope Francis's "day of tears",⁷ from Angela Merkel's "open door" refugee policy⁸ to radical activist campaigns such as "The Dead Are Coming",⁹ from the silent minute in the European parliament¹⁰ to #AlanKurdi.¹¹ Responding to an era shaped by the global war on terror and securitizing discourses that figure the nation-state as a body under threat, a variety of scholars, activists, artists, and politicians have called for empathy and solidarity with the fate of shipwrecked migrants. By recognising and publicly mourning the lives that have been lost, many have sought to "humanise" those who, like Yohanna and her baby, are swallowed by the turquoise-blue waters of "Our Sea."

These expressions of solidarity stand in sharp contrast to populist, far right, anti-immigrant, and xenophobic discourses that portray migrants as a form of danger—to Europe's security, welfare state, women, and so on. And yet, and as I argue in this chapter, these discourses actually share an underlying assumption of migrants as "strangers," "uninvited guests", and "charitable subjects: that is, as people fleeing conditions and conflicts that supposedly originate "elsewhere", outside of Europe. As Ethemcan Turhan and Marco Armiero explain, this framing of Europe as an innocent bystander overlooks that

"migration is often an externality of military interventions, proxy wars, imposition of structural economic reforms, multi-causal destruction of livelihoods both by rapid and slow violence through environmental change, establishment of enclosures, and corporate imperialism that have dispossessed and continues to dispossess people in different corners of the world."¹²

By evading Europe's long, constitutive history of empire, colonial conquest, and racial capitalism, as well as the ways in which (neoliberal) capital continues to depend on the

6 Lauren Said-Moorhouse CNN, "Ai Weiwei Covers Berlin Venue with Refugee Life Vests," CNN, accessed May 3, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/14/arts/ai-weiwei-berlin-life-jackets/index.html>.

7 "Pope Francis: Migrants' Deaths Are Shameful," accessed May 3, 2017, <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-migrants-deaths-are-shameful>.

8 "Angela Merkel Defends Germany's Open-Door Refugee Policy," Financial Times, accessed May 3, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/a60f289a-9362-11e5-bd82-c1fb87bef7af>.

9 raisa2, "'The dead are coming': Germans dig mock graves for migrants who died at sea," Text, The Stream - Al Jazeera English, June 22, 2015, <http://ajmn.tv/7sn5>.

10 "Opening: Minute's Silence for Migrants Drowned off Lampedusa," *European Parliament News*, October 7, 2013, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20131004IPR21512/opening-minute-s-silence-for-migrants-drowned-off-lampedusa>.

11 The twitter feed can be found at: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/Alankurdi>

12 See Ethemcan Turhan and Marco Armiero, "Cutting the Fence, Sabotaging the Border: Migration as a Revolutionary Practice," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 28, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2017.1315245>.

production of vulnerable, deportable, and therefore super-exploitable (non-white) workers, these discourses ultimately contribute to an ideological discourse that turns questions of responsibility, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform into matters of empathy, generosity, and hospitality. The result is a form of “white innocence”¹³ through which the white subject re-constitutes itself as “ethical” and “good”, innocent of its imperialist histories and present complicities. This not only reproduces colonial and patronising fantasies of the white man's burden, but also helps legitimise hegemonic narratives that see Europe as the bastion of democracy, liberty, and universal rights.

What might a different form of solidarity look like—a solidarity that takes seriously the materiality of the global colour line and that challenges, rather than confirms, the idea that Europe constitutes the pinnacle of freedom, democracy, and humanism? To answer this question, in this chapter I examine the political economy of migration, focusing in particular on the links between racial capitalism, imperialism, (neo)colonial dispossession, and global migration. Building on political economic critique of race and racism put forward in the last two chapters, I argue that migration constitutes one of the main contemporary routes through which populations racialized as non-white are rendered surplus under racial capitalism. The creation of a highly expendable, super-exploitable, and moveable workforce—be it slaves, sharecroppers, or coolies—has historically been central to the world capitalist system. Today, under neoliberalism and corporate globalisation,

“a new global immigrant labor supply system has come to replace earlier direct colonial and racial caste controls over labor worldwide. There is a new global working class that labors in the factories, farms, commercial establishments and offices of the global economy—a working class that faces conditions of precariousness, is heavily female, and increasingly [is] based on immigrant labor.”¹⁴

To recognise these historical and contemporary links between race, capital, and migration is not only to challenge hegemonic discourses that present Europe as the bastion of democracy, liberty, and universal rights. As activist groups such as Black Lives Matter UK and Parti des Indigènes de la République have shown, it is also to open up space for a different kind of internationalism and politics of solidarity—a solidarity

13 Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Duke University Press, 2016).

14 William I. Robinson, “Global Capitalism, Immigrant Labor, and the Struggle for Justice,” *Class, Race and Corporate Power* 2, no. 3 (2014): 3.

beyond the “master's tools” and which places the ongoing migrant crisis within a broader historical context of anti-racist and antic-capitalist struggles both within and outside of Europe.

I develop this argument in four parts. In the first section I demonstrate how recent forms of (liberal) pro-refugee activism in Europe have challenged xenophobic discourses that cast migrants as ethically non-recognised subjects—what Judith Butler describes as “ungrievable life.” The second section begins to build a critique of these discourses through a focus on political economy and the historical connections between Europe and the migrants washed up on its shores. Drawing on the concept of the Black Mediterranean, I argue that the contemporary migrant crisis must be understood in the context of Europe's constitutive history of empire, racial capitalism, and colonial conquest. In the third section I argue that the erasure of these connections has enabled recent forms of pro-refugee activism to turn dead migrants into the conduit through which the European Left redeems its *own* humanity and ethical salvation—something that ultimately raises questions around whose humanity is at stake, and for what purposes. In the final section I focus on the creation of alternative forms of solidarity emerging from an analysis of the materiality of the global colour line. Focusing on Black Lives Matter UK and Parti des Indigènes de la République, I show how some activist groups connect the mass deaths of migrants during crossings of the Mediterranean to anti-racist and anti-capitalist struggles *within* Europe. By placing the ongoing migrant crisis within a broader analysis of empire, racial capitalism, labour exploitation, and (neo)colonialism, these groups open up space for new forms of solidarity: for an internationalism and “many-headed hydra” that subverts the national “we” and that brings together migrants, refugees, workers, and European minorities (Blacks, Muslims, women, Roma, Sami, and so on) in a shared struggle against the violent surplussing of life under racial capitalism.

Borders and the Politics of Solidarity

In June 2015, the German activist collective the Center for Political Beauty, CPB, staged a mass funeral in Berlin to honour the thousand of migrants that have died trying to cross the Mediterranean. With the permission of relatives, bodies of migrants buried at the periphery of Europe were exhumed and transported to Berlin, where they

were to be given a “dignified burial” before the eyes of their “bureaucratic murderers.”¹⁵ “The German government’s worst nightmare is coming true”, explained the group: “Over the next few days, refugees who drowned or starved to death at Europe’s external borders on their way to a new life, will be brought to Berlin. The aim is to tear down the walls surrounding Europe’s sense of compassion.”¹⁶ Inviting the residents of Berlin to join them in commemorating the victims of “Europe’s aggressively sealed-off borders”,¹⁷ the group drew together thousands of protestors who together marched towards the vast grass lawn between the Chancellery and the German Parliament, where they dug holes and left behind “a mass graveyard at the heart of a leading bourgeois democracy.”¹⁸

Like many other activist groups, the CPB contests the hegemonic framing of the migrant crisis as a distinctively humanitarian emergency. The European border regime, they argue, has converted the Mediterranean into a mass graveyard. As William Walters explains, the increased securitization and militarization of the borders of the global North has been negotiated with the emergence of humanitarian aid and services located in border regions; “[i]f certain border zones are becoming spaces of humanitarian engagement, this is only because border crossing has been made, for certain segments of the world’s migratory population, into a matter of life and death.”¹⁹ Consequently, while migrants are typically referred to as “fatalities”²⁰—as victims of bad weather conditions, substandard vessels, and inadequate food and water supplies—this obfuscates that the Mediterranean need not be the main route of travel for migrants. Rather, and as Polly Pallister-Wilkins points out, it becomes the only viable means of transportation through a combination of EU border policies that deny people the possibility to fly and that closes off land borders, such as restrictive visa policies, advanced surveillance technology, naval patrols, armed guards and guard dogs, and “the time honoured tradition of fencing.”²¹ Before the European Union was formed and Schengen visas

15 “Art Collective Buries Migrants in Berlin,” artnet News, June 18, 2015, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/art-collective-bury-dead-migrants-berlin-308975>.

16 The statement is available at <http://politicalbeauty.com/dead.html>

17 Ibid.

18 Alice von Bieberstein and Erdem Evren, “From Aggressive Humanism to Improper Mourning: Burying the Victims of Europe’s Border Regime in Berlin,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (October 4, 2016): 454.

19 Walters, “Foucault and Frontiers: Notes on the Birth of the Humanitarian Border,” 147.

20 Brian and Laczko, “Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost during Migration,” 11.

21 Polly Pallister-Wilkins, “There’s A Focus On The Boats Because The Sea Is Sexier Than The Land: A Reflection on the Centrality of the Boats in the Recent ‘Migration Crisis,’” *The Disorder of Things* (blog), December 9, 2015, <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2015/12/09/theres-a-focus-on-the-boats-because-the-sea-is-sexier-than-the-land-a-reflection-on-the-centrality-of-the-boats-in-the-recent-migration-crisis/>.

introduced, North Africans could travel freely back and forth to work in Europe or go on holiday. The signing of the Schengen accords in 1991 rendered these crossings illegal and also more dangerous, leading to the first of many recorded deaths along the Strait of Gibraltar.²² When Spain began installing sophisticated border control systems, migrants were forced to resort to smuggling and more dangerous sea routes to reach Europe.

While the CPB's burial of deceased migrants has received mixed responses—some have called it an act of “political pornography”,²³ others have hailed it as an attempt to “transform refugees into people”²⁴—a variety of actors have followed the group in framing their calls for empathy, hospitality, and the right to asylum through the rhetoric and iconography of loss and mourning. In 2008 Mimmo Paladino's memorial sculpture *Porta d'Europa/Gateway to Europe* was built on Lampedusa to commemorate the migrants who have drowned while trying to reach Europe.²⁵ Shaped as an open door facing the sea, the sculpture seeks to bring to memory those who, in Butler's terminology, are ungrievable; those who, “not conceivable as lives within certain epistemological frames [...] are never lived nor lost in the full sense.”²⁶ In 2013, after a shipwreck off Lampedusa caused the death of 368 migrants, the European parliament observed a minute of silence, President Martin Schultz later explaining that he had spent the minute imagining “the screams of children seeing their parents drown, of parents unable to save their children.”²⁷ Pope Francis condemned the “globalization of indifference” and declared “a day of tears”, while the Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta promised posthumous citizenship and a state funeral for the victims.²⁸ More recently, activist organisations such as Boats4People, TracesBack, and the Italian feminist collective 2511 have held public commemorations for Europe's migrant dead, demanding the right to have the dead identified and properly buried, and for relatives to

22 Miriam Ticktin, “The Problem with Humanitarian Borders,” *Public Seminar* (blog), accessed September 2, 2016, <http://www.publicseminar.org/2015/09/the-problem-with-humanitarian-borders/>.

23 “Creative Activism in Berlin on the Refugee Crisis: ‘The Dead Are Coming’ - Qantara.de,” Qantara.de - Dialogue with the Islamic World, accessed March 22, 2017, <https://en.qantara.de/content/creative-activism-in-berlin-on-the-refugee-crisis-the-dead-are-coming>.

24 Berliner Zeitung, quoted on <http://politicalbeauty.com/dead.html>

25 SPIEGEL ONLINE, Hamburg Germany, “Africans Remembered: A Memorial for Europe's Lost Migrants - SPIEGEL ONLINE - International,” SPIEGEL ONLINE, accessed January 9, 2017, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/africans-remembered-a-memorial-for-europe-s-lost-migrants-a-560218.html>.

26 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010), 1.

27 “Opening: Minute's Silence for Migrants Drowned off Lampedusa.”

28 Tom Kington, “Lampedusa Shipwreck: Italy to Hold State Funeral for Drowned Migrants,” *The Guardian*, October 9, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/09/lampedusa-shipwreck-italy-state-funeral-migrants>.

reclaim the bodies and personal belongings of the dead.²⁹

A recent special issue on “Borders and the Politics of Mourning” links these interventions to Judith Butler’s ethics of grieving ungrievable life—which we encountered in chapter 1—and explores the political force of public grief for strangers (in this case, migrants).³⁰ Mourning, the contributors argue, enables “new affective and political grammars in response to suffering, injustice and death.”³¹ Pro-refugee groups such as the CPB are praised for asserting “a politics of mourning that disrupts the script of nationalist kinship”,³² and for scandalizing what makes migrant deaths possible in the first place. Grief for unknown others—for strangers—is here understood as offering a radical challenge to the xenophobia and white nationalism that underwrite the necropolitical logic of the European border regime. Nonetheless, when viewed closely these calls for rescue, welcome, and hospitality turn out to confirm rather than disturb colonial-capitalist relations of power. In the next section I show how a materialist reading of the global colour line disrupts these hegemonic narratives. As we shall see, in seeking to extend “grief and care to the dead stranger”³³ these left-liberal interventions contribute to an ideological formation that disconnects connected histories and divorces the contemporary migrant crisis from Europe’s long and ongoing history of empire, racial capitalism, and colonial conquest.

The Black Mediterranean: Racial Capitalism and the Political Economy of Migration

The term the “Black Mediterranean” has recently started to surface amongst academics, artists, and activists to describe the history of racial subordination in the Mediterranean region.³⁴ Inspired by Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic*, the Black

29 Kim Rygiel, “In Life Through Death: Transgressive Citizenship at the Border,” in *Routledge Handbook of Global Citizenship Studies*, ed. Engin Isin and Peter Nyers (Routledge, 2014).

30 See in particular Alexandra Délano Alonso and Benjamin Nienass, “Introduction: Borders and the Politics of Mourning,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (October 4, 2016): xix – xxxi and Bieberstein and Evren, “From Aggressive Humanism to Improper Mourning.” See also Maurice Stierl, “Contestations in Death – the Role of Grief in Migration Struggles,” *Citizenship Studies* 20, no. 2 (February 17, 2016): 173–91, doi:10.1080/13621025.2015.1132571 and Aleksandra Lewicki, “‘The Dead Are Coming’: Acts of Citizenship at Europe’s Borders,” *Citizenship Studies* 0, no. 0 (November 3, 2016): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2016.1252717>.

31 Miriam Ticktin, “Thinking Beyond Humanitarian Borders,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (October 4, 2016): 256.

32 Bieberstein and Evren, “From Aggressive Humanism to Improper Mourning,” 461.

33 Bieberstein and Evren, 461.

34 The term “Black Mediterranean” was first coined by Alessandra di Maio, see Alessandra di Maio, “The Mediterranean, or Where Africa Does (Not) Meet Italy: Andrea Segre’s *A Sud Di Lampedusa*,” in *The Cinemas of Italian Migration: European and Transatlantic Narratives*, ed. Sabine Schrader and Daniel Winkler (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

Mediterranean invites us to place the contemporary migrant crisis in the context of Europe's constitutive history of empire, racial capitalism, and colonial conquest. As Khalil Saucier and Tryon P. Woods explain, the Mediterranean “has been an *ongoing* crisis for black people for the better part of the past and present millenniums.”³⁵ As we saw in chapter 3, there was never such a thing as European modernity without slavery, and “the history of Manchester never happened without the history of Mississippi.”³⁶ While modernity typically is understood as an exclusively European phenomenon—as a product of the European Renaissance and Enlightenment—in reality “modernity appears when Europe affirms itself as the ‘center’ of a *World* History that it inaugurates.”³⁷ Colonial conquest and transatlantic slavery not only contributed to the growth of industrial capitalism in Western Europe³⁸ but also, and importantly, provided the condition of possibility for the formation of Enlightenment thought. The very idea of Europe emerged through a process of differentiation from the “periphery” that surrounds it; hence, and as Édouard Glissant has argued, Europe is not a *place* but a *project*.³⁹

Viewed through the lens of the Black Mediterranean, the contemporary migrant crisis is not a moment of exception or discrete event in time, but a late consequence of Europe's ongoing encounter with the world that it created through more than five hundred years of empire, colonial conquest, and racial capitalism.⁴⁰ As Saucier makes clear, what we are witnessing today is “a new declination of an older repressed issue” that “has its roots in Mediterranean racial slavery, Enlightenment thought (i.e. humanism that has relied on the provision of a dehumanized other), the colonial North-South relationship, its colonial legacy, as well as in its fascist and imperial worldview.”⁴¹

35 “Slavery’s Afterlife in the Euro-Mediterranean Basin,” openDemocracy, June 18, 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/tryon-p-woods-p-khalil-saucier/slavery%E2%80%99s-afterlife-in-euromediterranean-basin>.

36 Walter Johnson, “To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism, and Justice,” Text, Boston Review, October 19, 2016, <https://bostonreview.net/race/walter-johnson-slavery-human-rights-racial-capitalism>.

37 Enrique Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures),” *Boundary 2* 20, no. 3 (1993): 65, <https://doi.org/10.2307/303341>.

38 See Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Fahamu/Pambazuka, 2012).

39 Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (University Press of Virginia, 1989).

40 P. Khalil Saucier and Tryon P. Woods, “Ex Aqua: The Mediterranean Basin, Africans on the Move, and the Politics of Policing,” *Theoria* 61, no. 141 (December 1, 2014): 55–75, <https://doi.org/10.3167/th.2014.6114104>; Broeck, “Commentary (In Response to Michel Feith).” See also Reece Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* (Verso, 2016); Lucy Mayblin, *Asylum After Empire: Colonial Legacies in the Politics of Asylum Seeking* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017).

41 Broeck, “Commentary (In Response to Michel Feith),” 33. See also Nicholas De Genova, “The ‘migrant Crisis’ as Racial Crisis: Do Black Lives Matter in Europe?,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 0, no. 0 (August 21, 2017): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1361543>.

The philosophical disappearance of this history has served as a bedrock for contemporary discourses of migration, solidifying the belief that the ongoing crisis originates “elsewhere”, outside of Europe—and that Europe, as a result, is an innocent bystander.⁴² Indeed, in Western media and wider political discourse, the migrant crisis is often discussed as the byproduct of the war in Syria and conflicts across North Africa. The International Commission for Missing Persons, for example, maintains that “There is no mystery as to why more and more people are following what is now the world’s most dangerous migration route—and why so many are dying in the attempt. Fighting in Syria, Iraq, Libya and parts of sub-Saharan Africa, including Congo and Chad, has caused millions to seek asylum, first in neighbouring countries and then in Europe.”⁴³ The *New York Times* similarly notes that “The roots of this catastrophe lie in crises the European Union cannot solve alone: war in Syria and Iraq, chaos in Libya, destitution and brutal regimes in Africa.”⁴⁴ While it is true that the immediate cause of European migration is the breakdown of authority and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, this framing overlooks how Europe has been implicated—economically, militarily, and politically—in creating these violent conditions. A recent work by David Miller is notable in this regard, starting, as it does, from the premise that migrants are “Strangers in Our Midst”⁴⁵, as indicated by its title. In his latest book, Zygmunt Bauman similarly assumes that migrants are “Strangers at Our Door.” Like Miller, he takes it as a given that Europe is external to the origins of the “crisis”; “one cannot help”, he writes, “but notice that the massive and sudden appearance of strangers on our streets neither has been caused by *us* nor is under *our* control. No one consulted us; no one asked our agreement.”⁴⁶ With such a framing, Miller and Bauman both occlude the broader question of Europe’s responsibility in creating and upholding a difficult or impossible living situation in refugee-producing countries. After all, the majority of migrants seeking asylum in Europe are coming from countries that until recently were under

42 For an example, see Zygmunt Bauman, *Strangers at Our Door* (John Wiley & Sons, 2016); David Miller, *Strangers in Our Midst* (Harvard University Press, 2016).

43 “Missing Persons and Mediterranean Migration,” *International Commission for Missing Persons*, April 3, 2015, <http://www.icmp.int/news/missing-persons-and-mediterranean-migration/>.

44 The Editorial Board, “Europe Must Reform Its Deadly Asylum Policies,” *The New York Times*, August 31, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/01/opinion/europe-must-reform-its-deadly-asylum-policies.html>. The *Washington Post* similarly notes that Europe “can’t be expected to solve on its own a problem that is originating in Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya and—above all—Syria.” Editorial Board, “A Refugee Crisis of Historic Scope,” *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-refugee-crisis-of-historic-scope/2015/08/29/3cc62592-4d9d-11e5-902f-39e9219e574b_story.html?utm_term=.afecaa65161f.

45 Miller, *Strangers in Our Midst*.

46 Bauman, *Strangers at Our Door*, 15.

colonial rule. Libya and Eritrea were Italian colonies until 1947; Somalia was ruled by Italy and Britain until 1960; Syria was a French protectorate under the Mandate System until 1946; Britain invaded and occupied Afghanistan three times until formal independence in 1919. From the days of colonial conquest and genocide, to the economic exploitation under the Mandate System, and recent years' interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, any serious consideration of what lies behind the surge of migrants into Europe must account for this colonial history and the way in which it continues to structure the present. As Gurminder Bhambra makes clear, "Europe's relatively high standard of living and social infrastructure have not been established or maintained separate from either the labour and wealth of others, or the creation of misery elsewhere."⁴⁷ In fact, and as Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson have shown, the origins of the EU are inextricably bound up with imperial politics and "the perceived necessity to preserve and prolong the colonial system."⁴⁸ From the beginning of the Pan-European movement in the 1920s to its institutionalisation in the European Economic Community (EEC), European integration was inextricably bound up with the question of Europe's continued dominance over Africa; indeed, "a unification of Europe and a unified European effort to colonize Africa were two processes that presupposed one another."⁴⁹ The 2008 agreement between Italy and Libya, in which Colonel Gaddafi agreed to help curb migration flows in return for colonial reparations, is but a recent example of how the historical reality of colonialism continues to pattern the present.

A focus on racial capitalism and the *materiality* of the global colour line sheds new light on these processes. Two aspects in particular are worth highlighting. First, and against those who insist on a neat separation between "genuine" refugees and "economic migrants", it is worth remembering that the contemporary surge in migration is closely linked to the globalisation of neoliberal capital and labour stratifications in the world economy. As Fran Cetti explains, global disparities in income levels, health, education, and life expectancy

47 Gurminder Bhambra, "Europe Won't Resolve the 'migrant Crisis' until It Faces Its Own Past," *The Conversation* (blog), September 1, 2015, <http://theconversation.com/europe-wont-resolve-the-migrant-crisis-until-it-faces-its-own-past-46555>. As Reece Jones explains, what the European Left and Right both "miss is that it is not simply a migration crisis in Europe, but also a crisis created by Europe." Reece Jones, "Europe's Migration Crisis, or Open Borders as Reparations," Versobooks.com, accessed December 10, 2017, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2900-europe-s-migration-crisis-or-open-borders-as-reparations>.

48 Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, "Bringing Africa as a 'Dowry to Europe,'" *Interventions* 13, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 461, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2011.597600>. See also Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

49 Hansen and Jonsson, "Bringing Africa as a 'Dowry to Europe.'"

“have soared over the last thirty years of neoliberal policies, reaching a point today when they have never been higher. Poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunity have been entrenched in [developing] countries by decades of debt 'restructuring' imposed by Western states and financial institutions. The collapse of local economies and of formal and informal systems of survival in many countries in the Global South, and the unrelenting rise in rural disposessions and urban unemployment, generate and are compounded by conflict and insecurity.”⁵⁰

Since the 1970s the forceful integration of Asia, Africa, and Latin America into the world economy has driven millions of poor peasants off their land and into urban peripheries—with some reaching as far as the metropolises of Europe and North America.⁵¹ Accumulation, dispossession, and migration must ultimately be analysed and understood through a unified framework. As Hannah Cross explains, in the neoliberal present

“people are thrown out of the global economy—discarded and sometimes reincorporated. Therefore, there are 'wasted lives' (Bauman 2004), people who are left behind by 'modernisation' and become unemployed, unpaid, imprisoned, destitute, lost at sea or perishing in the desert.”⁵²

In other words, the violent displacement of millions of people in the global South is not random or coincidental but a result of the forceful appropriation of land and resources in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; “the dual processes of displacement and migration are *manufactured* through the specific trajectories of colonialism and capitalism.”⁵³

50 Fran Cetti, “Fortress Europe: The War against Migrants,” *International Socialism: A Quarterly Review of Socialist Theory* 148 (2015).

51 Structural adjustment programmes and public-sector downsizing imposed on the global South have, as Mike Davis point out in *Planet of Slums*, “been an inevitable recipe for the mass production of slums” by forcefully incorporating the subsistence peasantries in Asia and Africa into the world market. Struggling to compete with large-scale agroindustries, millions of farmers were forced from their land and driven into the cities to find work, if at all, in the informal sector. UN-Habitat similarly concludes that “the collapse of formal urban employment in the developing world and the rise of the informal sector is... a direct function of liberalization... Urban poverty has been increasing in most countries subject to structural adjustment programs.” See Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (Verso, 2007); United Nations Human Settlements Programme, *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements, 2003* (Earthscan Publications, 2003), 40.

52 Hannah Cross, “Labour and Underdevelopment? Migration, Dispossession and Accumulation in West Africa and Europe,” *Review of African Political Economy* 40, no. 136 (June 1, 2013): 215, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2013.794727>.

53 Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (AK Press, 2014), 44. As Walia explains, it is imperative that we interrogate “the role of Western imperialism in dispossessing communities in order to secure land and resources for state and capitalist interests, as well as the deliberately limited inclusion of

Second, and as we saw in chapter 3, the rise of global capitalism has historically been linked to the production of unwaged and less-than-free labour, such as chattel slavery, racialized indentured servitude, convict leasing, and debt peonage. As William I. Robinson explains, “migration/immigration has thus been central to the creation of the world capitalist system.”⁵⁴ In the neoliberal present, these forms of direct, colonial control over the global labour supply have been replaced, in part, by the creation of “immigrant labor.” Indeed, despite widespread anti-immigrant rhetoric throughout the global North, neither the state nor capital have an interest in closing down the border to all migrants: the goal is not to *prevent* migration but to *control* and *police* it, locking migrants into a state of permanent precarity, vulnerability, and super-exploitability. As David McNally notes, “it’s not that global business does not want immigrant labor to the West. It simply wants this labor on its own terms: frightened, oppressed, vulnerable.”⁵⁵ Xenophobic discourses and the criminalisation of undocumented migration enable a division of the global working class into “immigrants” and “citizens.” Migrants are thus constituted as a highly precarious, hyper-exploitable, and expendable work force; what Peter Nyers refers to as the “deportspora.”⁵⁶ What is at stake is the production of “a subordinate reserve army of deportable ‘foreign’ labour, always-already within the space of the nation-state, readily available for deployment as the inevitably over-employed working poor.”⁵⁷ The creation of such a super-exploited, hyper-surveilled, and expendable labour pool is central to racial capitalism and the global political economy in so far as it places downward pressure on wages everywhere and disciplines all workers—Germany’s 1 euro/hr job scheme is a case in point.⁵⁸ As Robinson elaborates,

migrant bodies into Western states through processes of criminalization and racialization that justify the commodification of their labour.” Walia, 39.

54 Robinson, “Global Capitalism, Immigrant Labor, and the Struggle for Justice,” 2.

55 David McNally, quoted in Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, 70.

56 Peter Nyers, “Abject Cosmopolitanism: The Politics of Protection in the Anti-Deportation Movement,” *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 6 (2003): 1070. As William Robinson explains, “The transnational circulation of capital and the disruption and deprivation it causes, in turn, generates the transnational circulation of labour. In other words, global capitalism creates immigrant workers... In a sense, this must be seen as a coerced or forced migration, since global capitalism exerts a structural violence over whole populations and makes it impossible for them to survive in their homeland.” William Robinson, “Globalization and the Struggle for Immigrant Rights in the United States,” *ZNet* (blog), March 10, 2007, <https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/globalization-and-the-struggle-for-immigrant-rights-in-the-united-states-by-william-robinson/>. See also Hannah Cross, *Migrants, Borders and Global Capitalism: West African Labour Mobility and EU Borders* (Routledge, 2013); Nicholas De Genova, “Spectacles of Migrant ‘illegality’: The Scene of Exclusion, the Obscene of Inclusion,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 7 (July 1, 2013): 1180–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.783710>; Angela Mitropoulos and Matthew Kiem, “Cross-Border Operations,” *The New Inquiry* (blog), November 18, 2015, <https://thenewinquiry.com/cross-border-operations/>.

57 Genova, “Spectacles of Migrant ‘illegality,’” 1190.

58 “Germany Puts Refugees to Work ... for One Euro,” *The Local*, May 16, 2016,

“Immigrant labor is extremely profitable for the transnational corporate economy in a double sense. First, it is labor that is highly vulnerable, forced to exist semi underground, and deportable, and therefore super-exploitable. Second, the criminalization of undocumented migrants and the militarization of their control not only reproduce these conditions of vulnerability but also in themselves generate vast new opportunities for accumulation. The private immigrant detention complex is a boom industry.”⁵⁹

In light of this, while activist groups such as the CPB have been effective in drawing attention to the “death worlds” that underlie and condition contemporary Europe, their calls for hospitality, empathy, and affective identification with the fate of migrants ultimately reproduce, rather than challenge, dominant interpretations that portray Europe as an innocent bystander. In framing the migrant crisis as a problem of inhumane Frontex policies and a society that turns a blind eye to suffering, these interventions do little to challenge established interpretations that cast migrants as “uninvited guests”, “charitable subjects”, and “strangers at our door.”⁶⁰ This not only obscures Europe's role in having created the conditions which, in part, have set in motion the migration of today; as Broeck argues, it also reproduces dominant interpretations that see Europe as the haven of democracy, liberty, and universal rights, as opposed to “a colonialist product which guards its comparative wealth and guarantees of freedom carefully, sheltered by broad mass approval of its hegemonic white citizenry, and by the support of its intellectual elites.”⁶¹ Put differently, by divorcing the ongoing crisis from Europe's long history of empire and racial capitalism, liberal pro-refugee activism often end up depicting contemporary manifestations of racism and white nationalism as exceptions to normality; as anachronisms, pathologies, and individual attitudes—rather than as constitutive elements of European history, culture, identity, and macroeconomics.⁶² As Nicholas De Genova explains, this reduces racism to little more than a politics of discriminatory hostility towards difference. A discussion emptied of

<https://www.thelocal.de/20160516/germany-puts-refugees-to-work-for-one-euro>.

59 Robinson, “Global Capitalism, Immigrant Labor, and the Struggle for Justice,” 9.

60 Amongst others, see Bauman, *Strangers at Our Door* and Miller, *Strangers in Our Midst*.

61 Broeck, “Commentary (In Response to Michel Feith),” 25.

62 As Alana Lentin makes clear, Europe's contemporary exclusionary practices must be seen as consistent and contiguous. Indeed, “the fact that none of the arguments that are constitutive of the case for closing the borders, deporting the undesirables, enforcing integration, or criminalising minority cultural practices are set in the politico-historical context out of which they emerge is striking.” Alana Lentin, “Postracial Silences: The Othering of Race in Europe,” in *Racism and Sociology*, ed. Wulf D. Hund and Alana Lentin (LIT Verlag Münster, 2014), 74.

historical and materialist baggage, this forsakes “an analysis of the distinctively European colonial legacies that literally produced race as a socio-political category of distinction and discrimination in the first place.”⁶³ In other words, while groups such as the CPB *do* offer critiques of racism and populist nationalisms, they fail to situate these critiques within a historical and materialist context that recognises the centrality of race to European capitalist modernity. As De Genova asks: “If migrant lives do arguably matter in Europe, why is it so persistently and perniciously difficult to recognize them as Black lives?”⁶⁴ These discourses not only evade the question what Michael Omi and Howard Winant call “racial formation”, namely, the historical, political, and economic processes through which racial categories are brought into being. As we shall see next, they also enable Europe to continue to see itself as the pinnacle of freedom, democracy, humanism—and, indeed, anti-racism.

White Innocence

In the previous section I argued that the majority of left-liberal responses to the ongoing crisis in the Mediterranean have contributed to an ideological formation that removes from view the interconnected, material histories that link Europe and the migrants washed up on its shores. By foregrounding the spectacle of death and suffering—emblematised by the circulation of the picture of 3-year old Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi, lying dead and alone on a beach in Bodrum, Turkey—these discourses call on Europeans to open their hearts, and to feel compassion and empathy with the suffering of migrants. As we shall see, this focus on bodies in pain not only decontextualises and dehistoricises the ongoing crisis: it also contributes to the construction of a particular cultural narrative—of European goodness, humanity, and anti-racism. If there exists a link between mourning and the mattering of human life, as Butler suggests, then this raises questions around whose humanity is at stake and, indeed for what purpose.

Sarah Ahmed's work on stranger fetishism offers a good starting point for thinking about these issues. In *Strange Encounters*, she explores how colonial amnesia and the erasure of connected histories lead to the objectification of the stranger, that is, to a “cutting off” of figures from the social and material relations which overdetermine

63 Genova, “The ‘migrant Crisis’ as Racial Crisis,” 5. As he notes, it is striking that although the risks associated with crossing the Mediterranean are disproportionately inflicted on migrant and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa “the brute *racial* fact of the deadly European border regime is seldom acknowledged.”

64 Genova, 3.

their existence.”⁶⁵ This is a move that ontologises the stranger, and that turns him or her “into something that simply *is*.” Ahmed argues that this is a logic that is shared by both anti-immigrant and xenophobic policies, *and* liberal and multicultural discourses that welcome strangers. Indeed, while liberal and multicultural discourses challenge representations that frame the stranger as a source of danger, they take for granted “the stranger’s status as a figure that contains or *has* meaning.”⁶⁶ The stranger is here turned into a reminder of the difference, relationality, and vulnerability that is common to all of us—as Bülent Diken argues, “with the stranger, we find ourselves.”⁶⁷ Uncovering the self-serving motives that underpin multicultural calls for welcoming the alien stranger, Ahmed notes how

“the alien is a source of fascination and desire: making friends with aliens, eating with aliens, or even eating one (up), might enable us to transcend the very limits and frailties of an all-too-human form. Or, by allowing some aliens to co-exist “with us”, we might expand our community: we might prove our advancement into or beyond the human; we might demonstrate our willingness to accept difference and to make it our own. Being hospitable to aliens might, in this way, allow us to become human.”⁶⁸

In her trilogy on national sentimentality, Lauren Berlant raises similar questions about the limits of liberal and multicultural discourses of inclusion. Her argument centres on how the language of emotions and the personal increasingly has come to replace politics and responsibility. She describes this as a form of sentimental politics that operates by burning the pain of excluded others “into the conscience of classically privileged [...] subjects” in order to make them “feel the pain [...] as their pain.”⁶⁹ Berlant argues that this focus on the wounds, pain, and suffering of others works to turn political problems into an affective matter to be solved through proper feeling, equating structural change with feeling good. Sentimentality, she argues, must therefore be understood as a political project launched on behalf of the beneficiaries of social injustice, as a “defensive response by people who identify with privilege yet fear they will be exposed as immoral by their tacit sanction of a particular structural violence that

65 Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (Routledge, 2000), 5.

66 Ahmed, 4.

67 Bülent Diken, *Strangers, Ambivalence and Social Theory* (Ashgate, 1998), 334.

68 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 2.

69 Lauren Berlant, “The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics,” in *Cultural Pluralism, Identity Politics, and the Law*, ed. Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns (University of Michigan Press, 2001), 53.

benefits them.”⁷⁰ As Ahmed reminds us, such “cannibalisation of the other masquerading as care”⁷¹ is made possible by historical amnesia and the erasure of history, because only by obscuring the privilege obtained through colonial conquest, genocide, and racial subordination can the white subject present itself as empathetic, caring, and good.

Applying Ahmed and Berlant's arguments to the Mediterranean crisis, it becomes possible to see how pro-refugee appeals to affect, liberal hospitality, and multiculturalism ultimately function as continuations of, rather than breaks with, the key premises of the populist, far right, anti-immigrant, xenophobic, and racist political parties they supposedly seek to challenge. While many of the pro-refugee groups and activists discussed above challenge the xenophobic discourses that present migrants as a form of danger (to Europe's security, welfare state, women, and so on), they rely on a similar fetishising logic. In seeking to extend “grief and care to the dead stranger”,⁷² these interventions not only transform the migrant into a predetermined universalised figure in need of Europe's help and hospitality: they also reproduce a narrative of European goodness and benevolence. As Saucier points out, this kind of activism might ultimately not be about migrants at all but, rather, “about constructing a new European citizen” by highlighting the difference between “good whiteness” (tolerant, multicultural, liberal) and “bad whiteness” (fascist, white nationalist). Dead migrants, he argues, here function as the conduit through which a more positive, cosmopolitan, and empathetic European identity can be created, one that supposedly is attuned to the suffering of all of humankind, but which in reality is concerned with saving Europe for itself.⁷³

Leftist philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek's commitment to a culturalist Europeanism can be understood in precisely this vein. While Žižek is critical of anti-immigrant discourses and committed to a policy of open borders, he calls on the Left to “embrace its radical Western roots”:

“Europe needs to be open to refugees, but we have to be clear they are in

70 Berlant, 83–4.

71 Quoted in Clare Hemmings, “Affective Solidarity: Feminist Reflexivity and Political Transformation,” *Feminist Theory* 13, no. 2 (2012): 152, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700112442643>.

72 Bieberstein and Evren, “From Aggressive Humanism to Improper Mourning,” 461.

73 See Broeck and Saucier, “A Dialogue: On European Borders, Black Movement, and the History of Social Death.” and Saucier and Woods, “Ex Aqua.” See also Gada Mahrouse, *Conflicted Commitments: Race, Privilege, and Power in Solidarity Activism* (McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, 2014), which examines solidarity as a colonial encounter that produces First World subjectivities.

our culture. Certain ethical limits... are non-negotiable. We should be more assertive toward our values... Europe means something noble—human rights, welfare state, social programs for the poor. All of this is embodied in enlightenment of the European legacy.”⁷⁴

By erasing Europe's colonial past and its neocolonial present—and with that, the responsibility that Europe bears for the bodies on its shores—Žižek not only reproduces hegemonic discourses that see Europe as the pinnacle of democracy, liberty, and universal rights. By securing the migrant's status as a stranger, he also enables the European subject to re-constitute itself as “ethical” and “good”, innocent of its imperialist histories and present complicities. Like activist groups such as the CPB, Žižek thus sanctions a white(washed) sense of self and satisfied way of being in the world—what Gloria Wekker describes as “white innocence”—that sees little or no relation between current social advantages and the long history of empire, imperialism, and racial capitalism.⁷⁵ Hence the focus on migrants that are *dead*, with sentimental stories of innocent children washed up on shores, and with mothers who drown while giving birth—that is, with bodies that cannot speak back. As Broeck argues, these are the “waves of white empathy” that come “washing up when things get all too obviously horrible for black so-called illegal migrants.”⁷⁶

Near and Far Peripheries: Connected Geographies of Resistance

So far I argued that dominant forms of pro-refugee activism in Europe elide and neglect the role of race, colonialism, and global capitalism in creating the ongoing migrant crisis. The result has been a solidarity which grieves and welcomes migrants as universal humans—and not as victims of a shared, global present built on racial capitalism, imperialism, and white supremacy. This choice is not innocent because, as Bhabra reminds us, “addressing particular sets of connections leads to particular understandings”, and as such it is imperative to consider “why certain connections were initially chosen and why choosing others could lead to more adequate explanations.”⁷⁷ In chapter 4 I argued that a materialist reading of the global colour line opens up space for a different kind of solidarity—based not on the connections forged from the

74 “‘EU Must Militarize Chaotic Immigration, Identify States behind Middle East Crisis’ – Žižek to RT,” RT International, accessed December 10, 2017, <https://www.rt.com/news/340562-eu-refugee-policy-chaos-militarization/>.

75 Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Duke University Press, 2016).

76 Broeck, “Commentary (In Response to Michel Feith),” 32.

77 Gurinder K. Bhabra, *Connected Sociologies* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 5.

ontological universal experience of vulnerability and mourning, but on resistance to interlocking oppressions under racial capitalism. In the context of the ongoing European migrant or refugee “crisis”, solidarity thus understood requires a shift in focus, away from the interconnectedness and oneness of humanity—metaphorised by the umbilical cord that connects Yohanna to her lifeless baby—towards the material entanglements that link Europe to the diverse regions from which migrants and refugees are coming. In the words of Stuart Hall: “They are here because you were there. There is an umbilical connection. There is no understanding Englishness without understanding its imperial and colonial dimensions.”⁷⁸

A number of activist groups—including Black Lives Matter UK, Parti des Indigènes de la République, New Urban Collective, European Network Against Racism, and Campaign Against Police and State Violence—are practising precisely such a radicalised and revolutionary form of solidarity. In the same way that Cedric Robinson insisted on reading the plantations of Mississippi and the factories of Manchester not as separate systems but as differentiated and complementary parts of the *same* global economy, these activist groups are placing the ongoing migrant crisis within a broader historical context of anti-racist struggles within and outside of Europe. These groups are doing the critical work of contesting what Harsha Walia describes as “border imperialism”; that is, the way in which the politics of borders are intimately intertwined with global systems of power and repression—at once at home and abroad—which find their roots in colonisation, slavery, and capital accumulation and exploitation.⁷⁹ In what follows I focus on the work of two of these groups—Black Lives Matter UK and Parti des Indigènes de la République—in order to demonstrate how an analysis of the co-constitution of near and far peripheries under racial capitalism opens up space for a different kind of internationalism and politics of solidarity.

On September 6, 2016, BLM UK shut down London City Airport by blocking a runway. In a video posted on Twitter, the group called for cuts in carbon omissions, arguing that climate change is a racial crisis.⁸⁰ While the countries most liable historically for global warming are located in the global North, many of the countries most significantly affected by global warming are in sub-Saharan Africa. UNHCR

78 Stuart Hall, *Black Chronicles II*, ii, accessed January 9, 2017, <http://autograph-abp.co.uk/exhibitions/black-chronicles-ii>.

79 Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*.

80 Matthew Weaver and Jamie Grierson, “Black Lives Matter Protest Stops Flights at London City Airport,” *The Guardian*, September 6, 2016, sec. UK news, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/sep/06/black-lives-matter-protesters-occupy-london-city-airport-runway>.

estimates that an annual average of 21.5 million people have been forcibly displaced since 2008 due to climate-induced hazards, including droughts, mass flooding, and desertification.⁸¹ By linking global warming to migrant fatalities, and contrasting the ease by which “a tiny elite can fly to and from London City airport, sometimes as a daily commute”⁸² with the deadly journeys undertaken by migrants as they try to enter Europe, BLM UK thus connect their own struggle against racial capitalism, marginalisation, and state violence in Britain to the global policing of migration flows. The group has also organised against abuse perpetrated during immigrant detention, incarceration, and deportation, as well as against state-sanctioned Islamophobia through the Prevent strategy and the escalation of post-Brexit anti-immigrant hate crimes.⁸³

Parti des Indigènes de la République (PIR) has similarly drawn attention to the continuity between mass migrant deaths during the crossings of the Mediterranean and the everyday violence inflicted on racialized minorities *within* Europe. PIR was formed in early 2005 with the goal of contributing to “the emergence of a political and organized expression of the rage of immigrant populations.”⁸⁴ PIR is primarily composed of French youths of African, Arab, Muslim, Maghrebian and Antillean origin, born and raised in France, who live the experience of racism, marginalisation, and exploitation. The French term “indigène”—loosely translated as indigenous—was chosen to invoke the colonial populations who, up until 1946, were governed by the Code de l'Indigénat. The notion of “indigène” ultimately draws attention to the fact that the French Republic—while claiming to uphold colour-blind values of equality, fraternity, and liberty—in fact continues to treat some of its citizens as quasi-colonial subjects. As Horuia Bouteldja, the spokesperson of PIR, explains:

“When they refuse to accept us as French citizens, they deny us equality. We need to name this reality: we cannot be French, so we are native. We are second-class citizens; ours is a lumpen-citizenship, just as at the time of the colonies. This imaginary linked to colonization and the history of

81 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Frequently Asked Questions on Climate Change and Disaster Displacement,” UNHCR, accessed December 9, 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/11/581f52dc4/frequently-asked-questions-climate-change-disaster-displacement.html>.

82 Alexandra Wanjiku Kelbert, “Climate Change Is a Racist Crisis: That’s Why Black Lives Matter Closed an Airport | Alexandra Wanjiku Kelbert,” *The Guardian*, September 6, 2016, sec. Opinion, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/06/climate-change-racist-crisis-london-city-airport-black-lives-matter>.

83 See Genova, “The ‘migrant Crisis’ as Racial Crisis,” 4.

84 Sadri Khiari, quoted in Stefan Kipfer, “Decolonization in the Heart of Empire: Some Fanonian Echoes in France Today,” *Antipode* 43, no. 4 (September 1, 2011): 1158, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2011.00851.x>.

slavery continues to determine how they perceive us, for the body of the indigenous was constructed during the colonial era. As long as this imaginary is alive, we remain native.”⁸⁵

For PIR, the legacies of race and colonialism continue to structure present realities in Europe: from the dark waters of the Mediterranean, where migrants are left to die, to the *banlieues* of Paris, to be Black in Europe is to be disposable.

In contrast to hegemonic forms of solidarity, PIR and BLM UK both disrupt hegemonic narratives that see Europe as the bastion of democracy, liberty, and universal rights. They do this by articulating their critiques of the current migration crisis within a wider analysis of European empire, racial capitalism, labour exploitation, and (neo)colonialism. As Walia explains with reference to No One Is Illegal, groups such as these contest “the capitalist and colonial logics that make immigration an issue in the first place.”⁸⁶ BLM UK and PIR are struggling for more than recognition or inclusion within the European polity, because the integrationist logic of immigration reduces racism to an individual mentality or exception from normality. Instead they target three specific problems: first, the problem of racism, stigmatisation, and marginalisation within Europe; second, the role of racism in creating a super-exploitative work force both within and outside of Europe; and three, the necessity of linking anti-racist struggle within Europe to internationalist liberation struggles worldwide.⁸⁷ By connecting near and far peripheries these groups are ultimately challenging established geographies of power. Where IR's state-centric imagination treats colonial frontiers and Western “homelands” as fundamentally separate domains, these groups insist on linking the struggle against capitalism and racist oppression *within* Europe to the deaths on its borders. As Prem Rajaram explains, this

“allows for thinking points of articulation between different marginalised groups, refuses the state-centric account of migrant and refugee 'governance,' and allows also for the basis of a politics of solidarity. Such solidarity is framed around the refusal of a divisive politics of race that seeks to establish animosity between classes similarly positioned before capitalist systems of production.”⁸⁸

In linking together metropolitan cores and colonial peripheries, activist groups such as

85 Quoted in Kipfer, 1158.

86 Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, ix.

87 Kipfer, “Decolonization in the Heart of Empire,” 1162.

88 Prem Kumar Rajaram, “Refugees as Surplus Population: Race, Migration and Capitalist Value Regimes,” *New Political Economy* 23, no. 5 (September 3, 2018): 11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2017.1417372>.

PIR and BLM UK ultimately open up space for a different forms of solidarity: for an internationalism that subverts the national “we” and that brings together migrants, refugees, workers, and European minorities (Blacks, Muslims, women, Roma, Sami, and so on) in joint struggle. This is a solidarity which goes beyond liberal notions of hospitality, empathy, multiculturalism, and the eventual “creation of a new reserve army of precarious labor”;⁸⁹ a solidarity which instead seeks a revolutionary transformation of contemporary Europe through a shared struggle against racism, patriarchy, capitalism, oppression, and exploitation. As Turhan and Armiero explain, what is at stake is a choice between

“a liberal way of dealing with migration as a temporary crisis that can be managed with the likes of the EU–Turkey migrant deal and a revolutionary perspective that embraces migration as an opportunity to break away from border-bound definitions of citizenship and create a truly cosmopolitan, responsible, and welcoming solidarity.”⁹⁰

Conclusion

Speaking at a conference in 2016, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon insisted that we are “facing the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time.” The refugee or migrant crisis, he argued, is more than “a crisis in numbers”; in fact, “it is also a crisis of solidarity.”⁹¹

What form of solidarity has been at stake in this crisis? In this chapter I have argued that the majority of European calls for solidarity with shipwrecked migrants have worked to evade the larger historical and material context of the global migration crisis. While European pro-refugee activists, scholars, and policymakers have harnessed the rhetoric of mourning, compassion, and empathy to challenge the xenophobic and white nationalist discourses that figure migrants as vermin, pariah, and bogus—that is, as less-than-human—they have often and inadvertently ended up reproducing the underlying assumptions of the far right: namely, that migrants are “strangers”, “charitable subjects”, and “uninvited guests.” By focusing on abstract—as opposed to historical—humanity, solidarity practiced this way contributes to an ideological formation that not only fails to connect the geo-politics of war and displacement to Europe's own macroeconomic and

89 Turhan and Armiero, “Cutting the Fence, Sabotaging the Border,” 2.

90 Turhan and Armiero, 7.

91 Ban Ki-Moon, “Refugee Crisis about Solidarity, Not Just Numbers, Secretary-General Says at Event on Global Displacement Challenge” (UN Press Release, April 15, 2016), <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sgsm17670.doc.htm>.

foreign policies. It also undoes the “umbilical cord” that links Europe and the migrants that are trying to enter the continent. The result has been a shift in focus, from questions of European responsibility, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform to matters of empathy, generosity, and hospitality—a move that ultimately transforms the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander, and thus confirms its status as “ethical”, “good”, and “humane.” If the migrant crisis, as Zygmunt Bauman has suggested, “is humanity's crisis”⁹², then this raises questions about whose humanity is at stake and, indeed, for what purposes.

In contrast to these perspectives, groups such as Black Lives Matter UK and Parti des Indigènes de la République point towards an alternative, revolutionary politics of solidarity that takes seriously the racialized political economy of migration and that is painfully aware of how immigrant workers have “become the archetype of the new global class relations; the quintessential workforce of global capitalism.”⁹³ This is a solidarity grounded less in the connections generated by universal ethics than in a recognition of the intertwined histories that arise out of the colonial past and the neocolonial present—summed up by the activist slogan “we didn't cross the border, the border crossed us.” These groups not only challenge hegemonic narratives that see Europe as the bastion of democracy, liberty, and universal rights: they also point towards an alternative form of solidarity and internationalism, beyond the “master's tools.” In Christina Sharpe's formulation,

“Refuse reconciliation to ongoing brutality. Refuse to feast on the corpse of others. Rend the fabric of the kinship narrative. Imagine otherwise. Remake the world. Some of us have never had any other choice.”⁹⁴

In the next chapter I turn to Black internationalist thought and recent forms of Black-Palestinian solidarity to deepen this analysis of how new forms of solidarity and internationalism are brought into being from below.

92 Brad Evans and Zygmunt Bauman, “The Refugee Crisis Is Humanity’s Crisis,” *The New York Times*, May 2, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/02/opinion/the-refugee-crisis-is-humanitys-crisis.html>.

93 Robinson, “Global Capitalism, Immigrant Labor, and the Struggle for Justice,” 8.

94 Christina Sharpe, “Lose Your Kin,” *The New Inquiry*, November 16, 2016, <http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/lose-your-kin/>.

CHAPTER 6

#Palestine2Ferguson: Empire and the Global Security Archipelago

“The young people of Ferguson struggle relentlessly, not just to win justice for Mike Brown or to end police misconduct but to dismantle racism once and for all, to bring down the Empire, and to ultimately end War. As they reach out to Palestine, and Palestine reaches back to Ferguson, the potential for a new basis for solidarity is being born—one rooted in revolution.”

—Robin D.G. Kelley¹

“I was born a Black woman
and now
I am become a Palestinian
against the relentless laughter of evil
there is less and less living room
and where are my loved ones?

It is time to make our way home.”

—June Jordan²

Introduction

In June 2016, the British-Sri Lankan hip hop artist M.I.A. was dropped as the headline act for the London Afropunk festival. The decision came as a response to comments she had made two months earlier about Beyoncé's Black Power-inspired Super Bowl performance. “It's interesting”, she said,

“that in America the problem you're allowed to talk about is Black Lives Matter. It's not a new thing to me—it's what Lauryn Hill was saying in the 1990s, or Public Enemy in the 1980s. Is Beyoncé or Kendrick Lamar going to say Muslim Lives Matter? Or Syrian Lives Matter? Or this kid in Pakistan matters? That's a more interesting question.”³

As her comments went viral, Tumblr and Twitter exploded. Some criticised her for trying to devalue the Black Lives Matter movement and minimise the issues faced by Black people in the United States.⁴ Some argued that her comments could be “read

1 Robin D. G. Kelley, “Yes, I Said ‘National Liberation,’” www.counterpunch.org, February 24, 2016, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2016/02/24/yes-i-said-national-liberation/>.

2 June Jordan, *Directed by Desire: The Collected Poems of June Jordan* (Copper Canyon Press, 2012), 400.

3 Guardian music, “Singer MIA Faces Criticism for Comments on Beyoncé and Black Lives Matter,” *The Guardian*, April 21, 2016, sec. Music, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/apr/21/mia-black-lives-matter-comments-beyonce-refugees-criticism>.

4 “M.I.A Slams Beyonce & #BlackLivesMatter,” That Grape Juice, accessed May 29, 2017,

directly as anti-black racism”,⁵ while others concluded that “this MIA thing is a good reminder that brown people need to work just as hard keeping their cousins in check as they do white folks.”⁶ As pressures for a boycott built up, Afropunk announced that they had decided to drop her as the headline act. “I’ve been told to stay in my lane”,⁷ M.I.A. later explained.

A similar debate erupted in 2015 when three young Muslims were gunned down in Chapel Hill and the Twitter hashtag #MuslimLivesMatter was introduced. Several activists responded on social media by urging people not to use the hashtag, which they described as an “appropriation” of the ongoing Black movement. As one commentator explained:

“This is not at all to undermine or belittle the injustices that other minority groups in this country deal with every day; in fact, it is quite the opposite. Every community deserves to be able to think critically about their own positions in America, about their own challenges, about their own experiences, and in their own terms. Of course Muslim lives are under fire in our American systems. There is no question about that. However, building off the #BlackLivesMatter trend equates struggles that are, though seemingly similar, drastically different.”⁸

In this chapter I take the controversy surrounding M.I.A. and the #MuslimLivesMatter hashtag as a starting point for thinking about what it means to bring geographically dispersed struggles into a shared horizon. Focusing on the solidarity that in recent years has been uniting Black radicalism with the Palestinian liberation struggle, I argue that the main problem with M.I.A.’s comments is not so much that they suggested that a movement for Muslim lives is more urgent than the contemporary Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The problem, rather, it is that her comments implied, and were interpreted as suggesting, that the struggles for Black and Muslim lives are fundamentally distinct and separate. In what follows I argue that such an interpretation is misleading, and that recent protests against police brutality and mass

<http://thatgrapejuice.net/2016/04/mia-slams-beyonce-blacklivesmatter/>.

5 “M.I.A. Made a Dumb, Clumsy Statement About Black Lives Matter,” *Jezebel*, accessed May 29, 2017, <http://jezebel.com/m-i-a-made-a-dumb-clumsy-statement-about-black-lives-1772262968>.

6 “M.I.A.’s Critique of Beyoncé and Black Lives Matter Had Black Twitter Upset,” accessed May 29, 2017, <https://mic.com/articles/141472/black-twitter-is-not-here-for-m-i-a-s-criticism-of-beyonc-and-black-lives-matter>.

7 Guardian music, “MIA Says She Won’t Play Afropunk Festival after Black Lives Matter Comments,” *The Guardian*, June 21, 2016, sec. Music, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/jun/21/mia-says-she-wont-play-afropunk-festival-black-lives-matter-comments>.

8 Quoted in Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Haymarket Books, 2016), 187.

incarceration *within* the United States are better thought of as a domestic instance of a *global* struggle against imperial violence, settler colonialism, and racial capitalism. From W.E.B Du Bois to Assata Shakur to Tupac, Black radicals have a long history of drawing connections between the racism they face at home and the expansion of empire abroad. In Du Bois formulation, the “Black condition in the United States is but a local phase of a global problem.”⁹ To recognise these intersecting logics is to open up space for a counter-history of transnational activism and resistance, grounded not in sameness and a flattening out of differences, but on the global, interconnected character of freedom struggles.

⁹ Quoted in Natalie J. Ring, *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State, 1880-1930* (University of Georgia Press, 2012), 203.

The chapter develops this argument in four sections. I begin by illustrating how (white) liberal commentators predominantly have portrayed BLM as a domestic movement struggling for access and reform: that is, for a more inclusive version of the American dream. Drawing on abolitionist scholars such as Angela Davis and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, I show that this focus on “recognition politics” elides the distinct class character of BLM as well as the ways in which the penal and national security state has come to function as a catchall solution to the systemic problems of racial capitalism, including mass homelessness, unemployment, mental illness, and drug addiction. The second section places this analysis in a global frame, and argues that racialized state violence against US domestic minorities is intimately connected to imperial overseas missions in and neocolonial exploitation of the global South. As Black internationalists such as Malcolm X, Huey Newton, and Stokeley Carmichael argued, American anti-Blackness is not exceptional but part of a global racial regime firmly rooted in the history of racial capitalism, imperialism, and settler colonialism. In the third section I undertake a more thorough analysis of the intimate linkages between racial violence at home and abroad, showing how the contemporary policing of Black and other working class communities in the US builds on explicitly colonial models of pacification, militarisation, and control. The issue here is not that racism elsewhere mimics that in the United States—and thus that, say, Brazil, occupied Palestine, and South Africa are *like* America—but, rather, that these heterogeneous geographies are *linked* through the overlapping logic of racial capitalism. The final section brings these arguments together through a discussion of the Black-Palestinian international and the entangled geographies of resistance that bring urban Black America and occupied Palestine into a shared horizon.

Citizen? An American Dream

On 9 August 2014, Michael Brown was shot dead by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Unarmed and with his hands raised above his head, Brown was pierced by at least six bullets and left lying in public view on the street for four hours, visible to anyone passing by.¹⁰ The following day a makeshift memorial was created on the bloodstained spot where he had died. As neighbourhood residents and others

¹⁰ Julie Bosman and Joseph Goldstein, “Timeline for a Body: 4 Hours in the Middle of a Ferguson Street,” *The New York Times*, August 23, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/24/us/michael-brown-a-body-timeline-4-hours-on-a-ferguson-street.html>.

gathered together, the police soon appeared, smashing the assembled candles and flowers with their vehicles.¹¹ The memorial, begun in silence and peace, quickly turned into a political protest as locals began to hold a vigil, block off traffic, and march down the streets.

In the days, months, and years that have followed that fateful August day, the local outrage in Ferguson has grown into a nationwide conversation about the relationship between law enforcement and Black communities. Tanisha Anderson, Sandra Bland, Rekia Boyd, Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, Oscar Grant, Freddie Gray, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Alton Sterling, and countless others: in the United States a Black person is killed by a law enforcement officer every 28 hours.¹² Black Lives Matter, which began as a Twitter hashtag, has emerged as a nationwide movement committed to unveiling and resisting police brutality, mass incarceration, and the systematic criminalisation of Black life—what Michelle Alexander calls the era of the “new Jim Crow.”¹³ As literary writer Claudia Rankine documents, to be identified as Black by the US police is to be subject to hyper-surveillance and an extensive list of permitted behaviour: “no hands in your pockets, no playing music, no sudden movements, no driving your car, no walking at night, no walking in the day, no turning onto this street, no entering this building, no standing your ground, no standing here, no standing there, no talking back, no playing with toy guns, no living while black.”¹⁴ In challenging Black death at the hands of the police, BLM campaigners and organisers are ultimately calling into question, not just how individuals like Michael Brown or Sandra Bland died, but also and more fundamentally, the conditions under which they were forced to live.¹⁵ Racialized police brutality is part

11 Mark Follman, “Michael Brown’s Mom Laid Flowers Where He Was Shot—and Police Crushed Them,” *Mother Jones*, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/08/ferguson-st-louis-police-tactics-dogs-michael-brown>.

12 Arlene Eisen, “Operation Ghetto Storm: 2012 Annual Report on the Extrajudicial Killing of 313 Black People by Police, Security Guards and Vigilantes” (Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, 2012), <http://www.operationghettostorm.org>. According to the *Guardian*, in 2015 the number of young black men killed by the police was five times higher than white men of the same age. See Jon Swaine et al., “Young Black Men Killed by US Police at Highest Rate in Year of 1,134 Deaths,” *The Guardian*, December 31, 2015, sec. US news, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/31/the-counted-police-killings-2015-young-black-men>.

13 Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, 2013). See also Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Harvard University Press, 2016) and Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

14 Claudia Rankine, “The Condition of Black Life Is One of Mourning,” *The New York Times*, June 22, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/magazine/the-condition-of-black-life-is-one-of-mourning.html>.

15 Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton, *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter* (Verso Books, 2016), 1.

of a larger structure which systematically “protects and benefits white people at the expense of people of color”¹⁶, not just in law enforcement and criminal justice, but also in healthcare, education, culture, and economic and environmental security. Virtually all indicators—including life expectancy, college graduation rates, infant mortality rates, prison sentences, SAT scores, unemployment rates, and wealth accumulation—tell the same story of Black disadvantage: Blacks are 39% of the homeless population, while only comprising 12 % of the overall population¹⁷; they are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts¹⁸; 34% of all Black children live in poverty, compared to 12% of white children¹⁹; the median wealth of a white household is 10 times that of Blacks.²⁰ The fact that Eric Garner and Alton Sterling were both killed while working on the street to make ends meet—Garner selling loose cigarettes, Sterling CDs—highlight the poor living conditions of many Black Americans.

While reactions to BLM have been varied—most notoriously, some have pushed back using the slogan All Lives Matter—the majority of (white) liberal commentators have interpreted the movement through the lens of “recognition politics”: that is, as a struggle to extend basic liberal rights to all members of society and gain recognition for an injured identity.²¹ David McIvor, for example, has argued that BLM must be understood as a struggle for democratic citizenship.²² Due to its deeply rooted history of exclusion, American citizenship is still unevenly experienced. BLM thus functions as a form of “democratic pedagogy” that seeks to remake norms of citizenship. A similar view is expressed by Ta-Nehisi Coates in his book *Between the World and Me*. Offering a penetrating critique of the American dream, Coates argues that Black Americans historically have been barred from being citizens: indeed, “[i]n America, it is traditional

16 Paul Gorski, “Ferguson and the Violence of ‘It’s-All-About-Me’ White Liberalism,” in *The Assault on Communities of Color: Exploring the Realities of Race-Based Violence*, ed. Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner and Nicholas Daniel Hartlep (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 35.

17 “RACIAL DISPARITIES IN HOMELESSNESS IN THE UNITED STATES” (National Alliance to End Homelessness in the United States, June 6, 2018).

18 Bureau of Labour Statistics, “Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey” (United States Department of Labor, July 6, 2018), https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpsee_e16.htm.

19 “Children in Poverty by Race and Ethnicity” (KIDS COUNT Data Center, 2016), <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/44-children-in-poverty-by-race-and-ethnicity#detailed/1/any/false/870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35,18/10,11,9,12,1,185,13/324,323>.

20 “How Wealth Inequality Has Changed in the U.S. since the Great Recession, by Race, Ethnicity and Income” (Pew Research Center, 2017), <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/01/how-wealth-inequality-has-changed-in-the-u-s-since-the-great-recession-by-race-ethnicity-and-income/>.

21 For example, see “#BlackLivesMatter: The Birth of a New Civil Rights Movement,” *The Guardian*, accessed May 29, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/19/blacklivesmatter-birth-civil-rights-movement>.

22 See “Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Work of Mourning” in David W. McIvor, *Mourning in America: Race and the Politics of Loss* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

to destroy the black body—it is heritage.” As he explains,

“[T]he tradition of attacking the citizenship rights of African-Americans extends from slave codes to state-wide bans on black residence to black codes to debt peonage to literacy tests, to felon disenfranchisement. You literally can trace attacks on black citizenship from the very origins of American citizenship itself, up into the present day.”²³

Coates's solution is a more inclusive American dream, and “a healing of the American psyche... what I’m talking about is a national reckoning that would lead to spiritual renewal... A revolution of the American consciousness, a reconciling of our self-image as the great democratizer with the facts of our history.”²⁴ For Coates, reparations and a closing of the wealth gap are crucial to this project of “imagin[ing] a new country.”²⁵

Other commentators have been less enthusiastic about BLM. Mark Lilla, for example, has accused it of using “Mau-Mau tactics to put down dissent” and for being “indifferent to the task of reaching out to Americans in every walk of life.”²⁶ Constituting a prime example of “identity politics”, for Lilla BLM is “a textbook example of how not to build solidarity.”²⁷ Taking a slightly more sympathetic stance, David Harvey argues that the movement for Black lives is rooted in the search for recognition. While the struggle against extrajudicial killings of Black people by police is not without its merits, it ultimately falls short of being the broad and far-reaching movement that is needed to challenge and transform capitalist society; “frankly I don’t see the current struggles in Ferguson as dealing very much in anti-capitalism.”²⁸ For Harvey, BLM is thus qualitatively different from Occupy Wall Street, which for him constitutes the “nemesis” of capitalist class power.²⁹

In spite of their apparent differences, thinkers such as Harvey and Lilla, on the one hand, and McIvor and Coates, on the other, actually share an understanding of BLM

23 Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Longest War,” *The Atlantic*, May 4, 2011, <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/05/the-longest-war/238334/>. See also

24 Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>.

25 Coates.

26 David Remnick, “A Conversation With Mark Lilla on His Critique of Identity Politics,” *The New Yorker*, August 25, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/a-conversation-with-mark-lilla-on-his-critique-of-identity-politics>.

27 Remnick.

28 “Symposium: Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism,” *Syndicate* (blog), accessed March 20, 2018, <https://syndicate.network/symposia/theology/seventeen-contradictions-and-the-end-of-capitalism/>.

29 David Harvey, “The Party of Wall Street Meets Its Nemesis,” *Versobooks.com*, accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/777-david-harvey-the-party-of-wall-street-meets-its-nemesis>.

as a domestic integrationist project: that is, as a struggle for access, reform, and inclusion—that is, for recognition. None of these writers make any serious attempt to link the question of race within the US to broader global structures, such as world poverty, the globalisation of neoliberalism, and the “war on terror.” This is in contrast to the actual BLM movement, which has continued to make explicit links between white supremacy, imperialism, and global capitalism: indeed, the core message of Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100) is that “Racial Justice is Economic Justice”; Umi Selah of Dream Defenders has linked racialized domestic inequality to US military operations overseas, calling on the US government to “not engage in wars where we perpetuate an economic system that ruins democracy around the world”; and Alicia Garza, one of the founders of the Black Lives Matter hashtag, has stated that “for the first time in a long time, we are talking about alternatives to capitalism.”³⁰ To depict BLM as a form of identity politics—and, thus, as a movement with little or no interest in challenging the logic of capital—is not only to ignore that many of the movement's key figures have a background in labour organising and other economic justice campaigns. It also overlooks that race, in Stuart Hall's memorable formulation, “is the modality in which class is lived.”³¹ As Cedric Robinson reminds us, race-making practices are intrinsic to capital accumulation, because racism supplies the precarious and exploitable lives capitalism needs to extract land and labour. Capitalism relies on race to split humanity into those associated with property, citizenship, and wages, and those subjected to super-exploitation and dispossession. Rather than an embarrassment residue of pre-capitalist social relations, racial differences are constitutive of capital, because processes of capital accumulation are themselves predicated on the devaluation of Black and other non-white people.

To read the contemporary criminalisation of Black lives—as well as of other racialized minorities, including Latinx, Muslims, and First Nations³²—through the lens

30 “BYP100: Our Impact,” n.d., <https://byp100.org/our-impact-2/>; Lawrence Ross, *Blackballed: The Black and White Politics of Race on America's Campuses* (St. Martin's Press, 2016), 226; “A Q&A With Alicia Garza, Co-Founder of #BlackLivesMatter,” *The Nation*, March 2015, <https://www.thenation.com/article/qa-alicia-garza-co-founder-blacklivesmatter/>.

31 Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 55.

32 Native Americans are in fact more likely than other racial groups to be killed by law enforcement. While American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians make up just 0.8% of the American population, they are the victims in 1.9% of police killings—a mortality rate that is 12% higher than for Blacks, and three times the rate of whites. Native Americans in fact make up three of the top five top age-group killed by police. See “The Forgotten Minority in Police Shootings,” *CNN*, November 13, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/10/us/native-lives-matter/index.html>.

of racial capitalism is ultimately to pay close attention to the neoliberal context of structural unemployment, concentrated urban poverty, and mass homelessness. As prison abolitionists such as Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Angela Davis have shown, racialized state violence (inflicted on Black, Hispanic, Muslim, and Native American lives) emerged as a solution to the problem of how to manage the devastating consequences of the neoliberal economy.³³ Over the past 40 years, the US economy has undergone a fundamental shift, from Fordism—characterised by mass production, industrial factories, assembly lines, and bureaucratised unions—to neoliberalism and the belief in laissez-faire solutions to social and economic problems. Since the 1980s, millions of industrial working-class jobs have been lost as a result of deindustrialisation, globalisation, and capital flight. As manufacturing's share of US GDP declined from 28% in 1950 to 12% in 2012, unemployment rates have sharply increased, particularly in industries such as auto, rubber, and steel.³⁴ Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous workers, whose vulnerable position in the US economy often make them “last to be hired, first to be fired”, were hardest hit by these transformations. The Black unemployment rate is currently twice as high as for whites, and more than 20% of young Black workers are currently without a job.³⁵ As Jordan Camp summarises “the transition to neoliberalism has led to extreme polarization of wealth, an expanding planet of slums, and the formation of the largest carceral state on the planet.”³⁶

The state's organised political response to this social and economic crisis has, above all, been to criminalise poor people and people of colour. Having abandoned the liberal welfare state and Keynesian economic policies, the neoliberal state has come to rely on the criminal justice system. As Patrisse Cullors, one of the founders of BLM, makes clear, “the police have become judge, juror and executioner. They've become the social worker. They've become the mental health clinician. They've become anything and everything that has to do with the everyday life of mostly black and brown poor

33 Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (University of California Press, 2007); Angela Y. Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture*, 1st ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005). See also Alex Vitale, *The End of Policing* (Verso Books, 2018).

34 See Jordan T. Camp, *Incarcerating the Crisis: Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neoliberal State* (Univ of California Press, 2016); Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*; Jan Rehmann, “Hypercarceration: A Neoliberal Response to ‘Surplus Population,’” *Rethinking Marxism* 27, no. 2 (2015): 303–11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2015.1007790>.

35 “Black Unemployment Rate Is Consistently Twice that of Whites,” *Pew Research Center* (blog), August 21, 2013, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/08/21/through-good-times-and-bad-black-unemployment-is-consistently-double-that-of-whites/>.

36 Camp, *Incarcerating the Crisis*, 3.

people.”³⁷ With cuts to public expenditure on education, transportation, health care, and public-sector employment, the police and criminal justice system have ultimately come to replace social welfare. Since the early 1980s, state spending on prisons has increased three times the rate of spending on schools,³⁸ while spending on police has increased by 445%. These policies should not be seen as inevitable reactions to criminality or threats to public safety; in fact, crime rates have been falling for the past twenty years. Instead, and as I argued in chapter 3, mass criminalisation functions to legitimise the neoliberal state by containing and pacifying those that have been rendered superfluous by its economic dislocations: predominantly, but not exclusively, poor people of colour.³⁹ As Davis makes clear, mass criminalisation has effectively become a catchall solution to the systemic problem of racial capitalism, including “homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy”⁴⁰, as well as the existence of a growing “surplus population”—disproportionately non-white—whose labour has been rendered redundant by the de-industrialisation of the US political economy.⁴¹ Blacks and Hispanics currently constitute 58% of the prison population, despite being only one fourth of the general population.⁴² Native Americans, similarly, are incarcerated at nearly twice the rate of whites. Commenting on the link between mass criminalisation of non-white life and the neoliberalisation of racial capitalism, Loïc Wacquant observes that “fewer than half of the inmates [in U.S. prisons] held a full-time job at the time of their arraignment and two-thirds issue from households with an annual income amounting to less than half of the so-called poverty line.”⁴³

In light of this, to suggest that BLM is a struggle for recognition *only* (as argued

37 Quoted in Mark Jay, “Policing the Poor in Detroit,” *Monthly Review* (blog), January 1, 2017, <https://monthlyreview.org/2017/01/01/policing-the-poor-in-detroit/>.

38 “State and Local Expenditures on Corrections and Education” (U.S. Department of Education, July 2016), <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/other/expenditures-corrections-education/brief.pdf>.

39 This analysis was first developed by Stuart Hall and his co-authors in Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013). For contemporary takes on Hall's thesis, see Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*; Bernard E. Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets: Punishment and the Myth of Natural Order* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011); Jonathan. Simon, *Governing through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*, Studies in Crime and Public Policy (Oxford ; New York, New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), <https://www.dawsonera.com/guard/protected/dawson.jsp?name=https://lse.ac.uk/idp&dest=http://www.dawsonera.com/depp/reader/protected/external/AbstractView/S9780198040026>; Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Duke University Press, 2009).

40 Angela Davis, “Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex,” n.d., <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/davisprison.html>.

41 See Gilmore, *Golden Gulag* and Rehmann, “Hypercarceration.”

42 “NAACP | Criminal Justice Fact Sheet,” NAACP, accessed June 24, 2017, <http://www.naACP.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>.

43 Glenn C. Loury et al., *Race, Incarceration, and American Values* (MIT Press, 2008), 60.

by Lilla and Harvey) is to miss the mark. The contemporary policing of racialized minorities is intimately linked to neoliberalism's production of racialized categories of surplus people, and as such there can be no real racial justice without economic justice—and vice versa. In Barbara Fields' insightful formulation,

“There's no sense in which the BLM movement should be seen as identity politics. It is a movement of a great portion of the poorest people in the United States resisting the violence of the capitalist state. Black Lives Matter... is as much an example of a U.S.-based class struggle as Occupy Wall Street was. To focus on the black poor is not to ignore others who also endure economic inequality. In speech after speech, the leading voices of this movement have insisted that if we liberate the black poor, or if the black poor liberate themselves, we will uplift everybody else who's been kept down. In other words, any serious analysis of racial capitalism must recognize that to seek liberation for black people is also to destabilize inequality in the United States at large, and to create new possibilities for all who live here.”⁴⁴

In what ways is this an international struggle? As Chris Chen perceptibly notes, the same security state that sends 1 in 3 black men to prison in their lifetime also “deports nearly half a million undocumented immigrants annually, has exterminated anywhere from 100,000 to over a million civilians in Iraq alone, and is now gearing up for a \$46 billion dollar 'border surge' which includes drone surveillance and biometric exit scanning.”⁴⁵ In what follows I argue that racialized state violence against minorities is intimately connected to imperial overseas missions (particularly in the Muslim world) and neocolonial exploitation of the global South: as BLM organisers and activists have repeatedly emphasised, police terror *within* the US is closely linked to the violence inflicted on Brown and Black people *globally*. To be clear, the issue here is *not* that racism elsewhere mimics that in the United States—and thus that, say, Brazil, occupied Palestine, and South Africa are *like* America—but, rather, that these heterogeneous geographies are *linked* through the overlapping racial logic of global capitalism. As

44 Alicia Garza similarly argues that “#BlackLivesMatter doesn’t mean your life isn’t important—it means that Black lives, which are seen as without value within White supremacy, are important to your liberation. Given the disproportionate impact state violence has on Black lives, we understand that when Black people in this country get free, the benefits will be wide reaching and transformative for society as a whole. When we are able to end hyper-criminalization and sexualization of Black people and end the poverty, control, and surveillance of Black people, every single person in this world has a better shot at getting and staying free. When Black people get free, everybody gets free.” Alicia Garza, “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement,” October 7, 2014, <http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>.

45 Chris Chen, “The Limit Point of Capitalist Equality,” *Endnotes* 3, accessed May 13, 2018, <https://endnotes.org.uk/issues/3/en/chris-chen-the-limit-point-of-capitalist-equality>.

BLM co-founder Alicia Garza explains, “We remain in active solidarity with all oppressed people who are fighting for their liberation and we know that our destinies are intertwined.”⁴⁶ As we shall see, BLM organisers are enacting a revolutionary solidarity. In that, they not only challenge the idea that Black freedom is attainable within US legal frameworks and political institutions: they also push us to think of the protests against police brutality in the US as a domestic instance of a broader and global struggle against racial capitalism, imperial violence, and settler colonialism—and, thus, as part and parcel of a radical internationalism from below.⁴⁷

“No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger”: The Lessons of Black Internationalism

When the streets of Ferguson erupted in protest in 2014, activists in the West Bank and Gaza were amongst the first to respond, tweeting messages in support as well as concrete advice on how to cope with tear gas inhalation. “Solidarity with #Ferguson. Remember to not touch your face when teargassed or put water on it. Instead use milk or coke!”⁴⁸ read one tweet. A solidarity statement signed by a range of Palestinian activists and organisations similarly declared: “with a Black Power fist in the air, we salute the people of Ferguson and join in your demands for justice.”⁴⁹ In response, BLM protesters began waving Palestinian flags, chanting “from Ferguson to Palestine, occupation is a crime.”⁵⁰ A year later over 1,100 Black activists, artists, scholars, students, and organizations signed a statement calling for “solidarity with the Palestinian

46 Alicia Garza, “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement.

47 Such a perspective stands in direct contrast to the increasingly popular body of thought known as Afropessimism. Scholars such as Frank Wilderson and Jared Sexton strictly distinguish between worker's exploitation and the slave's “social death”, which they argue constitute the very condition of possibility for civil society. Yet, and as Barabara Fields and Robin D.G. Kelley make clear, this precludes an understanding of slavery as fundamental to capitalism, “as though the chief business of slavery were the production of white supremacy rather than the production of cotton, sugar, rice and tobacco.” Afropessimism not only frames anti-Blackness as separate from global capitalism, imperial violence, and settler colonialism, thus ruling out the possibility of solidarity. In the words of Kelley, it also “obscures the dialectic that produced and reproduced the violence of a regime dependent on black life for its profitability.” Robin D. G. Kelley, “Black Study, Black Struggle,” *Boston Review*, n.d., <http://bostonreview.net/forum/robin-d-g-kelley-black-study-black-struggle>.

48 Robert Mackey, “Advice for Ferguson’s Protesters From the Middle East,” *The New York Times*, August 14, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/15/world/middleeast/advice-for-fergusons-protesters-from-the-middle-east.html>.

49 “Palestinians Express ‘solidarity with the People of Ferguson’ in Mike Brown Statement,” *Electronic Intifada*, August 15, 2014, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/rana-baker/palestinians-express-solidarity-people-ferguson-mike-brown-statement>.

50 Acronym TV, *From Ferguson To Palestine Occupation Is a Crime*, accessed May 29, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pR6bt9_Yn5o.

struggle.”⁵¹ A short video, entitled “When I See Them I See Us”, was also released.⁵² Featuring activists, artists, and academics such as Cornel West, Angela Davis, Danny Glover, Lauryn Hill, Alice Walker, and Palestinian hip-hop ensemble DAM, the video highlights the common Black-Palestinian struggle against militarised policing and other forms of state-sponsored violence; “Gaza Stands with Baltimore”, “End state racism”, and “Your walls will never cage our freedom”, the video declares. In May 2015, a delegation of organisers from Black Lives Matter, BYP100, and Dream Defenders traveled to Israel-Palestine where they met with artists, civil rights activists, youth organisers, and refugees in Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Haifa. While this pushed Black-Palestinian solidarity into mainstream focus, such solidarities are not new. Indeed, Palestinians and Black radicals have a long history of drawing connections between each others struggles. As Rabab Abdulhadi points out, “[t]hese expressions are not new and they're not because of the excitement of the moment. They do have their historical precedents in the connections that organically brought together anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-capitalist—very clear revolutionary politics, not reformist politics.”⁵³ Thinkers and activists such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Claudia Jones, Paul Robeson, Malcolm X, and Angela Davis have all waved the banner of internationalism with the (Muslim) Third World. Taking the intertwined histories of colonialism and racial capitalism as their starting point, they envisioned a global revolutionary movement and thus sought to link their own struggle within the United States to a larger community of resistance beyond the nation-state—from Harlem to Cairo, Palestine to Bandung, Cape Town to Kingston. As Nikhil Singh has argued,

“perhaps the most consistent and enduring strand of modern black activism has been the opposition to imperialism and colonialism. It was manifest across the spectrum of black politics, from the secular communism of Du Bois and Paul Robeson, to the Christian pacifism of King and the revolutionary, black nationalism of Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party. It led diverse groups of the black activists and intellectuals in the United State to consciously link their own aspirations to national liberation struggles across the world, including India, Ghana, Cuba, Congo, Vietnam, South Africa, and Palestine.”⁵⁴

51 “2015 Black Solidarity Statement With Palestine,” Black Solidarity With Palestine, accessed May 29, 2017, <http://www.blackforpalestine.com/>.

52 Black-Palestinian Solidarity, *WHEN I SEE THEM I SEE US*, accessed May 29, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsdpg-9cmSw>.

53 Quoted in Kristian Davis Bailey, “Black–Palestinian Solidarity in the Ferguson–Gaza Era,” *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (December 21, 2015): 1017, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2015.0060>.

54 Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 2005), 53–4. For a good introduction to Black internationalism, see Cheryl

Malcolm X's writings and teachings were foundational in shaping this tradition of Black internationalism. Rejecting Martin Luther King's civil rights framework, he argued that the struggle against Jim Crow segregation and racial violence was part of a global struggle against white supremacy: "The same rebellion, the same impatience, the same anger that exists in the hearts of the dark people in Africa and Asia is existing in the hearts and minds of 20 million black people in this country who have been just as thoroughly colonized as the people in Africa and Asia."⁵⁵ For Malcolm, this meant that the struggle against racial oppression in the United States had to be internationalised. Black freedom would only come about by using what he called "new methods", which required getting out of "the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam" and into the Third World.⁵⁶ In 1964, he traveled to the Middle East and Africa, where he visited a string of countries and met with intellectuals and political figures such as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Maya Angelou, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, and the head of the newly formed Palestine Liberation Organization. After returning to the United States, he began to explicitly link European colonial rule to institutionalised racism in the US; the police in Harlem, he argued, are like the French in Algeria, "like an occupying army."⁵⁷ As a former Pullman porter and final assembler at the Ford Wayne Assembly Plant, he clearly understood that these dynamics were fundamentally intertwined with capitalism: as George Breitman documents, "from the thinking initiated through his discussions with African revolutionaries... he [Malcolm X] came to the conclusion that capitalism is the cause of racism, that you can't have capitalism without racism."⁵⁸ For Malcolm, the Black

Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1995* (University of Illinois Press, 2011); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Beacon Press, 2003); Sean L. Malloy, *Out of Oakland: Black Panther Party Internationalism During the Cold War* (Cornell University Press, 2017); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2011); M. Marable and Vanessa Agard-Jones, *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line* (Springer, 2008); Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Duke University Press, 2011); Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Beacon Press, 2002); Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Harvard University Press, 2017); Michael O. West, William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkins, *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2009).

55 Quoted on the cover of Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America* (U of Minnesota Press, 2012).

56 Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America* (U of Minnesota Press, 2012).

57 Quoted in Franziska Meister, *Racism and Resistance: How the Black Panthers Challenged White Supremacy* (transcript Verlag, 2017), 194.

58 Quoted in *Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary* (BRILL, 2016), 80.

struggle within the United States thus had to be understood in the context of an international struggle against racial capitalism and imperialism:

“I, for one, would like to impress, especially upon those who call themselves leaders, the importance of realizing the direct connection between the struggle of the Afro-American in this country and the struggle of our people all over the world. As long as we think—as one of my good brothers mentioned out of the side of his mouth here a couple of Sundays ago—that we should get Mississippi straightened out before we worry about the Congo, you’ll never get Mississippi straightened out. Not until you start realizing your connection with the Congo.”⁵⁹

The Black internationalist imaginary was perhaps most forcefully articulated by the Black Panther Party (BPP)—whose multi-racial Rainbow Coalition we already encountered in chapter 4—which sought to forge a global revolutionary struggle inspired by the tenets of Marxist Leninism and Maoism. Huey Newton, who co-founded the BPP together with Bobby Seale in 1966, developed a theory of “intercommunalism”, a political imaginary rooted in an analysis of racial capitalism and imperialism. As Alex Lubin explains, the politics of intercommunalism “directed revolutionary politics away from the nation-bound horizon of the mainstream civil rights movement and toward the global sphere of anti-imperialism and decolonization.”⁶⁰ The Panthers rejected the framework of Black nationalism, which they argued failed to identify the US as an imperial power. Black nationalism was problematic because, rather than challenging racial capitalism and imperialism, Black nationalists sought inclusion within the empire. As Newton maintained, “[w]e cannot be nationalists, when our country is not a nation, but an empire.”⁶¹ In *Black Power*, BPP members Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and Charles Hamilton theorised Black urban communities and the ghetto within the United States as “internal colonies.” Black subjugation within the US, they argued, effectively mirrored colonial rule: “institutional racism has another name: colonialism.”⁶² Addressing the organization of Latin American solidarity in 1967, Carmichael maintained that “[t]he struggle we are engaged in is

59 “When Malcolm X Went to Africa,” *Africa Is a Country* (blog), June 27, 2011, <http://africasacountry.com/2011/06/malcolm-x-in-africa1/>.

60 Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (UNC Press Books, 2014), 121.

61 Quoted in Charles Earl Jones, *The Black Panther Party (reconsidered)* (Black Classic Press, 1998), 66.

62 Stokely Carmichael, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (Vintage Books, 1967), 5.

international... Our people are a colony within the United States... It is more than a figure of speech to say that the black communities in America are the victims of white imperialism and colonial exploitation.”⁶³

In place of a nation-bound civil rights movement, the Panthers thus sought to forge political solidarities beyond the nation-state and in the realm of international and intercommunal politics. Envisioning a global, revolutionary, and anti-imperialist movement, they built connections with national liberation movements around the world. As Newton explained,

“We see very little different in what happens to a community here in North America and what happens to a community in Vietnam. We see very little difference in what happens, even culturally to a Chinese community in San Francisco and a Chinese community in Hong Kong. We see very little difference in what happens to a Black community in Harlem and a Black community in South Africa, a Black community in Angola and Mozambique.”⁶⁴

The BPP's newspaper captured this internationalist outlook: it published countless articles on the struggle for decolonisation in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia, including the Congo, Palestine, Bolivia, Cuba, and Vietnam.⁶⁵ Amongst these, the Palestinian national liberation movement was seen as a particularly important question. As Lubin has shown, the Panthers approached the question of Palestine, not as a Jewish-Arab conflict, but “through the optic of anti-imperialism, with a particularly sharp focus on the role of the U.S. empire in affecting the plight of Palestinians and the actions of Zionists.”⁶⁶ The Panthers argued that “Zionism was an extension of U.S. imperialism and racial capitalism” and, hence, “that the PLO was struggling against the same imperial powers as black radicals in the United States.”⁶⁷ Palestinians and Black communities in the US were thus intimately linked through their struggle for survival under the conditions of racial capitalism and imperialism. This meant that the struggle for peace in the Middle East by necessity would entail a struggle against Israeli, US imperialism *as well as* racial capitalism. More so than other issues, the question of

63 Stokely Carmichael and Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (Simon and Schuster, 2003), 590.

64 Huey P. Newton, *The Huey P. Newton Reader* (Seven Stories Press, 2011), 170.

65 Besenia Rodriguez, “‘Long Live Third World Uniy! Long Live Internationalism’: Huey P. Newton’s Revolutionary Intercommunalism,” in *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line*, ed. M. Marable and Vanessa Agard-Jones (Springer, 2008), 161.

66 Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation*, 123.

67 Lubin, 123.

Palestine thus exposed the rift between the mainstream civil rights movement and the anti-imperialist intercommunalism of the Panthers. Indeed, where Black nationalists sought inclusion within the legal and political boundaries of the American polity, the Panthers embraced a “revolutionary nationalism” that disavowed the US empire and lent support to Third World national liberation struggles.

History has not been kind to the internationalist imaginary of the Panthers. Like Malcolm X, the Panthers are today typically remembered as violent, militant, and extremist—a sharp contrast to Martin Luther King Jr., who is celebrated as a saint-like figure and national hero, his birthday being a public holiday and his “I Have a Dream” speech covering the new five-dollar bill. Here it is worth recalling that King, in his last years, adopted a position not radically different from Malcolm X and the Panthers. In his “Beyond Vietnam” speech, delivered exactly one year before he was assassinated, King linked segregation to imperialism, and described the war in Vietnam through the lens of empire. Imperialism, poverty, and racism, he argued, are deeply interrelated and must therefore be confronted together. The following year he helped orchestrate the Poor People's Campaign, which addressed questions of poverty, unemployment, and housing for the poor—regardless of racial background.⁶⁸ Reflecting on the gulf between King and Malcolm X in public memory, and the empty symbolism of King, James Baldwin would later argue that

“The only reason you talked to Martin is because you were afraid to talk to Malcolm. That's the only reason you talked to Martin. And then when both men (and this happened before your eyes), when both men arrived at the same point—that is to say when they connected—then the great black disaster: the global disaster. At the point where Malcolm came back from Mecca and said, 'White is a state of mind; white people are not devils. You are only as white as you want to be' and when Martin connected the plight of garbage men in Memphis with Korea and Vietnam, then both men were killed.”⁶⁹

In sum, Black radicals have a long history of connecting Third World liberation struggles to their own struggle for freedom. In Lubin's terminology, Black internationalists such as Malcolm X and Huey Newton envisioned “an abolitionist

68 In fact, and as Nikhil Pal Singh has argued, the scope and aspirations of the civil rights movement cannot be captured by recognition politics: the hegemonic narrative of civil rights “fails to recognize the historical depth and heterogeneity of black struggles against racism, narrowing the political scope of black agency and reinforcing a formal, legalistic view of black equality.” Singh, *Black Is a Country*, 31.

69 James Baldwin, *Conversations with James Baldwin* (Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1989), 218.

geography”⁷⁰ based on shared struggles against state violence, racial capitalism, and colonialism. Connections of oppression produced connections of struggle, as “the tearful waters of the Mississippi River flow[ed] into the sorrowful waters of the River Jordan.”⁷¹ In the next section I build on this analysis to show that recent forms of Black-Palestinian solidarity can and should be understood as a continuation of this tradition of Afro-Arab internationalism. Focusing on how neoliberal counterinsurgency methods and tactics increasingly have come to flow from Gaza to Ferguson to the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan—and back again—I demonstrate that the *domestic* policing of Black lives in the United States is intimately linked to the state terror imposed on Brown and Black people *globally*. The issue here is not whether places like urban Black America and occupied Palestine are alike—although they may be, as many have insisted—but, rather, and as we shall see, that these heterogeneous geographies are linked through the logic of racial capitalism, as manifest in the wars on drugs, crime, and terror.

The (Post)Colonial Boomerang: Race and the Global Security Archipelago

When protests erupted in Ferguson in 2014 many were shocked by the heavily militarised response by the police. The “war has come home”, declared a number of leading media outlets.⁷² As Robin D.G. Kelley explains, “Ferguson looked like a war zone because the police looked like the military.”⁷³ Dressed in riot gear, and armed with tear gas, stun grenades, and rubber bullets, the St Louis law enforcement could have been mistaken for soldiers. Ferguson is not unique in this regard. In recent years American police departments have substantially increased their use of war zone equipment and tactics, acquiring everything from body armour, drones, SWAT vehicles,

70 Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation*, 24.

71 Vijay Prashad, “Alex Lubin. Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary,” *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 4 (October 1, 2015): 1448, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/120.4.1448>.

72 “War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Police” (American Civil Liberties Union, 2014); “The US War Culture Has Come Home to Roost,” www.counterpunch.org, August 20, 2014, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/08/20/the-us-war-culture-has-come-home-to-roost/>; “American Military Technology Has Come Home—to Your Local Police Force,” *The Nation*, accessed May 30, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/american-military-technology-has-come-home-to-your-local-police-force/>; Jana Hönke and Markus-Michael Müller, *The Global Making of Policing: Postcolonial Perspectives* (Routledge, 2016).

73 Robin D. G. Kelley, “Thug Nation: On State Violence and Disposability,” in *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton (Verso Books, 2016), 27.

toxic chemicals, military aircrafts, and machine guns.⁷⁴ Behind this stands a Department of Defence programme, which enables the transfer of excess military property to US law enforcement agencies. Since the programme was created in 1997, more than \$4.3 billion worth of gear has been imported from the battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan to the streets of places like Ferguson.⁷⁵

Such transfers between military and police are not unique, nor are they novel: colonial military tactics have historically helped shape policing methods in the colonial metropolis. The contemporary policing of Black and other working class communities builds on explicitly colonial models of pacification, militarisation, and control. Colonial war-zones frequently functioned as “social laboratories” where new techniques of control could be tested before they were shipped back to the metropole:⁷⁶ the French Empire regularly used Algeria as testing ground for forms of population control that later were exported back to the colonial metropolis; the United States relied on the Philippines to experiment with new forms of policing tactics; and Britain made use of its domestic colony, Ireland, and later Palestine, Malaya, and Kenya.⁷⁷ Following the Second World War and the rising presence of Black and Asian communities in the imperial metropolises, alongside the Great Migration of Black Americans into Northern cities, these imperial policing techniques increasingly found their way back to the capitalist heartlands in the North—a “boomerang effect”, in Aimé Césaire's memorable formulation. As Foucault later would elaborate:

“while colonization, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power in the West, and on the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. A

74 Mark Thompson, “War Comes Home: The Militarization of U.S. Police Forces,” *Time*, accessed May 30, 2017, <http://time.com/3144818/ferguson-police-militarization-pictures/>.

75 “Ferguson Police: A Stark Illustration of Newly Militarised US Law Enforcement,” *The Guardian*, accessed May 29, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/14/ferguson-police-military-restraints-violence-weaponry-missouri>.

76 For example, see Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (University of California Press, 1997); Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives* (Duke University Press, 2003); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2005); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt: With a New Preface* (University of California Press, 1991).

77 See, indicatively, Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation*, 154; Dr Georgina Sinclair and Dr Chris A. Williams, “‘Home and Away’: The Cross-Fertilisation between ‘Colonial’ and ‘British’ Policing, 1921–85,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35, no. 2 (June 1, 2007): 221–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086530701337567>; Paul Dixon, “‘Hearts and Minds’? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 3 (June 1, 2009): 353–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390902928172>; Vitale, *The End of Policing*; Stephen Graham, *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (Verso Books, 2011).

whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practise something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself.”⁷⁸

Palestine has historically been a node where new methods of policing, population pacification, and counterinsurgency have been developed. Laleh Khalili documents how, during the Mandate period, Palestine served as a laboratory in which British counterinsurgency practices—including forms of collective punishment, siege of cities and villages, the building of walls, and the usage of civilians as hostages and human shields—were perfected and then exported elsewhere to places such as Malaya, Cyprus, and Kenya.⁷⁹ These practices were subsequently absorbed, and innovated upon, by the Israeli security apparatus which has continued to use Palestine as the testing ground for a range of counterinsurgency methods and tactics. As Kahlili explains, “having consolidated its technologies of domination through several decades of military occupation, the Israeli military has now become a significant exporter of the counterinsurgency knowledge it has accumulated in Palestine.”⁸⁰ Israeli companies have emerged at the forefront of a multi-billion-dollar global industry for security technology, including unmanned drones, biometric scanners, and surveillance equipment.⁸¹ Israeli drones designed to target Palestinians are now routinely deployed by police forces in North America, Europe and East Asia; similarly, Israeli experience in closure, entrapment, and containment—of locking down cities and incarcerating the entire population of Gaza and the West Bank—is increasingly being made use of by those planning large-scale security operations in the West.⁸²

One of Israel's largest clients is the United States, which in return offers Israel military and political aid. Since 9/11 almost all police department in the United States have sent high-level commanders to Israel to receive lessons in counterterrorism,

78 Quoted in Joseph Pugliese, *Biometrics: Bodies, Technologies, Biopolitics* (Routledge, 2012), 52.

79 Laleh Khalili, “THE LOCATION OF PALESTINE IN GLOBAL COUNTERINSURGENCIES,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 3 (August 2010): 415, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743810000425>.

80 Khalili, 416. As she explains, “The violence of Israeli counterinsurgency against Palestinians cannot be understood without locating it in a broader global space, where imperial control through military intervention continues apace, and in a more historical context, where the violent technologies of domination travel across time and space, making Palestine an archetypal laboratory and a crucial node.”

81 Andy Clarno, *Neoliberal Apartheid: Palestine/Israel and South Africa after 1994* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), 165.

82 See Graham, *Cities Under Siege*, xviii. The new high-tech border fence between the United States and Mexico, for example, is being built by a consortium linking Boeing to the Israeli company Elbit, whose radar and targeting technologies have been developed in the permanent lockdown of Palestinian urban life; Graham, xxii–xxii.

guerilla warfare, and occupation enforcement.⁸³ These connections are so important that the NYPD recently opened a local branch in Israel. In light of this it is not surprising that the police violence in Ferguson and the attendant images inspired comparisons with Israel's occupation of Gaza: in fact, out of the four law enforcement agencies that were deployed in Ferguson, at least two had received training in Israel.⁸⁴ When Palestinian activists tweeted advice to protesters in Ferguson—including how to cope with tear gas inhalation and other riot control methods—they offered solidarity for a struggle which not only is parallel to their own, but also deeply interconnected. “Dear #Ferguson”, tweeted one Palestinian activist, “The Tear Gas used against you was probably tested on us first by Israel. No worries, Stay Strong. Love, #Palestine.”⁸⁵

The flow of weapons and tactics between colony and metropole, and military and police, has never been a one-way street. From the Philippines to Guatemala to Iraq and Afghanistan, the history of policing blurs the edges between the domestic and the international. In the same way that tactics and technologies from overseas imperial engagements often have been shipped home and incorporated into domestic American policing, policing methods imposed on Black communities in the United States—including surveillance, racial profiling, and pre-emptive policing—have frequently served as models for counterterrorism tactics and operations abroad.⁸⁶ Indeed, just as colonial technologies and techniques are “coming home” to organise, police, and pacify domestic racialized populations, “so efforts to classify risky versus risk-free populations, activities, and circulations are ‘moving out’ to colonize the infrastructures, systems and circulations which sustain transnational capitalism.”⁸⁷ Counterinsurgency-inspired policing emerged in the 1960s as a response to the increasing number of race riots in American cities. As William Rosenau explains, “policy elites saw the ghetto and its denizens as the cockpit of nascent revolution—a fear reinforced by Black Power advocates and other radicals who called for insurrection against white oppressors.”⁸⁸ In

83 “OPINION: Ferguson Is Not Gaza ... yet,” accessed November 26, 2016, <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/8/ferguson-police-violenceisraeliandusmilitarizedpolicies.html>.

84 Mark LeVine, “Ferguson Is Not Gaza ... yet,” *Aljazeera*, August 18, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/8/ferguson-police-violenceisraeliandusmilitarizedpolicies.html>.

85 Rajai Abukhalil, “Dear #Ferguson. The Tear Gas Used against You Was Probably Tested on Us First by Israel. No Worries, Stay Strong. Love, #Palestine,” microblog, @rajaiabukhalil (blog), accessed May 30, 2017, <https://twitter.com/rajaiabukhalil/status/499758494749577217>.

86 Kristian Williams, “The Other Side of the COIN: Counterinsurgency and Community Policing,” *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 3, no. 1 (2011). See also “Policing Empire | Jacobin,” accessed November 26, 2016, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/09/policing-empire/>.

87 Graham, *Cities Under Siege*, 131.

88 William Rosenau, “‘Our Ghettos, Too, Need a Lansdale’: American Counter-Insurgency Abroad and at

an article in *US News & World Report*, Army Colonel Robert B. Rigg warned that America's urban ghettos could pose a greater danger than enemies abroad: “There is the danger and the promise that urban guerrillas of the future can be organized to such a degree that their defeat would require the direct application of military power.”⁸⁹ The country, he suggested, was effectively on the verge of a civil war. After the 5-day riot in the Watts neighbourhood in Los Angeles in 1965—in which 34 people were killed, 1000 injured, and 4000 arrested—government officials and police strategists began to study counter-guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency techniques to quell ghetto unrest.⁹⁰ Darryl Gates, who was field commander in Watts in 1965 and later would serve as Chief of the Los Angeles police during the 1991 riots, explains that

“[We] began reading everything we could get our hands on concerning guerilla warfare. We watched with interest what was happening in Vietnam. We looked at military training, and in particular we studied what group of marines, based at the Naval Armory in Chavez Ravine, were doing. They shared with us their knowledge of counter-insurgency and guerrilla warfare.”⁹¹

In the late 1960s, ideas, equipment, and tactics used in Vietnam increasingly made their way back into domestic US police departments. On 8 December 1960, the first SWAT squad made its operational debut in an attack on the Los Angeles headquarters of the Black Panther Party. In the decades that followed, the military largely neglected counterinsurgency while the police as, Kristian Williams has shown, “kept practicing, and developing, its techniques.”⁹² The war on drugs, launched in 1971 by Richard Nixon; the expansion of the prison industrial complex under the Reagan era; and the militarisation of the US southern border, all provided new impetus to militarised policing. Black communities such as Skid Row, a high-poverty area of Los Angeles, have frequently served as testing ground for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency policies that then have been exported around the world. In fact, and as Williams shows, many of the contemporary counterinsurgency methods used in Iraq and Afghanistan were “developed by police agencies inside the US.”⁹³

Home in the Vietnam Era,” in *The New Counter-Insurgency Era in Critical Perspective*, ed. Celeste Ward Gventer and M. L. R. Smith (Springer, 2014), 112.

89 *U.S. News & World Report* (U.S. News Publishing Corporation, 1968).

90 Williams, “The Other Side of the COIN: Counterinsurgency and Community Policing,” 91.

91 Rosenau, “‘Our Ghettos, Too, Need a Lansdale’: American Counter-Insurgency Abroad and at Home in the Vietnam Era,” 117.

92 Williams, “The Other Side of the COIN: Counterinsurgency and Community Policing,” 92.

93 Williams, 81.

The broken window theory of policing has been particularly influential in shaping new methods of counterinsurgency. Introduced by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in an article in *The Atlantic* in 1982, it argues that disorder in the form of minor violations breeds larger disorders. As Christina Heatherton and Jordan Camp explain, the idea “is deceptively simple: to stop major crimes from occurring, police must first prevent small signs of ‘disorder’ from proliferating, such as graffiti, litter, panhandling, public urination, the sale of untaxed cigarettes, and so forth.”⁹⁴ According to this logic, if minor crimes are left unchecked this will act as a signal to others in the community that more serious crimes can be committed without impunity. Before his final and fatal encounter with the police, Philando Castile was stopped 31 times and charged with more than 60 minor violations⁹⁵; Eric Garner was similarly stopped and harassed for small-scale infractions for several years before he was slain on a Staten Island pavement. While it is his last words—“I can’t breathe”—that have become a rallying cry for protestors, his preceding words, spoken in an attempt to reason with the police officers before they crushed his head to the pavement, are perhaps more telling: “Every time you see me, you want to mess with me. I’m tired of it.”⁹⁶ These examples demonstrate the ways in which broken windows policing has been crucial in legitimating pre-emptive measures such as racial profiling and more aggressive policing in inner-city communities. As Kelley explains, just like “lethal drone attacks on young men who *might* be terrorists or *may* one day commit acts of terrorism—the presumption of guilt based on racial profiling is a essential component of broken windows policing.”⁹⁷ Broken windows techniques that have been picked up by the military includes the Neighborhood Watch, computerized intelligence files, and statistical analysis.⁹⁸ “Snake Eater”, a computer networked developed for the Chicago police, is currently being used by the US Marines in Anbar province to identify and track insurgents. As Williams notes, “the military has been preparing for this sort of operation for a long time: 1999’s ‘Urban Warrior’ training exercises included the biometric

94 Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton, “Introduction: Policing the Planet,” in *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton (Verso Books, 2016), 3.

95 Michelle Alexander, “Michelle Alexander: Amidst Police Brutality, ‘There’s an Unfinished Revolution Waiting to Be Won’,” *In These Times*, July 12, 2016, <http://inthesetimes.com/article/19286/following-horrific-violence-something-more-is-required-of-us>.

96 “Eric Garner’s Haunting Last Words - CNN.com,” CNN, accessed June 22, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/04/us/garner-last-words/index.html>.

97 Kelley, “Thug Nation: On State Violence and Disposability,” 17.

98 Williams, “The Other Side of the COIN: Counterinsurgency and Community Policing,” 92.

scanning of 'resistance fighters'—in Oakland, California.”⁹⁹ In return, poor urban areas within the United States have increasingly come to look like a foreign battleground in the war on terror. As Stephen Graham explains,

“The U.S. military’s focus on operations within the domestic urban sphere is also being dramatically strengthened by the so-called War on Terror, which designates cities—whether US or foreign—and their key infrastructures as 'battlespaces.' Viewed through such a lens, the Los Angeles riots of 1992; the various attempts to securitize urban cores during major sports events or political summits; the military response to Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005; the challenges of 'homeland security' in US cities—all become 'low intensity' urban military operations comparable to conducting counter-insurgency warfare in an Iraqi city.”¹⁰⁰

These synergies cannot be captured by IR's standard language of territorial borders, inside/outside, and Westphalian sovereignty. As Black and Palestinian activists remind us, “from Ferguson to Palestine, occupation is a crime.” This geography contrasts with IR's hegemonic language, which typically depicts colonial frontiers and Western “homelands” as fundamentally separate domains. And yet, from the Black American ghetto to the French banlieues to Brazil's favelas, security and military doctrines in the cities of the West are melding with those used in colonial borderlands. What Graham calls the “new military urbanism” increasingly structures the global city and the neoliberal state worldwide; as seen in the rapid expansion of policing and incarceration, border walls and detention centres, gated communities and fortress suburbs; in the proliferation of militarised borders alongside the world's North-South equator; and in the growing “security archipelago”¹⁰¹ designed to protect the wealthy and powerful from those rendered surplus by the economic dislocations of racial capitalism.¹⁰² As discussed in chapter 5, the policing, entrapment, and containment of migrants in the Mediterranean and the forceful protection of “fortress Europe” must be considered a similar response to the neoliberalisation of racial capitalism and its violent surplussing

99 Williams, 93.

100 Graham, *Cities Under Siege*, 20.

101 Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* (Duke University Press, 2013).

102 As Ruth Wilson Gilmore explains “the movement of capital, in other words, both precedes and confirms structural adjustments, but the latter must be guaranteed, as it were, by some combination of coercion and consent. The rise in security work, therefore, is the natural outcome of the renovation and deepening of uneven development throughout the world.” Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “What Is to Be Done?,” *American Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (June 16, 2011): 251–2, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2011.0020>. See also Wacquant Loïc, “The Militarization of Urban Marginality: Lessons from the Brazilian Metropolis,” *International Political Sociology* 2, no. 1 (March 6, 2008): 56, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2008.00037.x>.

of racialized populations across the planet. As Ben Hayes and Roche Tasse explain,

“The EU is now 'defended' from those fleeing poverty and destruction by a formidable apparatus that includes landmines placed along the Greek Turkish border, gun boats and military aircraft patrolling the Mediterranean and the coast of West Africa, and trigger-happy border guards and barbed wire fences around the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco. Added to this, unmanned drones are now being deployed through a consortium led by Dassault Aviation, Europe's largest manufacturer of combat aircraft, to target the bodies of 'illegal immigrants.'”

In the same way that activists *within* Europe (such as PIR and BLM UK) have been linking migrant border deaths to their own struggle against racialized state violence, so Black and Palestinian activists have been recognising the intimate linkages between Israeli apartheid and American white supremacy. In the next section I build on this to consider how Black-Palestinian activists are enacting a revolutionary solidarity and “many-headed hydra” from below. As we shall see, the issue here is not that Palestine is *like* urban Black America—although this, to varying degrees, might be true—but more fundamentally, that the struggle for Palestinian liberation is deeply entwined and interconnected with the fight for Black lives in America.

From Ferguson to Palestine: Entangled Geographies of Resistance

“The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us.”
—Fred Moten¹⁰³

In December 2017, 16-year-old Palestinian activist Ahed Tamimi was arrested for slapping two Israeli soldiers. Earlier that day her 14-year-old cousin had been shot in the head by an Israeli soldier while protesting against Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. When Israeli soldiers tried to enter the yard of her family home, Tamimi asked them to leave. The soldiers refused, insisting that they wanted to use her home as a base from which to shoot at protesters. Tamimi stood her ground. Video footage, which quickly went viral, shows her slapping and kicking the two soldiers. Although she posed no direct threat to any of them—the soldiers wore

103 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Minor Compositions, 2013), 10.

protective gear and easily fended her off—she was arrested and later sentenced to eight months in prison.

Tamimi's case is by no means unique: since 1967, Israel has imprisoned approximately 800,000 Palestinians.¹⁰⁴ Palestinians currently face one of the highest per capita incarceration rates in the world, with 40% of all Palestinian men having been imprisoned at one point in their lives. Similar to Black lives in America, the hyperincarceration of Palestinians must, at least in part, be seen as a consequence of neoliberal restructuring, and the violent production of surplus populations that are permanently unemployed and abandoned by the neoliberal state.¹⁰⁵ As Lubin makes clear, “[t]hroughout the 1990s and 2000s, Palestinians and African Americans were both, in different ways, rendered as surplus populations beyond economic inclusion and therefore were viewed as potential threats—insurgencies—that had to be contained via counterinsurgency measures characterized by heightened security and military techniques as well as mass incarceration.”¹⁰⁶ To recognise these intimate links between counterinsurgency efforts in Palestine and urban Black America is ultimately to open up space for new forms of solidarity between these geographically dispersed struggles. As Dream Defenders, the US civil rights organisation, declared in their solidarity statement released in response to Tamimi's arrest:

“While our struggles may be unique, the parallels cannot be ignored. US police, ICE, border patrol and FBI train with Israeli soldiers, police, and border agents, utilizing similar repressive profiling tactics to target and harass our communities. Too many of our children quickly learn that they may be imprisoned or killed simply for who they are. From Trayvon Martin to Mohammed Abu Khdeir and Khalif Browder to Ahed Tamimi—racism, state violence and mass incarceration have robbed our people of their childhoods and their futures.”¹⁰⁷

Like BYP100 and BLM, Dream Defenders has continued to insist that the struggle against police brutality in the United States is more than a domestic integrationist project. The issue here is not only that policing practices at home mimic counterinsurgency abroad but, more fundamentally, that domestic police terror *within* the US is intimately connected to the state terror imposed on Brown and Black people

104 IMEU, “Israel’s Mass Incarceration of Palestinians | IMEU,” accessed June 19, 2017, <https://imeu.org/article/israels-mass-incarceration-of-palestinians>.

105 I discuss the neoliberal restructuring of Israel-Palestine in further depth in chapter 7.

106 Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation*, 152.

107 “Dream Defenders & Allies Stand with Ahed Tamimi and the Palestinian Freedom Struggle,” n.d., <https://www.dreamdefenders.org/freeahed>.

globally. Black and Palestinian struggles are fundamentally connected, not because the experience of racial oppression is everywhere the same, but because these systems of oppression are intimately entwined. As Angela David notes, private security groups such as G4s (the world's largest security provider)

“already recognize what feminists call intersectionality. G4S spans from private policing to the transportation of immigrants to private prisons to the deportation of people from Mexico in the U.S. to the Mexican border, the deportation of Africans from Europe to countries in Africa... [I]t has [also] played a major role in upholding the occupation in Palestine... [T]here’s a lesson to us that the feminist notion of intersectionality is one that should be incorporated into our work as well... [I]f one looks at that corporation, I think that all of the issues that we are addressing can be seen. In a sense, the private corporations recognize the intersectionality of issues and struggles, and we have to do that, as well.”¹⁰⁸

Black-Palestinian activists have been at the forefront in recognising these linkages. Videos such as “When I See Them I See Us” not only point to the similarities between police violence in the United States and Palestine, but also reveal the ways in which the experience of Black Americans and Palestinians are fundamentally interlinked. The key issue here is not that Palestinians and Black Americans have the same relationship to state violence but, rather, that their different experiences of oppression must be viewed within a shared circuit. As Mychal Denzel Smith notes, “the people of Ferguson aren't being treated like a foreign army. They’re being treated like black people in America.”¹⁰⁹ The producers of the “When I See Them I See Us” video were careful to recognise these differences, emphasising that anti-Black racism in the United States is not the same as military occupation in Palestine: while Black Americans have some recourse to civil society, Palestinians remain stateless. “Our struggles”, the producers explained, “are not the same and... solidarity between us is not a given.” Instead, “solidarity is a political choice we make.”¹¹⁰ The solidarity envisioned here is not one of sameness or shared identity, but a political relation forged through contestation and across boundaries of difference: a revolutionary solidarity built on shared struggles against interlocking forms of oppression, and brought into being by transnational resistance against the

108 “Angela Davis Talks Black Liberation, History and the Contemporary Vision,” accessed June 21, 2017, <http://www.ebony.com/news-views/angela-davis-black-liberation-interview#axzz4kd97Q11Y>.

109 “The Ferguson/Palestine Connection,” *Ebony*, accessed May 30, 2017, <http://www.ebony.com/news-views/the-fergusonpalestine-connection-403#axzz4iS9jMQzR>.

110 “From Ferguson to Palestine: The Resurgence of Black-Palestinian Solidarity,” *Palestine in America* (blog), December 10, 2016, <https://palestineinamerica.com/2016/12/black-palestinian-solidarity-pia-print-issue/>.

militarisation and neoliberal governance of urban Black America and Palestinian communities. Palestine and Black America are intimately connected, not because these locations are the same but because the struggles taking place there reveal “something important and productive about the colonial world.”¹¹¹ Underneath the different experiences of Black Americans and Palestinians “lies a more profound layer of similarity that is constituted by colonial modernity and border thinking.”¹¹² As Ruth Wilson Gilmore notes,

“The poorer places, or global South, are also here in the global North, in both urban and rural areas 'unfixed' by capital flight and state restructuring. The unfixing is not, however, an absolute erasure; what's left behind is not just industrial residue—devalued labour, land made toxic, shuttered retail businesses, the neighbourhood or small city urban farm—but, by extension, entire ways of life that, having been made surplus, unfix people: women, men, 'the kids.'”¹¹³

June Jordan's poetry gives voice to this revolutionary solidarity and internationalist imaginary. Inspired by the Afro-Arab solidarity movements that emerged in the wake of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers, Jordan visited Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982 and 1996, when she returned to witness sixteen days of Israeli bombardment in Operation Grapes of Wrath. Through poems such as “To Sing a Song of Palestine” and “Apology to the People of Lebanon”, she produced a political consciousness that brought urban Black America and occupied Palestine into contact, revealing the international dimension of local struggles. After the 1982 Lebanon war she wrote “Moving Towards Home”, an elegy to the horrors and “unspeakable events” she witnessed in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla. A call for an anti-imperial, revolutionary, and internationalist solidarity, the poem ends with the now famous lines:

“I was born a Black woman
and now
I am become a Palestinian
against the relentless laughter of evil
there is less and less living room
and where are my loved ones?”

111 Prashad, “Alex Lubin. Geographies of Liberation,” 8.

112 Alex Lubin, “‘Fear of an Arab Planet’: The Sounds and Rhythms of Afro-Arab Internationalism,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 5, no. 1 (2013): 261.

113 Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 179.

It is time to make our way home.”¹¹⁴

Conclusion

In 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast and the city of New Orleans. What appeared to be a natural catastrophe soon exposed an underlying social crisis, as images revealed thousands of poor people—mostly Blacks, but also Latinos, elderly, and a few white people—stranded on rooftops without any food and water, or places to wash and urinate. As Henry Giroux observes, “[d]ead people, mostly poor African-Americans, left uncollected in the streets, on porches, hospitals, nursing homes, in electric wheelchairs, and in collapsed houses prompted some people to claim that America had become like a 'Third World country' while others argued that New Orleans resembled a 'Third World Refugee Camp.’”¹¹⁵ New Orleans, it turned out, was devastated not so much by bad weather as by decades of neglect and neoliberal governance that had removed all safety nets for the poor, sick, elderly, and homeless. In the days after Katrina, the army fought to take back control of New Orleans, which quickly had turned into a no man's land. “It's like Baghdad on a bad day”,¹¹⁶ remarked one of the officers. In her poem “Of Refuge and Language”, Arab American poet Suheir Hammad reflects on the militarised response to Katrina, as well as the neoliberal policies that rendered so many poor people disposable:

“Evacuated as if criminal
Rescued by neighbors
Shot by soldiers

Adamant they belong

The rest of the world can now see
What I have seen

Do not look away

The rest of the world lives here too
In America”¹¹⁷

114 Jordan, *Directed by Desire*, 400.

115 Henry A. Giroux, *Stormy Weather: Katrina and the Politics of Disposability* (Routledge, 2015), 8.

116 Ann Scott Tyson, “Troops Back From Iraq Find Another War Zone,” September 6, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/05/AR2005090501404.html>.

117 Suheir Hammad, “On Refuge and Language,” *Affilia* 21, no. 2 (May 1, 2006): 240–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109905285761>.

Through her poetry, Hammad invites us to connect the Black American poor and Palestinian refugees and, thus, to think of New Orleans as a Third World refugee site. Like Hammad's poetry, this chapter has sought to bring the precarity of urban Black America and occupied Palestine into a shared horizon. The policing of Black lives and other racialized minorities within the United States is intimately linked to racial capitalism and imperialism on a global scale. The issue here is not only that policing practices at home mimic counterinsurgency abroad but, more fundamentally, that domestic police terror *within* the US is intimately connected to state terror imposed on Brown and Black people *globally*—which M.I.A. recognised when she called for a focus on the intersectionality of Black and Muslim freedom struggles. Black American and Palestinian struggles are fundamentally connected, not because the experience of racial oppression is everywhere the same, but because these forms of racialized state violence are intertwined responses to the neoliberalisation of racial capitalism and its violent surplussing of racialized populations across the planet. Commenting on the backlash against the #MuslimLivesMatter hashtag, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor thus rightly notes that “[i]t is one thing to respect the organizing that has gone into the movement against police violence and brutality, but quite another to conceive of Black oppression and anti-Black racism as so wholly unique that they are beyond the realm of understanding and, potentially, solidarity from others who are oppressed.”¹¹⁸ While the intersectionality of Black and Muslim struggles has long been recognised by radicals, it is also being brought to life again by a new generation of Black and Palestinian activists. By comparing their everyday realities of racialized state violence, these activists are enacting a shared political imaginary that reveals the links between the violence of neoliberal globalisation and the global war on terror. In doing so, they envision a revolutionary solidarity which, as Rabab Abdulhadi has argued, contests the “exceptionality and identity politics that oftentimes suggest that racism only affects Blacks who should fight against it; only Palestinians are affected by Zionism and should therefore struggle against it or only Indigenous people are impacted by US settler colonialism and must dismantle it.”¹¹⁹ Brought to life by contemporary Black and Palestinian activists, as well as by June Jordan through her poetry, Malcolm X and the Black Panthers through their politics of intercommunalism, such a revolutionary

118 Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, 187.

119 “Roundtable on Anti-Blackness and Black-Palestinian Solidarity,” accessed May 30, 2017, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21764/roundtable-on-anti-blackness-and-black-palestinian>.

solidarity unravels the intimate connections between domestic anti-racism and global anti-imperialist struggles. As Black-Palestinian activists have continued to emphasise, such an internationalist view of liberation is urgently needed—especially in an era “when neoliberal economic restructuring converges with global counterinsurgency measures that target Arab and Muslim populations abroad and Black people and Muslims at home.”¹²⁰ In the next chapter I continue to analyse these entangled geographies of resistance by turning to the ongoing struggle for decolonisation in South Africa.

¹²⁰ Chen, “The Limit Point of Capitalist Equality,” 15.

CHAPTER 7

Things Fall Apart: Contesting Settler Colonialism, in South Africa and Beyond

“To break up the colonial world does not mean that after the frontiers have been abolished lines of communication will be set up between the two zones. The destruction of the colonial world is no more or less than the abolition of one zone.”
—Frantz Fanon¹

“When we say 'Rhodes Must Fall' we mean that patriarchy must fall, that white supremacy must fall, that all systematic oppression based on any power relations of difference must be destroyed at all costs.”
—Rhodes Must Fall Statement²

Introduction

In March 2007, a UN agency released a special report suggesting that Israel has established “an apartheid regime that oppresses and dominates the Palestinian people as a whole.”³ Authored by Richard Falk, former UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories, and Virginia Tilley, the report established that Israel is “guilty of policies and practices that constitute the crime of apartheid.”⁴ While the description of Israel as an apartheid state sparked a heated controversy,⁵ comparisons between Israel and apartheid South Africa are not new. In the last few years a number of activists, intellectuals, and policymakers have argued that Israel's policies towards Palestinians are directly comparable to the South African apartheid regime.⁶ The Boycott,

1 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 2001), 31.

2 The statement is available at http://jwtc.org.za/resources/docs/salon-volume-9/RMF_Combined.pdf

3 “Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of ...,” archive.is, March 16, 2017, <http://archive.is/5OWjY>.

4 “UN Report: Israel Has Established an ‘Apartheid Regime,’” accessed June 22, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/03/report-israel-established-apartheid-regime-170315054053798.html>.

5 For example, see “Richard Falk: Anger at My Israel ‘Apartheid’ Report Puts Free Speech at Risk,” Middle East Eye, accessed June 25, 2017, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/academic-freedom-criticism-israel-united-nations-and-fake-news-748512622>; Adam Shaw, “Haley Demands UN Withdraw Report Branding Israel ‘apartheid’ State,” Text.Article, Fox News, March 15, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2017/03/15/un-report-co-authored-by-flamethrower-richard-falk-calls-israel-apartheid-state.html>; “Arabs Protest UN’s Withdrawal of Israel ‘Apartheid’ Report,” Ynetnews, accessed June 25, 2017, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4939473,00.html>.

6 See, indicatively, Jimmy Carter, *Palestine Peace Not Apartheid* (Simon and Schuster, 2006); Andy Clarno, *Neoliberal Apartheid: Palestine/Israel and South Africa after 1994* (University of Chicago Press, 2017); Sean Jacobs and Jon Soske, eds., *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy* (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2015); Ilan Pappé, *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid* (Zed Books Ltd., 2015); Paul Di Stefano and Mostafa Henaway, “Boycotting Apartheid From South Africa to Palestine,” *Peace Review* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 19–27,

Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which seeks to pressure Israel to adhere to international law and respect basic human rights and democratic principles,⁷ self-consciously styles itself on the South African anti-apartheid movement. As Omar Barghouti, a founding member of BDS, explains, the power of comparing Israel to South Africa is not only that it “invites sanctions—similar in nature and breadth to those imposed on apartheid South Africa.”⁸ It also disrupts narratives that frame Israel-Palestine as a Jewish-Arab ethnic conflict rather than a case of settler colonialism and, thus, as part of a broader context of anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles.

In this chapter, I seek to push this analysis further: building on the materialist reading of the global colour line put forward in previous chapters, I argue that there is much to be gained from an analysis of the interconnected logics of racial capitalism in Israel-Palestine and *contemporary* South Africa. Indeed, while formal apartheid has been dismantled and South Africa now is “free”, the struggle for decolonisation continues. Twenty years after the end of apartheid, white ownership of the South African economy remains intact, and the living conditions of the Black underclass continue to resemble the historical disenfranchisements of the apartheid past. This chapter asks why that is, as well as what (if anything) it might tell us about the struggle for Palestinian liberation. Such an analysis is crucial because if Palestine, as Angela Davis has argued, “represents what... South Africa represented in the 1980s and up until the end of apartheid”,⁹ then it is imperative to consider what South Africa represents *today* and what lessons can be learned from that.

To develop these claims, the chapter puts settler colonial studies into conversation with the literature on racial capitalism. Where settler colonialism often has been understood as distinct from the ongoing process of capital accumulation—in essence, as the elimination rather than exploitation of the native—I argue that

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2014.876304>; Ben White, *Israeli Apartheid: A Beginner's Guide* (London ; New York : New York: Pluto Press, 2009).

7 More precisely, the BDS movement urges that that sanctions be imposed until Israel 1) ends its illegal military occupation of Palestine 2) recognises the equal rights of Arab-Palestinian citizens living in Israel, and 3) respects and promotes the right of return for Palestinian refugees. For a more detailed description, see “What Is BDS?,” BDS Movement, April 25, 2016, <https://bdsmovement.net/what-is-bds>.

8 Omar Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights* (Haymarket Books, 2011), 64.

9 “Angela Davis: ‘This Is the South Africa Moment for the Palestinian People,’” Middle East Eye, accessed June 18, 2017, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/activist-angela-davis-compares-bds-anti-apartheid-south-africa-movement-1086168629>. Pattrisse Cullors, a co-founder of Black Lives Matter, similarly argues that “frankly, we believe that Palestine is the new South Africa.” See “How The Black Lives Matter and Palestinian Movements Converged,” *Moment Magazine - The Next 5,000 Years of Conversation Begin Here* (blog), March 14, 2016, <http://www.momentmag.com/22800-2/>.

dispossession is a constant and normal strategy of racial capitalism. As Glen Coulthard has recently argued, it is crucial that we “reestablish... the colonial relation of dispossession as a co-foundational feature of our understanding of and critical engagement with capitalism.”¹⁰ Applying these insights to Israel-Palestine and *contemporary* South Africa, I argue for the importance of a relational analysis that—rather than merely comparing different geographies (as if they were isolated localities that happen to resemble one another)—reveals the ways in which different spaces of oppression and histories of struggle are entwined and interconnected. Consequently, while the apartheid analogy and comparison with South Africa has been helpful for reconnecting *some* struggles—placing Israel-Palestine in the context of a global struggle against settler colonialism and racism—a more thorough understanding of what South African apartheid was *and continues to be* would point to the need to establish a broader global movement—a “many-headed hydra”—based on challenging the global logics of racial capitalism. As we shall see, this would mean reconnecting the Palestinian struggle to the struggles of other disposable communities around the world, from the streets of Ferguson to the dark waters of the Mediterranean, from the favelas of Salvador to the townships of Cape Town.

I develop this argument in three sections. I begin by discussing how BDS supporters increasingly have turned to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. While this analysis has been helpful for reframing Israel-Palestine as a case of settler colonialism (rather than ethnic conflict), it has also overlooked the role of capital in producing and sustaining apartheid. This is problematic because, as I argue in the second section, decolonisation remains an unfinished project in South Africa. While the transition to democracy sought to de-racialize the state, it neglected underlying economic questions of land reform, wealth redistribution, and reparations.¹¹ Since 1994, South Africa has undergone an extensive process of neoliberal restructuring which has deepened existing inequalities and led to an increasing reliance on police violence.

10 Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 14.

11 At the time of writing, some steps have been taken to initiate a program of land redistribution. After gaining power in February 2018, President Cyril Ramaphosa pledged to redistribute land without compensation; a parliamentary committee is currently examining whether such redistribution would be allowed under current laws. Most critics have written this off as an empty promise, designed to win votes in the upcoming elections—not dissimilar from similar promises made in 2014. For example, see Marianne Merten, “South Africa Has All Legislative and Policy Tools for Land Redistribution – Politics, Patronage and Governance Paralysis Have Made It Impossible so Far,” *Daily Maverick*, June 5, 2018, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-06-05-south-africa-has-all-legislative-and-policy-tools-for-land-redistribution-politics-patronage-and-governance-paralysis-have-made-it-impossible-so-far/>.

Thus, rather than eliminating racism, the South African transition reconfigured the relationship between race, capital, and the state.¹² In contemporary South Africa, the racial, colonial, and gendered logics of dispossession continue to be reproduced—albeit in a reconfigured form. The third section links this back to the BDS movement by examining how Israel-Palestine has undergone a similar process of neoliberal restructuring post-1994. This has resulted in the production of a racialized surplus population for which the Israeli state must deploy new forms of control: policing, incarceration, surveillance, warehousing, border controls, and so on. In the final section I turn to the Fallist movements to consider what can be learned from the *contemporary* struggle for decolonisation in South Africa, and what possibilities for solidarity and internationalism follow from this.

“Our South Africa Moment Has Arrived”:¹³ Boycotting Israel

In 2005, a coalition of Palestinian civil-society organisations, academics, activists, intellectuals, and trade unions called on the international community “in the spirit of international solidarity, moral consistency, and resistance to injustice and oppression... to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era.”¹⁴ The BDS campaign has since then grown into a powerful global solidarity movement. As Gargi Bhattacharyya notes, “support for Palestinian human rights has become the emblematic solidarity movement of our time.”¹⁵ Boycotts have historically been a popular anti-colonial and anti-racist tactic; examples include the Indian boycott of British good from 1919 to the end of the British occupation in 1947, the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the United States, and the international boycott of apartheid South Africa. Out of these, the South African boycott—which began in the 1950s and lasted through to the early 1990s—remains one of the world's largest and most sustained international solidarity

12 As authors such as Michael Omi and Howard Winant point out, neoliberal projects are ultimately racial projects. See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (Routledge, 2014), 211. See also David J. Roberts and Minelle Mahtani, “Neoliberalizing Race, Racing Neoliberalism: Placing ‘Race’ in Neoliberal Discourses,” *Antipode* 42, no. 2 (March 1, 2010): 248–57, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00747.x> and Jodi Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism,” *Social Text* 24, no. 4 89 (December 21, 2006): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2006-009>.

13 See chapter 14, “Our South Africa Moment Has Arrived”, in Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*.

14 “Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS,” BDS Movement, July 9, 2005, <https://bdsmovement.net/call>.

15 See Gargi Bhattacharyya, “Globalizing Racism and Myths of the Other in the ‘War on Terror,’” in *Thinking Palestine*, ed. Ronit Lentin (Zed Books Ltd., 2013).

movements. Anti-apartheid movements in the UK, the Netherlands, and the United States pressured their governments to stop trading with, and cut off oil and arms supplies to, the apartheid regime; different Third World governments in the UN worked to institute the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid; and campaigns in the Commonwealth countries led to the implementation of the highly successful sports boycott.¹⁶

Given the success of the anti-apartheid movement, it is not surprising that BDS frequently cites the South African experience as a major source of inspiration. As Abigail Bakan and Yasmeen Abu-Laban explain, BDS hopes to grow into “an international movement of economic, political and social pressure from below that would isolate Israel as a 'pariah state' comparable to apartheid South Africa.”¹⁷ South Africa is seen as a particularly useful point of comparison, not only because of the success of the anti-apartheid boycott campaign, but also because of the similarities between apartheid South Africa and contemporary Israel-Palestine. Many BDS supporters directly compare Israel's occupation of Palestine with the South African system of apartheid. As *The Guardian* observed in 2006, “comparisons between white rule in South Africa and Israel's system of control over the Arab peoples it governs are increasingly heard. Opponents of the vast steel and concrete barrier under construction through the West Bank and Jerusalem dubbed it the 'apartheid wall' because it forces communities apart and grabs land.”¹⁸ More recently, leading figures of the anti-apartheid struggle such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu have stated that the conditions in Palestine are “worse than apartheid.”¹⁹ In an article entitled “Do I Divest?”, Tutu argues that “yesterday's South African township dwellers can tell you about today's life in the occupied territories... The indignities, dependence and anger are all too familiar... Many South Africans are beginning to recognize the parallels to what we went through... If apartheid ended, so can the occupation, but the moral force and international pressure

16 For example, see the special issue on “The Global Anti-Apartheid Movement” in *Radical History Review*.

17 Abigail B. Bakan and Yasmeen Abu-Laban, “Palestinian Resistance and International Solidarity: The BDS Campaign,” *Race & Class* 51, no. 1 (July 1, 2009): 32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396809106162>. See also Salah Hassan, “Historicizing Palestinian Boycott Politics,” *Social Text Online*, n.d., https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/historicizing-palestinian-boycott-politics/.

18 Chris McGreal, “Worlds Apart,” *The Guardian*, February 6, 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/feb/06/southafrica.israel>.

19 Author Robin Yassin-Kassab, “‘Worse than Apartheid’ – The Movement to Boycott Israel,” *PULSE* (blog), February 27, 2009, <https://pulsemedia.org/2009/02/27/worse-than-apartheid-the-movement-to-boycott-israel/>.

will have to be just as determined.”²⁰ The “Not in Our Names Declaration of Conscience”, signed by hundreds of leading Jewish South Africans, similarly states that “it becomes difficult, particularly from a South African perspective, not to draw parallels with the oppression experienced by Palestinians under the hand of Israel and the oppression experienced in South Africa under apartheid rule.”²¹ By underlining the similarities between contemporary Israel and apartheid South Africa, BDS supporters are seeking to de-exceptionalise Israel and disrupt hegemonic discourses that frame Israelis and Palestinians through the language of moral equivalency and parity.²² In particular, the comparison with apartheid South Africa draws attention to the settler colonial character of the Israeli state. As Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs explain, “both apartheid South Africa and the Israeli state originated through a process of conquest and settlement largely justified on the grounds of religion and ethnic nationalism. Both pursued a legalized, large-scale program of displacing the earlier inhabitants from their land.”²³

Comparisons between Israel and apartheid South Africa are of course not new.²⁴ Already in 1961, the apartheid prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd triumphantly declared that “Israel like South Africa is an apartheid state.”²⁵ South African activists agreed, but unlike Verwoerd did not see this as a reason to praise Israel. Israel, they argued, was not only *like* apartheid South Africa, but also intimately involved in perpetuating their own oppression. Throughout the apartheid period, Israel remained an important and loyal ally to South Africa. In the 1970s, this cooperation extended into the field of nuclear

20 “Do I Divest?,” www.counterpunch.org, October 17, 2002, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2002/10/17/do-i-divest/>. In a Guardian article entitled “Apartheid in the Holy Land”, Tutu similarly writes: “I’ve been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa”. See “Apartheid in the Holy Land,” *The Guardian*, April 29, 2002, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/29/comment>.

21 “Declaration of Conscience on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by South Africans of Jewish Descent,” accessed June 18, 2017, <http://www.mepc.org/declaration-conscience-israeli-palestinian-conflict-south-africans-jewish-descent>.

22 As Abu-Laban and Bakan explain, the BDS campaign “as a strategy of resistance and cross-border solidarity, can be usefully framed as an anti-racist movement that contests a post-second world war hegemonic construction of state ideology, in which Zionism plays a central role and serves to enforce a racial contract that hides the apartheid-like character of the state of Israel”. See Bakan and Abu-Laban, “Palestinian Resistance and International Solidarity,” 32.

23 Jacobs and Soske, *Apartheid Israel*, 1. For a discussion of the failure to use the rhetoric of empire and settler colonialism in discussion of Palestine, see chapter 2, “Raw Cuts: Palestine, Israel, and (Post)Colonial Studies” in Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Duke University Press, 2016).

24 For an historical overview, see Salim Vally, “Solidarity with Palestine: Confronting the ‘Whataboutery’ Argument and the Bantusan Denouement,” in *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy*, ed. Sean Jacobs and Jon Soske (Haymarket Books, 2015).

25 Quoted in Vally, 43.

technology, with Israel helping South Africa to develop nuclear warheads.²⁶ This friendship continued throughout the 1980s, and enabled the apartheid regime to work around international sanctions. Israel also continued to offer diplomatic and military support, sending 35% of its arms exports to South Africa as late as 1980.²⁷ In 1987, when the Israeli cabinet finally denounced South Africa's apartheid policies, a number of critical Israel scholars had begun declaring Israel an “apartheid state”, some suggesting that Gaza was “the Soweto of the State of Israel.”²⁸ In the 1990s these comparisons became increasingly common as human rights organisations began denouncing the “Bantustanization” of Palestine. In 2003, Mahmood Mamdani and Edward Said organised a conference at Columbia University entitled “An Anti-Apartheid Perspective on Israel and Palestine.” As Mamdani explained, “South Africa is a way of talking about Palestine. They are different and yet not all that different.”²⁹

In sum, it is clear that pro-Palestinian activists, artists, and academics have a long history of turning to South Africa to underline similarities and to explore strategies of resistance. By emphasising the settler colonial nature of the Israeli state, these activists and intellectuals not only disrupt hegemonic narratives that continue to frame the occupation of Palestine as a Jewish-Arab ethnic conflict. As Salma Musa has argued, it also opens up new avenues for solidarity, enabling “alliances between peoples resisting oppression, linking Palestine to struggles against militarism, mass incarceration, and policing, as well as indigenous land claims and struggles in North America.”³⁰ Nonetheless, the apartheid analogy is not without its limits. Defenders of Israel have been quick to argue that the comparison is flawed, because Palestinian citizens of Israel—unlike Black South Africans during apartheid—enjoy civil rights.³¹

26 Sasha Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance: Israel's Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010).

27 Polakow-Suransky, “Gold Stones, Glass Houses,” *Foreign Policy*, May 10, 2010, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/05/10/gold-stones-glass-houses/>. See also the book by the same author: Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance*.

28 Meron Benvenisti, *West Bank Data Base Project: A Survey of Israel's Policies* (American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1984).

29 Mahmood Mamdani, “Beyond Nuremberg The Historical Significance of the Post-Apartheid Transition in South Africa,” in *A Journey of Ideas Across: In Dialogue With Edward Said*, ed. Adania Shibli (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, n.d.), <http://journeyofideasacross.hkw.de/resisting-colonialism-old-and-new/mahmood-mamdani.html>.

30 Salma Musa, “BDS and Third World Internationalism,” *Social Text Online*, 2016, https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/bds-and-third-world-internationalism/. See also Keith P. Feldman, *A Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Juliana Hu Pegues, “Empire, Race, and Settler Colonialism: BDS and Contingent Solidarities,” *Theory & Event* 19, no. 4 (October 12, 2016), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/633272>; Steven Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, 1 edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2016).

31 For example, see “Why Israel Is Nothing Like Apartheid South Africa,” *New York Times*, March 31,

While such arguments, at least to some extent, can be written off as ideological attempts to deflect attention from the illegal occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, they arguably *do* highlight the limits of comparative approaches. Indeed, in comparing Israel-Palestine and South Africa, commentators have primarily focused on similarities in state violence, and therefore limited their analyses to the time period before 1994. Because of this they have often been prone to overlook that *contemporary* South Africa—more than twenty years after the end of apartheid—remains one most radically unequal places in the world.³² As Ashwin Desai and Richard Pithouse point out, “the government's own statistics agency concludes that in real terms: average black 'African' household income declined 19% from 1995 to 2000, while white income was up 15 percent.”³³ Despite a growing Black elite, white ownership and domination of the economy remain intact; Blacks command only 10% of the economy, and on average earn six times less than whites.³⁴ Faced with permanent unemployment, informal housing, and high rates of HIV/AIDS in the townships, the living conditions of the majority of Black South Africans continue to resemble the historical disenfranchisements of the apartheid past. While legalised and formally enshrined apartheid has come to an end, it is undeniable that racialized differences continue to manifest themselves in all walks of life: as Heidi Grunebaum observes, this is visible “in every sphere of society from who works in restaurant kitchens to who owns them: who cleans the roads and sidewalks and who are shop owners, whose children are cared for by nannies and whose children have to fend for themselves.”³⁵ The large number of strikes, social movements, and popular uprising

2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/31/opinion/why-israel-is-nothing-like-apartheid-south-africa.html>.

32 There exists a large body of literature that have documented how the material conditions of the majority black poor have worsened in the “new” South Africa. Amongst others, see Patrick Bond, *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005); Ashwin Desai and Richard Pithouse, “‘What Stank in the Past Is the Present’s Perfume’: Dispossession, Resistance, and Repression in Mandela Park,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 4 (September 16, 2004): 841–75; Zine Magubane, “The Revolution Betrayed? Globalization, Neoliberalism, and the Post-Apartheid State,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 4 (September 16, 2004): 657–71; Thiven Reddy, *South Africa: Settler Colonialism and the Failures of Liberal Democracy* (Uppsala: Zed Books, 2015).

33 Desai and Pithouse, “What Stank in the Past Is the Present’s Perfume,” 843.

34 Achille Mbembe, “Apartheid Futures and the Limits of Racial Reconciliation,” 3, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/documents/Mbembe%20-%202015%20-%20Public%20Positions%20-%20Apartheid%20Futures.pdf>.

35 Heidi Grunebaum, *Memorializing the Past: Everyday Life in South Africa After the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Transaction Publishers, 2011), 124.

—from miner's strikes³⁶ to service delivery protests³⁷ to university students movements such as Rhodes/Fees Must Fall³⁸, which I discuss in further detail below—confirm that the struggle for decolonisation and the “long walk to freedom”³⁹ continue, even though South Africa now is “free.”

Two conclusions can be drawn from this. First, we might need to rethink the nature of settler colonialism, including its relation to capital. In the literature, settler colonialism has predominantly been theorised as a process that is distinct from colonialism: as the elimination rather than exploitation of Indigenous populations, in Patrick Wolfe's famous formulation.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, and as the ongoing struggle for justice in South Africa reveals, dispossession might be a constant feature of capital accumulation, and consequently something that persists—even after the state has been de-racialized and formal freedom attained. As we shall see in the next section, in South Africa the racial, colonial, and gendered logics of dispossession have not so much withered away as transformed themselves into structures more ideally suited for the neoliberal present.

Second, the ongoing struggle for decolonisation in South Africa also reveals the limits of a *comparative* approach that merely seeks to add up similarities and differences (such as that between Israel-Palestine and South Africa). While comparative approaches are not without merit, as David Theo Goldberg reminds us, they often “seem to miss a crucial dimension for comprehending racial significance and racist conditioning in all their complexity”:⁴¹ namely, the *global* colour line. In what follows I argue that a *relational* approach—anchored in a global political economic critique of race and

36 “The Marikana Massacre Is a Tale of Utter Shame for South Africa,” *The Guardian*, accessed June 19, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/26/marikana-massacre-ramaphosa-lonmin>. For a detailed analysis of the Marikana massacre, see Patrick Bond and Shauna Mottiar, “Movements, Protests and a Massacre in South Africa,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 31, no. 2 (April 1, 2013): 283–302, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2013.789727>.

37 Peter Alexander, “Rebellion of the Poor: South Africa's Service Delivery Protests – a Preliminary Analysis,” *Review of African Political Economy* 37, no. 123 (March 1, 2010): 25–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056241003637870>.

38 “South Africa's Student Protests Are Part of a Much Bigger Struggle,” *The Washington Post*, accessed June 19, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/09/23/south-africas-student-protests-are-part-of-a-much-bigger-struggle/?utm_term=.f2884c9b15d7.

39 Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk To Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, New Ed edition (London: Abacus, 1995).

40 See Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 387–409, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>. See also L. Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (Springer, 2015). While both scholars recognise that the logic of elimination intersects with capital accumulation in complex ways, the secondary literature has often treated them as distinct.

41 David Theo Goldberg, “Racial Comparisons, Relational Racisms: Some Thoughts on Method,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no. 7 (September 1, 2009): 253, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870902999233>.

racism—demonstrates that there are lessons to be learned from the successes *as well as* the shortcomings of South Africa's transition to democracy. Indeed, studying South Africa *post*-1994 sheds light on the changing character of (settler) colonialism, and the ways in which the racial, colonial, and gendered logics of dispossession continue to be reproduced—albeit in a reconfigured form—in the neoliberal present. Ultimately, the point is not just that Israel-Palestine is *like* (apartheid) South Africa but, more fundamentally, that these spaces of oppression and histories of struggle are deeply entwined and interconnected under racial capitalism.

The Limits of Rainbowism: From National Liberation to Neoliberalism

Twenty years after the end of apartheid, why has so little changed for the Black poor in South Africa? To answer this question it is helpful to consider, once more, the materiality of the global colour line. This is important, not least because the concept of “racial capitalism”, while popularised by Cedric Robinson, actually derives from South Africa; it was coined in the 1970s when activists and intellectuals debated the role of capitalism in supporting the racial order of the apartheid regime.⁴² Anglophone liberal scholars argued that the “colourblind” logic of capitalism, if left to its own device, would destroy all forms of racial prejudice and discrimination. The free market system, it was argued, would eventually replace racism—seen as a “social aberration”—with new forms of social interaction, based on rational economic principles and enlightened self-interest. In contrast, Marxists and radical intellectuals form the Black Consciousness Movement, including Neville Alexander, Steve Biko, Harold Wolple and a young Stuart Hall (in conversation with South African exiles living in Muswell Hill and other parts of London), argued that racial apartheid was a direct consequence of capitalism.⁴³ Anticipating Robinson's *Black Marxism*, they insisted that racialization and capital accumulation are mutually constitutive processes, and that race cannot be understood in isolation from capitalism. For these radicals, this meant that the struggle against the racial state could not be de-linked from the struggle against racial capitalism;

42 Michael Cloete, “Neville Alexander: Towards Overcoming the Legacy of Racial Capitalism in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 86, no. 1 (March 10, 2015): 34–6, <https://doi.org/10.1353/trn.2014.0032>.

43 For example, see Neville Alexander, *South Africa: Which Road to Freedom?* (Walnut Publishing, 1994); Cloete, “Neville Alexander”; Derek Hook, “Retrieving Biko: A Black Consciousness Critique of Whiteness,” *African Identities* 9, no. 1 (February 1, 2011): 19–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2011.530442>. See also Sharad Chari, “Three Moments of Stuart Hall in South Africa: Postcolonial-Postsocialist Marxisms of the Future,” *Critical Sociology* 43, no. 6 (2015).

indeed, South Africa would remain divided and unequal unless racism and capitalism were confronted together.

The years that have followed the end of apartheid lend support to this argument. In 1994, democratic elections were held for the first time in South Africa and an interim constitution was passed. A year later the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up to help facilitate the political transition. Victims of human rights violations were encouraged to come forward and share their traumatic experiences, as were perpetrators who, in exchange for testimony, could ask for amnesty from prosecution. By healing the wounds of the past, the TRC thus sought to build a “new” and de-racialized South Africa—a boldly democratic and multicultural society, a “rainbow nation” in Nelson Mandela's evocative phrase. Obscured by this polyphonic, multicultural, and post-racial vision is the fact that apartheid was a socio-economic—and not just political—system, based on the disempowerment, exploitation, and dispossession of Black South Africans. As Sampie Terreblanche has argued, “the apartheid system (or, more correctly, the system of racial capitalism) was deliberately constructed in a very close collaboration between (white) business and (white) politicians to create a (mainly African) labour repressive system on behalf of white business.”⁴⁴ For centuries South African mines, farms, and factories were dependent on the exploitation of cheap Black labour. White South Africans were able to enjoy unfair advantages in the labour market, accumulating wealth, land, and power, while impoverishing the Black working class.⁴⁵ From 1960 to 1983, 3.5 million Black South Africans were forcefully removed from their homes and resettled into segregated neighbourhoods. While formal apartheid was abolished in 1994, the spoils of this system was passed on to younger generations in the form of white privilege. As Achille Mbembe notes, this is visible in “monetary or property value, banking practices, housing and land assets, educational resources, cultural capital, insider networks, good jobs, a sense of self-esteem, dignity and superiority.”⁴⁶

44 Sampie Terreblanche, “Dealing With Systemic Economic Injustice,” in *Looking Back, Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, ed. Charles Villavicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd (Zed Books, 2000), 267. See also Achille Mbembe, “Whiteness without Apartheid: The Limits of Racial Freedom,” openDemocracy, accessed February 28, 2017, http://www.opendemocracy.net/whiteness_without_apartheid_the_limits_of_racial_freedom.

45 For an account of the systematized exploitation of black labourers under apartheid, see Colin Bundy, *Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, 2nd edition (Cape Town {u.a.: James Currey, 1988); Terreblanche, “Dealing With Systemic Economic Injustice”; Steven Friedman, *Race, Class and Power: Harold Wolpe and the Radical Critique of Apartheid* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2015).

46 Mbembe, “Apartheid Futures and the Limits of Racial Reconciliation,” 9.

The failure to engage with this long history of land dispossession, displacement, dispersion of communities, and enforced resettlement has ultimately helped to normalise present inequalities. As Michael Cloete explains, “[i]nstead of restructuring the apartheid economy to meet the needs of the black majority, the leaders of the post-apartheid state have chosen the option of a formal constitutional democracy, on the one hand, and the capitalist system of its former oppressors, on the other, as the foundation of the post-apartheid South Africa.”⁴⁷ Despite a growing Black middle class, the white elite retains control over the economy. More so than other issues, the question of land highlights the incomplete nature of decolonisation: while the state no longer actively colonises the land of Black South Africans, the vast majority of land remains in the hands of the old white elite. As Neville Alexander, the Black intellectual and revolutionary, makes clear:

“Ownership and control of the commanding heights of the economy... have remained substantially in the same hands as during the heyday of apartheid. It is perfectly justifiable to say that what we used to call the apartheid capitalist system has simply given way to the post-apartheid capitalist system. The jargon of those who make the decisions has changed (everyone has become 'non-racial' and 'anti-racist'), a few thousand black middle class people have boarded the gravy train and are being wooed into the ranks of the established (white) elite, but the nature of the state remained fundamentally unchanged.”⁴⁸

In spite of this, it would be a mistake to suggest that the nature of racial oppression in South Africa remains unchanged. The transition to democracy not only left existing inequalities in place, but also intensified the marginalisation and exploitation of the Black poor. To see how and why, it is important to consider how the birth of the “rainbow nation” coincided with the end of the Cold War and the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism. In the years leading up to the fall of apartheid, the ANC leadership increasingly turned to neoliberal trickle-down economics as the antidote to problems such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Starting in the early 1990s, the World Bank repeatedly sent missions to South Africa to persuade ANC researchers and policy advisors to subscribe to economic orthodoxy. Senior ANC officials were also sent to the Washington headquarters to receive training in the tenets

47 Cloete, “Neville Alexander,” 37.

48 Neville Alexander, *An Ordinary Country: Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa* (University of Natal Press, 2002), 64.

of neoliberalism and workings of financial markets.⁴⁹ In 1996—the same year as the TRC hearings began in Cape Town—the ANC subsequently became the first African government to voluntarily ask the World Bank for help to implement a structural adjustment programme.⁵⁰ Within two years of coming to power, it adopted the neoliberal macroeconomic Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) programme, which stressed deficit reduction, privatization, de-regulation, and trade liberalisation. It also accepted responsibility for the \$25 billion dollar debt accumulated by the apartheid regime, and offered constitutional protection for the existing distribution of private property.

While these neoliberal policies were justified on the basis that they would help facilitate the process of democratising the South African state, in reality they have led to a reconfiguration of the relationship between race, capital, and the state.⁵¹ Rather than eliminating racism, the adoption of a neoliberal economic program has transformed the apartheid economy—which was characterised by state support for industrial and agricultural production, racialized welfare, and a split labour market—into structures more ideally suited for the demands of global capital.⁵² Legally enshrined racial capitalism under apartheid has thus come to be replaced by racial neoliberalism, in which full citizenship, as David Theo Goldberg explains, is restricted to “the healthy, to those who can pay-as-they-go, and to those who own property.”⁵³ In particular, neoliberal restructuring

“has transformed racial apartheid into a more generic and so supposedly less pernicious apartheid... Its racial arrangements are thus seen to fall within the parameters of what has come to be considered the global normal and so acceptable. But acceptable because the terms of recognition now exclude the analytics of racial articulation, because the state no longer takes itself so ordered even if the structural informalities

49 Sagie Narsiah, “Neoliberalism and Privatisation in South Africa,” *GeoJournal* 57, no. 1/2 (2002): 4.

50 See Bond, *Elite Transition*.

51 As Michael Omi and Howard Winant point out, neoliberal projects are ultimately racial projects; Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 211. See also David J. Roberts and Minelle Mahtani, “Neoliberalizing Race, Racing Neoliberalism: Placing ‘Race’ in Neoliberal Discourses,” *Antipode* 42, no. 2 (March 1, 2010): 248–57, doi:10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00747.x and Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism.”

52 As Terreblanche explains, “the economic system has been changed over the past 30 years from one of colonial and racial capitalism to a neo-liberal, first world, capitalist enclave that is disengaging itself from a large part of the black labour force. Although the black elite—both the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie—has been adopted as a junior partner, the new system has retained a racial character; it is still a white-controlled enclave in a sea of black poverty”. Solomon Johannes Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002* (University of Natal Press, 2002), 422.

53 David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 311.

of the society continue to embed their legacy.”⁵⁴

The South African white elite and the aspiring Black bourgeoisie have benefitted from fiscal austerity, tax concessions, export oriented growth, the lowering of inflation, and the liberalisation of steady exchange controls.⁵⁵ Yet for the majority of South Africans, neoliberal restructuring has meant widespread unemployment, deepening forms of marginalisation, and the privatisation of basic public services such as transport, water, electricity, health care, and education.⁵⁶ 20% of urban households now lack access to electricity, and a quarter have no running water: 80% of rural households have neither. In the last decade, there has been a rapid proliferation of precarious forms of employment, including temporary, contract, casual, and part-time forms. This vulnerable, non-standard workforce has grown so large that at present only 40% of the economically active population has full-time employment; for Blacks, this decreases to approximately one-third.⁵⁷ As Desai makes clear, “[p]oor people are not perceived as citizens who are entitled to certain basic rights, but as paying customers who forfeit all rights when they are unable to pay.”⁵⁸ Abandoned by the state, they have only themselves to rely on for survival. In John Saul's formulation,

“[a] tragedy is being enacted in South Africa, as much a metaphor for our times as Rwanda and Yugoslavia and, even if not so immediately searing of the spirit, it is perhaps a more revealing one. For in the teeth of high expectations arising from the successful struggle against a malignant apartheid state, a very large percentage of the population—among them many of the most desperately poor in the world—are being sacrificed on the altar of the neo-liberal logic of global capitalism.”⁵⁹

South Africa's transition to democracy thus demonstrates the limitations of a liberation strategy that limits decolonisation to state reformation.⁶⁰ While the transition to democracy restructured the state and rejected white supremacy in favour of

54 Goldberg, *The Threat of Race*.

55 Ashwin Desai, “Neoliberalism and Resistance in South Africa,” *Monthly Review* (blog), January 1, 2003, <https://monthlyreview.org/2003/01/01/neoliberalism-and-resistance-in-south-africa/>.

56 Amongst other things, corporate taxes have fallen from 48% in 1994 to 30% in 1999; there has also been a lifting of capital controls, and lower tariffs on imports. See Patrick Bond, *Against Global Apartheid: South Africa Meets the World Bank, IMF, and International Finance* (University of Cape Town Press, 2003), viii.

57 All figures are from Desai, “Neoliberalism and Resistance in South Africa.”

58 Ibid.

59 John S. Saul, “Cry for the Beloved Country: The Post - apartheid Denouement,” *Review of African Political Economy* 28, no. 89 (September 1, 2001): 429, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056240108704550>.

60 Clarno, “Neoliberal Apartheid,” 2015, 70. See also David Theo Goldberg, *Are We All Postracial Yet?* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

reconciliation, other aspects of decolonisation were sidelined. The result has been a multicultural and post-racial discourse which puts the category of race under erasure and, as Myambo explains, therefore “enables 'belonging' but not a material redistribution of belongings in the concrete sense of possessions, (private) property, and land.”⁶¹ The idea of “non-racialism”—a founding value in the constitution and the South African term for post-racialism—thus naturalises and de-historicises ongoing forms of material inequality, socio-economic marginalisation, and structural poverty. In this context of historical amnesia, to advocate for land reform, redistribution of wealth, and the undoing of structures of privilege—in housing, education, employment, and so forth—is deemed akin to reverse racism. As The Landless People's Movement point out, in “South Africa it appears if you challenge for land, you threaten the very foundation of the miracle nation.”⁶²

The Settler Colonial Present

The incomplete nature of South Africa's decolonisation has important implications for the BDS movement and the wider struggle for Palestinian liberation. Indeed, while South Africa now is free in the legal sense of the term—according to international law, apartheid ends with the elimination of legalised racial discrimination—neoliberal restructuring has placed important limits on the meaning of decolonisation. As Cloete makes clear, structures of subjugation remain beneath the veneer of rights, recognition, and rainbowism; “the ANC willingness to compromise with their former oppressors... has ensured that the material systemic conditions underlying the unethical practice of human exploitation in the past have remained intact as the enabling (structural) conditions for the (im)possibility of the 'new' South Africa.”⁶³ Consequently, and in contrast to settler colonial studies—which, as I argued above, often has theorised settler colonialism as distinct from colonialism; as the elimination (rather than

61 Myambo, “Capitalism Disguised as Democracy,” 65. For similar arguments about how a politics of recognition leaves the underlying structural conditions unchallenged, see Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Duke University Press, 2002) and Charles R. Hale, “Neoliberal Multiculturalism: The Remaking of Cultural Rights and Racial Dominance in Central America,” *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 28, no. 1 (2005): 10–28.

62 Quoted in Grunebaum, *Memorializing the Past*, 38. Michael MacDonald, in a similar vein, argues that “under apartheid, racial nationalism mobilized opposition; under democracy, racial nationalism suffocates it”. See Michael MacDonald, “The Political Economy of Identity Politics,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 4 (September 16, 2004): 653.

63 Cloete, “Neville Alexander,” 33.

exploitation) of Indigenous populations—the ongoing struggle for justice in South Africa raises crucial questions about the evolving character of (settler) colonialism, and the ways in which the racial, colonial, and gendered logics of dispossession continue to be reproduced in new ways in the present. As Glen Coulthard has recently argued, dispossession and exploitation are not mutually exclusive but deeply interconnected. That is, settler colonial dispossession is not distinct from processes of capital accumulation, but is rather a strategy which seeks to eliminate unwanted populations while simultaneously accumulating land and wealth. In our contemporary era of neoliberalism, these “relations of power are no longer reproduced primarily through overtly coercive means”, but through the invisible hand of the market.⁶⁴ Dispossession thus understood survives the formal end of apartheid, but in new and updated forms that suit the needs of the post-racial present.

How, at all, does this relate to BDS and the Palestinian struggle? As we saw in the first section, a growing body of scholarship now describes Israel as an apartheid and/or settler colonial state. While this literature makes a powerful case for de-exceptionalising the Israel-Palestine conflict (arguing that it needs to be understood alongside a host of other cases of settler colonialism), it has paid scant attention to the link between race, capital, and land. This is problematic, not least since Israel-Palestine—like South Africa—has undergone an extensive programme of neoliberal restructuring since 1994. The Oslo Peace Process, which took the first steps towards a lasting two state solution, was from the start a deeply neoliberal process; as Clarno points out, “[t]he Oslo negotiations were promoted by Israeli business elites concerned that political instability would impede their ability to attract foreign investors and multinational corporations.”⁶⁵ According to the Palestinian anthropologist Khalil Nakhleh, it was in fact the globalisation of the Israeli economy that pushed it towards Oslo.⁶⁶ By removing the existing barriers separating the Palestinian and Israeli economies, Oslo was designed to open the markets of the Arab world to US and Israeli capital and, thus, to lay the foundations for a process of corporate-led neoliberalisation of the region. As Toufic Haddad points out, this vision was embraced by the international donor

64 Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*.

65 Clarno, “Neoliberal Apartheid,” 2015, 69–70.

66 Khalil Nakhleh, “Oslo: Replacing Liberation with Economic Neo-Colonialism,” Al-Shabaka, accessed June 23, 2017, <https://al-shabaka.org/commentaries/oslo-replacing-liberation-with-economic-neo-colonialism/>. For a discussion of Oslo as neoliberal governance, see chapter 5 in Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (UNC Press Books, 2014).

community. In place of political solutions, Oslo was based on “the notion that the market's invisible hand would guide Israelis and Palestinians to peace, provided the international community financially and politically backed this arrangement and facilitated the creation of an adequate incentives arrangement.”⁶⁷ Oslo thus saw the Palestinian liberation movement being superseded by a Palestinian state-building programme based on neoliberal institution-building; indeed, “Palestinians were to attain national independence with the IMF, the World Bank, and the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the United States challenging economic policies and investments, and with the occupying power, Israel, on their side.”⁶⁸ Palestine, argues Haddad, has effectively become a business, and it is clearly “a very profitable one, for any number of engaged actors from donors to Western states.”⁶⁹

This vision of a private-sector-led, export-oriented, free-market economy as the foundation for an independent Palestinian state was also embraced by the Palestinian Authority (PA). The strongest expression of this can be found in the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP). In 2007, under the leadership of prime minister Salam Fayyad—a former IMF employee—the PA began to implement a neoliberal reform package developed in coordination with the World Bank and the British Department for International Development. Focusing on public sector reform and private sector investment, the programme called for a 21% reduction of public-sector employment resulting in the elimination of 40,000 jobs. It also imposed a three year freeze on public salaries and ended the supply of subsidised water and electricity to refugee camps. To promote private sector investment, the PRDP reasserted the long-standing goal of establishing free-trade industrial zones, enabling foreign investors to take advantage of low-wage labour in the Occupied Territories.⁷⁰

It is here that the experience of Israel-Palestine and *contemporary* South Africa begin to converge. In both places, neoliberal restructuring has reconfigured the relation between race, capital, and the state, leading to the creation of a racialized surplus population that can be exploited and expropriated at will. As Clarno makes clear,

67 Toufic Haddad, *Palestine Ltd.: Neoliberalism and Nationalism in the Occupied Territory* (I.B.Tauris, 2016).

68 Raja J. Khalidi and Sobhi Samour, “Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement,” MPRA Paper, November 30, 2010, <https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/29642/>; Christine Leuenberger and Ahmad El-Atrash, “Building a Neoliberal Palestinian State under Closure: The Economic and Spatial Implications of Walls and Barriers,” *Economic Sociology European Electronic Newsletter* 16, no. 2 (2015): 21.

69 Haddad, *Palestine Ltd.*

70 See Haddad, *Palestine Ltd.*

“neoliberal restructuring has generated surplus populations in both South Africa and Palestine/Israel: permanently unemployed, too poor to consume, and abandoned by the neoliberal state.”⁷¹ This process—which has the effect of pressuring workers to accept lower wages, dangerous working conditions, over time, and so forth—is intrinsically linked to the neoliberal restructuring of the world economy. As Neferti Tadar explains, “in order for national developing states and economic elites to become viable players in the financialized global market, they must have at their disposal a population that can be made redundant to any particular lines of industry as dictated by the sudden vicissitudes of capital flows and that will ultimately shoulder the costs of fallout of any and all speculative manoeuvres.”⁷² The structural shift in the global economy—begun in the 1960s and intensified throughout the 1970s and 80s—have made sectors of the working class superfluous to the needs of capital. Expelled from the labour market and from what remains of the welfare state, they have come to resemble what Tadar describes as “forms of bare life, at-risk populations, warehoused, disposable people, urban excess (planet of the slums).”⁷³ In Gaza and the West Bank, official unemployment figures hover at 27%, but reach up to 45% among university graduates and those younger than 30. Palestinians have thus come to resemble those who Ashwin Desai, in the context of South Africa, calls “the poors”: those who exist at the margins of the capitalist economy and “whose plight cannot... be meaningfully addressed or meaningfully improved within the neoliberal institutions of global capitalism.”⁷⁴

In South Africa as well as occupied Palestine, the violent surplussing of racialized populations has given rise to a growing “security archipelago”,⁷⁵ designed to police the poor and protect the wealthy and the dominant—exemplified by the massive expansion of policing and incarceration, border walls and detention centres, gated communities and fortress suburbs. As we saw in chapter 3, neoliberalism has to be understood as a simultaneous roll-back of the (welfare) state through privatisation *as well as* a roll-out of new forms of interventionism and social control, meant to contain and pacify racialized populations rendered superfluous by capital. In South Africa,

71 Clarno, “Neoliberal Apartheid,” 2015, 71–2.

72 Neferti X. M. Tadiar, “Life-Times of Disposability within Global Neoliberalism,” *Social Text* 31, no. 2 115 (2013): 26, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2081112>.

73 Neferti X. M. Tadiar, 24. For a similar analysis with respect to the water poisoning in Flint, Michigan, see Laura Pulido, “Flint, Environmental Racism, and Racial Capitalism,” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 27, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2016.1213013>.

74 Cloete, “Neville Alexander,” 43.

75 Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* (Duke University Press, 2013).

neoliberal restructuring has been accompanied by a range of “tough-on-crime” criminal justice reforms meant to secure urban space and police the poor. Borrowed from the carceral technology and “war on crime” rhetoric developed in the United States, harsh criminalisation has been framed as crucial to economic development in at least two ways: first, by signalling to investors that South Africa is safe for foreign investment and white commercial farming; and second, by warehousing surplus labour and opening up a new market for private interests.⁷⁶ As a consequence, South Africa's prison population today ranks amongst one of the highest in the world.⁷⁷ There has also been a rapid increase in gated communities, fortress suburbs, and private security companies. The private security industry has been the fastest-growing sector in South Africa since the early 1990s, and now employs more than 40,000 people.⁷⁸

In Palestine, similar processes of racialized (in)security are at work; since 1967, Israel has imprisoned approximately 800,000 Palestinians.⁷⁹ Palestinians currently face one of the highest per capita incarceration rates in the world, with 40% of all Palestinian men having been imprisoned at one point in their lives. Since 2007, the international security company Group 4 Security (G4S) has been contracted to provide services and equipment to Israeli prisons, detention centres, checkpoints, and the police. G4S, which is the largest private employer on the African continent, also owns and manages prisons in South Africa, including Mangaung Correctional Centre, the second largest private prison in the world.

As we saw in the previous two chapters, this link between neoliberal economic policies, racialized (in)security, and moral panics is by no means unique to South Africa and Israel-Palestine.⁸⁰ Indeed, in the United States a Black person is killed by law

76 Amanda Alexander, “Democracy Dispossessed: Land, Law & the Politics of Redistribution in South Africa” (Columbia University, 2016), 189–191. The link between neoliberal economic policies and criminalization has been noted by a number of thinkers. Amongst others, see Jordan T. Camp, *Incarcerating the Crisis: Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neoliberal State* (Univ of California Press, 2016); Angela Y. Davis, *The Meaning of Freedom: And Other Difficult Dialogues* (City Lights Publishers, 2012); Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *Prisons of Poverty* (U of Minnesota Press, 2009).

77 “SA Prison Population among World’s Highest | IOL,” accessed March 4, 2017, <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/sa-prison-population-among-worlds-highest-398070>.

78 Andy Clarno, “Beyond the State: Policing Precariousness in South Africa and Palestine/Israel,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 10 (August 24, 2014): 1728, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.931984>; Tony Roshan Samara, “Order and Security in the City: Producing Race and Policing Neoliberal Spaces in South Africa,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 4 (April 1, 2010): 637–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870903337318>.

79 IMEU, “Israel’s Mass Incarceration of Palestinians | IMEU,” accessed June 19, 2017, <https://imeu.org/article/israels-mass-incarceration-of-palestinians>.

80 Edna Bonacich, Sabrina Alimahomed, and Jake B. Wilson, “The Racialization of Global Labor,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 52, no. 3 (November 1, 2008): 342–55, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764208323510>.

enforcement every 28 hours; along the borders of the EU, gunboats, military aircrafts, landmines, and border guards are similarly used to prevent migrants fleeing poverty and violence from entering mainland Europe. To be clear, the issue here is not that the militarisation and neoliberal governance of South Africa is *like* occupied Palestine or urban Black America—although that might be the case—but, rather and more significantly, that these different geographies of oppression are linked through uneven and combined processes under racial capitalism: and as such they must be analysed and resisted within a shared circuit. In the next section I return to South Africa to discuss the Fallist movements, the ongoing struggle for decolonisation in *present-day* South Africa, and the bonds of solidarity that are being forged between South African students and the BDS.

The Art of Falling: From Recognition to Abolition

“To everyone who has survived pain, and trauma at the hands of the colonial legacy of Rhodes. I am sorry. That those are the places we must go to learn, that our black mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters must sweat cents from their pores so that we can get better. We were the ones with possibility to become 'something better,' the promise of the rainbow nation, of women empowerment, of a new South Africa. Is this not why our foremothers have suffered? That we get better, safer? Oh, the liberal university we could not call home.

They did not know, that 'better' looked like rape scars and nights sweats filled with anxiety. It is not new either; black womxn have long learned to carry rape scars and night sweats. But it was not meant to be us. Freedom was not coming tomorrow. Tomorrow was here. Our blackness and womxnhood could no longer be used against us as weapons. The maggot-filled lies of inclusivity.

Whatever the fuck it was. Seldom better, it was never home.”⁸¹

In 2015 students at the University of Cape Town (UCT) formed a radical movement that challenged the exclusionary character of South African universities as well as the wider dream sold by the “rainbow nation.” As organisers and activists were quick to point out, South African universities have historically played a central role in creating and upholding colonialism and apartheid: indeed, under British colonialism,

81 Redacted, “#RhodesWar: Makunyiwe Macala,” *The New Inquiry*, February 5, 2018, <https://thenewinquiry.com/blog/makunyiwe-macala/>.

universities such as UCT received extensive funds to study the “native question”; under apartheid, the education system was highly segregated, with white schools and universities receiving most of the funding—a pattern which continues to structure higher education in present-day South Africa. Under the hashtag of #RhodesMustFall, the students at UCT drew together a variety of individuals and groups marginalised within the university community, including cleaners, cafeteria staff, and gardeners. While it is the call to remove the infamous statue of Cecil Rhodes which has received most attention by the media, #RMF organised around a much larger set of demands, including the decolonisation of the Eurocentric university curricula, the transformation of a predominantly white professoriate, the ending of exploitation of outsourced poor Black workers, the expansion of financial aid for low-income students, and higher wages and better conditions for campus workers.⁸² As the #RMF Mission Statement declares, “we are an independent collective of students, workers and staff who have come together to end institutionalised racism and patriarchy at UCT.”⁸³ The call to decolonise higher education quickly spread to other campuses, inspiring similar movements such as Open Stellenbosch at Stellenbosch University, the Black Student Movement at the University Currently Known As Rhodes (UCKAR), Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford, Royall Must Fall at Harvard Law School, and the nationwide #FeesMustFall collective. As the movement grew from #RhodesMustFall to #FeesMustFall and finally to Fallism, organisers have challenged the wider narrative of the transition from apartheid to democracy. Speaking to the lived realities of race and class in contemporary South Africa, they remind us that the struggle to decolonise higher education is intimately linked to a broader set of struggles: struggles against racial capitalism—including its reliance on institutional racism, racialized state violence, and the violent production of surplus populations—and the way in which it continues to structure everyday life in South Africa in new but old ways, twenty years after “freedom” and the end of apartheid.

From its inception, pro-Black, Black feminist, and queer activist organisation such as Black Stokvel, Queer Revolution, and South African Young Feminist Activists have been central to the Fallist movements. The #RMF Mission Statement names Radical Black Feminism, alongside Black Consciousness and Pan-Africanism, as one of

82 For an excellent overview of the role of precarious labour in universities and beyond in South Africa, see Andries Bezuidenhout and Khayaat Fakier, “Maria’s Burden: Contract Cleaning and the Crisis of Social Reproduction in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” *Antipode* 38, no. 3 (June 26, 2006): 462–85, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0066-4812.2006.00590.x>.

83 The Mission Statement is available at http://jwte.org.za/resources/docs/salon-volume-9/RMF_Combined.pdf

the founding three pillars of the movement. As the Statement declares,

“we are not only defined by our blackness, but that some of us are also defined by our gender, our sexuality, our able bodiedness, our mental health, and our class, among other things. We all have certain oppressions and certain privileges and this must inform our organising so that we do not silence groups among us, and so that no one should have to choose between their struggles.”⁸⁴

Alongside calls for free education and an end to the outsourcing of workers, Fallists have also been calling out patriarchy, sexual violence, ableism and queer-antagonism. At UCKAR, organisers published the #RURReference List, listing the names of 11 men accused of rape on campus, which inaugurated a national debate on rape culture in higher education. Around the same time Wits students initiated a naked solidarity protest under the hashtag #IamOneInThree, to draw awareness to the high number of women in South Africa who have—or will be—sexually assaulted and/or raped in their lifetime. As these students make clear, race might be the “modality in which class is lived”, as Stuart Hall once put it, but gender is all too often the modality in which race is lived.

⁸⁴ The Rhodes Must Fall Mission Statement is available at http://jwtc.org.za/resources/docs/salon-volume-9/RMF_Combined.pdf

In rejecting the ideology of the “rainbow nation”, Fallists have successfully exposed the limits of multiculturalism and a recognition politics which maintains structures of subjugation beneath the veneer of rights, reconciliation, and formal equality. These movements are practicing what Du W.E.B. Du Bois called “abolition democracy”; namely, a politics which seeks to abolish all institutions complicit in racial capitalism and bent on exploiting the “basic majority of workers who are yellow, brown and black.”⁸⁵ Indeed, and as Khadija Khan explains, “RMF/FMF activists have departed from 'rainbow nation' ideologies of transformation altogether, and are calling for complete reconstruction in the form of decolonisation.”⁸⁶ Unsurprisingly, Fallists and BDS supporters have been quick to make connections between their struggles; as the BDS website declares, “Rhodes Must Fall activists are natural allies of the BDS movement.”⁸⁷ At the UCT, students have repeatedly called on their university to divest from Israel and to implement an academic boycott.⁸⁸ A boycott is seen as essential, not only for the purpose of furthering the Palestinian struggle, but also because it is “an important step” in the project of decolonising South African universities. As a statement from the students makes clear:

“At a time when there is university-wide consensus that UCT must commit to a programme of decolonisation, there is a growing understanding that decolonisation cannot simply be an inward-looking process, but must include a response to the global context. Any attempt by UCT to decolonise will fail at the outset if it disregards the systems of oppression in which it is complicit and perpetuates, beyond its campus boundaries of Rondebosch and Mowbray. The UCT academic boycott of Israel cannot be viewed in isolation, but must be seen as part of the broader movement towards decolonising the university.”⁸⁹

Pointing to the interconnected histories of land dispossession, settler colonialism, and apartheid, as well as of contemporary neoliberal restructuring and racialized state violence, UCT students invite us to consider the freedom struggles in Israel-Palestine and contemporary South Africa through a shared lens. These struggles are not the same,

85 W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880* (Simon and Schuster, 1999), 16. See also Angela Y. Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture*, 1st ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005).

86 Khan, “Intersectionality in Student Movements,” 113.

87 “For the Record, BDS Is an Anti-Racist Issue,” *BDS Movement* (blog), May 16, 2016, <https://bdsmovement.net/news/record-bds-anti-racist-issue>.

88 “University of Cape Town Debates Academic and Cultural Boycotts of Israel,” *The Jerusalem Post*, September 29, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/BDS-THREAT/University-of-Cape-Town-debates-academic-and-cultural-boycotts-of-Israel-506305>.

89 UCT Palestine Solidarity Forum, “UCT, Decolonisation And The Academic Boycott Of Israel,” *The Daily Vox*, n.d., <https://www.thedailyvox.co.za/uct-decolonisation-academic-boycott-israel/>.

and yet they are interconnected—different fronts of the same war. In making these connections, students are enacting a revolutionary solidarity through which a “many-headed hydra” is brought into being—an internationalism that stretches from the townships of Cape Town to the “open-air prison” in Gaza, from the mines in Marikana to the free trade zones in the West Bank, and from the punctuated myth of the “rainbow nation” to the ruins of the Oslo Accords.



Fig. 2: UCT students protest against the occupation in Palestine

Conclusion

Over the last few years the Fallist movements in South Africa have inspired groups and activists around the world calling for the decolonisation of higher education and wider society. Exposing the hollowness of rainbow ideology, Fallists have challenged the racial, colonial, and gendered logics of dispossession which continue to structure everyday life in South Africa. Present-day South Africa is “free” in the legal sense of the term but, as Fallists remind us, decolonisation remains an unfinished project: the transition to democracy not only left existing inequalities in place, but also intensified the marginalisation and exploitation of the Black poor. As South African intellectuals such as Neville Alexander and Steve Biko clearly understood, racialized dispossession is a constant feature of capital accumulation. Perspectives that equate decolonisation with state reformation ultimately overlook this link: not only are they implicated in the reproduction of racialized inequalities, but they also help reproduce a

colourblind discourse that places race under official erasure and therefore forecloses the very possibility of addressing racialized inequalities. As the South African transition makes clear, the racial, colonial, and gendered logics of dispossession are perfectly capable of reproducing themselves even after the formal attainment of freedom and democracy.

This argument has important implications for the BDS movement. While BDS campaigners in recent years have turned to the South African anti-apartheid movement to formulate strategies of resistance and conceptualise future visions, my analysis reveals that there might be just as much to learn from the incomplete nature of decolonisation in *contemporary* South Africa. Since 1994, South Africa and Israel-Palestine have both undergone processes of neoliberal restructuring, which has deepened existing inequalities and led to an increasing reliance on state violence in order to police the racialized poor and secure the powerful. While the apartheid analogy has been helpful for disrupting hegemonic narratives that frame Israel-Palestine as a Jewish-Arab ethnic conflict—as opposed to a case of settler colonialism and, thus, as part of a broader context of anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles—a more thorough understanding of what South African apartheid was *and continues to be* opens up space for a radical internationalism that links together the struggles against racial capitalism, (settler) colonialism, patriarchy, ableism, and so on: for an internationalism that makes “things fall apart” and that calls for a complete reconstruction of society in the form of abolition and decolonisation. In the next chapter I extend this analysis by asking how such ideas of universal history and total critique can be retrieved without invoking Eurocentric ideas of progress and teleology. As we shall see, if the dream of emancipation is to be retained, not everything can fall: we must also learn to float anew.



*Fig. 3: Scenes from the film Moonlight*⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Available at <https://metro.co.uk/2017/02/27/what-is-moonlight-about-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-oscar-best-picture-winner-6475790/>

CHAPTER 8

Universal History Without Guarantees

“Long before Karl Marx wrote 'Workers of the world, Unite!', the revolution was international.”
—C.L.R. James¹

“The class consciousness of our epoch is not the sole prerogative of male, white, productive labourers. It remains to be constructed from the potential complementarity of diverse political struggles which constitute the class politically at different levels. It provides a promise of unity which may only be apparent in the rarest moments of revolutionary rupture, where we may catch a fleeting glimpse of the class for itself.”
—Paul Gilroy²

Introduction

Over the last three decades, post- and decolonial scholars have drawn attention to the dangers of universal claims. Thinkers from Edward Said to Gayatri Spivak to Walter Dignolo and Sylvia Wynter have shown how moral-political universalism—a form of abstract and eternal knowledge beyond time and space—is intimately bound up with European colonialism and domination.³ From the notion of the universal stems a teleological, progressive reading of history, in which European Enlightenment modernity is seen as “a developmental advance over premodern, nonmodern, or traditional forms of life.”⁴ The universal is, from this perspective, inherently suspect, complicit with historical and epistemic forms of imperialism.

What does this rejection of universalism mean for the internationalism outlined in previous chapters? Indeed, if we accept that “[t]he normative perspective that serves

1 Quoted in Reiland Rabaka, *Africana Critical Theory: Reconstructing the Black Radical Tradition, from W. E. B. Du Bois and C. L. R. James to Frantz Fanon and Amílcar Cabral* (Lexington Books, 2010), 96.

2 Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *EMPIRE STRIKES BACK: Race and Racism In 70's Britain* (Routledge, 2004), 306.

3 For an excellent introduction into questions of time, historicity, and world politics, see Kimberly Hutchings, *Time and World Politics: Thinking the Present* (Oxford University Press, 2015). For a critique of universal history, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000); Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limit of World-History* (Columbia University Press, 2012); Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (Psychology Press, 2004); Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (February 3, 2004): 257–337, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2004.0015>.

4 Amy Allen, *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Columbia University Press, 2016), 3.

to orient the forward-looking conception of progress is justified” by a colonial “backward-looking story about how ‘our’ modern, European, Enlightenment moral vocabulary and political ideals”, as Amy Allen has argued, then what is left of the emancipatory project of equality and freedom? Put differently, how might we be critical of the universal, while simultaneously recognising that to outright reject the possibility of universal history is to “read out of existence the whole strand of fighters like CLR James, Claudia Jones, and Dr. King, all of whom very much believed in universal projects and anti-racist demands”?⁵ Responding to these questions, in this chapter I examine how, if at all, it might be possible to disentangle emancipatory politics from its historical baggage of Eurocentrism, racism, and empire. Connecting this to the radical internationalism outlined in previous chapters, I interrogate how it might be possible to retrieve the notion of universal history and total critique, *without* invoking Eurocentric ideas of progress and teleology. To do so I put Susan Buck-Morss's re-reading of Hegelian dialectics into conversation with Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history and Stuart Hall's call for a Marxism “without guarantees.” As we shall see, these thinkers not only allow us to centre-stage revolutionary, subaltern groups as the agents of history; they also help us re-conceive revolutionary transformation as the *interruption* of history, rather than its *culmination*. The insurgent universalism that emerges out of this is neither abstract (in a Kantian sense) nor free-floating (as it is for poststructuralists): instead it arises in opposition to the universalising thrust of racial capitalism and the hegemonic narratives that accompany it. In Theodore Adorno's formulation, “progress occurs where it ends.”⁶

I develop this argument in four sections. In the first section I turn to the groups and movements discussed in the last three chapters, arguing that these seemingly independent struggles—against white nationalism in Europe, police brutality in the United States, and neoliberal apartheid in South Africa and Palestine—actually must be understood as different fronts of the same war and, consequently, as different facets of a radical internationalism from below. The struggles against empire, white supremacy, settler colonialism, gender subordination, and capitalist restructuring are not the same—but they are interconnected. Recognising these “discontinuous but related histories”⁷ ultimately points to the necessity of connecting—but not unifying—different struggles

5 David Roediger, quoted in Satnam Virdee, “Race, Class and Roediger’s Open Marxism,” *Salvage* (blog), n.d., <http://salvage.zone/online-exclusive/race-class-and-roedigers-open-marxism/>.

6 Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (Columbia University Press, 2012), 150.

7 Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, 283.

in a global struggle against racial capitalism. In section two I revisit the post/decolonial debate on history and historicism in order to raise questions about the epistemological underpinnings of such a project. If this is a universalist project—“the historical antilogic to racism, slavery, and capitalism”,⁸ in Cedric Robinson's formulation—then how can it avoid relying on the “master's tools” and repeating the moral-political universalism it supposedly wants to challenge? In essence, how—if at all—might it be possible to combine dialectics with dialectics, and universalism with non-Eurocentrism? To answer this question in the last two sections I read Susan Buck-Morss alongside Walter Benjamin and Stuart Hall, arguing that it in fact is possible to retrieve the emancipatory project of equality and freedom *without* invoking the false universalism of the Enlightenment. In telling an insurgent counternarrative, movements such as BLM, BDS, RMF/FMF, and migrant activists remind us that there could have been, and still can be, a different world. In bringing the world to a standstill, they turn the present into a revolutionary possibility.

Different Fronts of the Same War

In the last three chapters I sketched the contours of a contemporary motley-crew of “planetary wanderers” that enact a radical internationalism from below. Focusing on migrant struggles in Europe, recent forms of Black-Palestinian solidarity, and the Fallist and BDS movements, I highlighted that the struggle against racial capitalism—including the violent surplussing of racialized populations and the consequent growth of the penal and national security state—necessitates a national as well as international frame. This should not be mistaken for the classical Marxist version of internationalism. Indeed, this is not a perspective grounded in the notion of the working class as a continuous and homogenous historical subject: instead it unfolds from what Paul Gilroy describes as “discontinuous but related histories”, capturing the relation between those “who, though structurally related, [are] not always geographically proximate.”⁹ In the same way that Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism* insisted on reading the plantations of Mississippi and the factories of Manchester not as separate systems but as differentiated and complementary parts of the *same* global economy, the struggles waged by these different groups must be understood as mutually constitutive and dialectically entwined.

8 Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 2 edition (Chapel Hill, N.C: University North Carolina Pr, 2000), 240.

9 Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, 283.

While BLM, migrant activists, Fallists, and BDS supporters recognise the specificity of their struggles, their aspirations also exceed territorial borders. Responding to the violent policing, surveillance, and confinement of actually or potentially rebellious racialized (and gendered) populations rendered surplus by capitalist restructuring, their struggles constitute different fronts of the same war. Together they form part of a contemporary “many-headed hydra” that stretches from the streets of Ferguson and Baltimore to the dark waters of the Mediterranean, to the refugee camps in Gaza and the West Bank to the townships of Cape Town. To be clear, the struggles waged here are not the same: indeed, the argument is not that occupied Palestine is *like* the Mediterranean or the townships of South Africa. The point, rather, is that these struggles illuminate each other in complex ways; that they are part of a larger network and circuit of struggle; and that we are living in related histories. Consequently, while the movements for Black lives in the United States, migrant rights in Europe, Palestinian liberation, and South African decolonisation are not the same, they *are* interrelated and dialectically entwined: through circuits of empire, labor, migration, and cultural and political imagination. This does not deny the uniqueness and specificity of local struggles—after all, Palestinians, Blacks, migrants, and Indigenous peoples do not share the same experience of oppression—but it does emphasise their transnational character, and thus points to the importance of connecting (but *not* unifying) different struggles, projects, and trajectories under racial capitalism.

Such an internationalism is of course not easy or automatic: as discussed in previous chapters, practises of solidarity can easily re-colonise and re-silence those who resist oppression and become yet another re-enactment of power and privilege. The problem, as Indigenous scholar Andrea Smith has argued, is that racialized peoples can be victims of one or more of the logics of white supremacy, and *simultaneously* be complicit in oppression through the other logics. The goal of a radical internationalism, then, cannot be to homogenise oppression, nor can it be to establish who is more oppressed. Instead, it must seek to understand “how anti-immigrant xenophobia, white supremacy, and settler colonialism are mutually reinforcing in ways that actually prevent us from seeing how these logics are fully connected.”¹⁰ The struggles against empire, white supremacy, settler colonialism, gender subordination, and capitalism are not the same—but they are interlocking. As such it is futile to change one system while leaving others intact.

10 See Smith's introduction in Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (AK Press, 2014), xiii.

For scholars of a postcolonial and poststructuralist bent, such an emancipatory project is likely to look suspicious. How, they might ask, can the idea of total critique and transformation be retrieved, without invoking Eurocentric ideas about universal history? To answer this question—and to counter the idea that the internationalism outlined above is yet another version of Eurocentric universal history—in the next sections I revisit the post/decolonial debate on history and historicism. Drawing on Susan Buck-Morss, Walter Benjamin, and Stuart Hall, I show that it in fact is possible to retrieve the emancipatory project of equality and freedom *without* relying on the false universalism of the Enlightenment.

Universal History and Its Discontents

The concept of universal history—which sees the history of humanity as a story about gradual progress towards greater freedom, equality, prosperity, rationality, and/or peace—is central to Enlightenment philosophy. As Wendy Brown explains, “[f]or Hegel, the world was growing ever more rational; for Kant, more peaceful; for Paine; more true to the principles of natural right; for Tocqueville, more egalitarian; for Mill, more free and reasonable; and for Marx, perhaps, all of the above.”¹¹ Over the last thirty years such ideas have been heavily criticized by post- and decolonial scholars. As Dipesh Chakrabarty, Ranajit Guha, Anibal Quijano, Robert White, and numerous others have shown, the idea that history progresses from one “stage” to another is intimately intertwined with European colonialism and domination. In Chakrabarty's formulation, “[h]istoricism enabled European domination of the world in the nineteenth century.”¹² By privileging and universalising the European path of development, Enlightenment philosophers depicted Europe or “the West” as more developed and advanced than the non-European world. As Quijano explains,

“All non-Europeans could be considered as pre-European and at the same time displaced on a certain historical chain from the primitive to the civilized, from the rational to the irrational, from the traditional to the modern, from the magic-mythic to the scientific. In other words, from the non-European/pre-European to something that in time will be

11 Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 6.

12 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 7. For a discussion of the entanglement of Europe's colonial project and the philosophy of history see, amongst others, Allen, *The End of Progress*; Guha, *History at the Limit of World-History*; Young, *White Mythologies*.

Europeanized or modernized.”¹³

Hegel's account of world history, which is premised on the development of the consciousness of freedom, offers a typical example. Africa, Hegel maintained, is outside of history, and Africans constitute a “race of children that remain immersed in a state of naiveté.”¹⁴ For Kant, similarly, non-Europeans—which he classified as black (Africans), yellow (Asians), and red (Asians)—were less advanced than white Europeans, and thus less capable of self-rule. As Thomas McCarthy has shown, Kant considered “cultivation, civilization, and moralization a process of diffusion from the West to the rest of the world”,¹⁵ through which non-European cultures gradually assimilated to European culture. Marx, meanwhile, described capitalism as an intrinsic stage in history's path, leading him to argue that the “country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.”¹⁶ Like Hegel and Kant, European modernity was for him superior to non-European forms of life. Non-European cultures were thus relegated to an “imaginary waiting-room of history.”¹⁷

The problem with such narratives of universal history is not only that they give legitimacy to the civilising mission, serving as ideological rationalisation and justification for Europe's colonial project. They also rely on a skewed reading of Europe's own history, which elides the ways in which Enlightenment modernity was the product, not only of Europe's internal struggle for liberty, equality, and fraternity, but also of the creation of colonial empire abroad. As Fanon reminds us, “Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The riches which are choking it are those plundered from the underdeveloped peoples.”¹⁸ The rise of industrial capitalism in Europe was made possible by the enslavement of millions of Africans, the genocide of Native Americans, imported Asian indentured servitude, and the extraction of natural resources

13 Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification,” in *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, ed. Mabel Moraña, Enrique D. Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui (Duke University Press, 2008), 204.

14 Quoted in Naomi Zack, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 254. For an excellent analysis of the role of race in Hegel's philosophy of history, see Stuart Barnett and Robert Bernasconi, “Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti,” in *Hegel After Derrida* (Routledge, 1998).

15 Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 67. For a similar analysis of JS Mill, see Beate Jahn, “Barbarian Thoughts: Imperialism in the Philosophy of John Stuart Mill,” *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 3 (2005): 599–618.

16 Quoted in Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), 177.

17 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 8. He continues: “the European idea of history... came to non-European peoples in the 19th century as somebody's way of saying “not yet” to somebody else.”

18 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 2001), 58.

such from the colonies.¹⁹ Moreover, and as Edward Said demonstrated in *Orientalism*, European Enlightenment was also ideologically dependent on the colonial project, because Europe's own identity was formed through encounters with those that it perceived as geographically and culturally other.

Critiques such as these have led many to conclude that the concept of universal history is inherently bankrupt and best left in the dustbin of history.²⁰ Such conclusions may nonetheless be too hasty. As Chakrabarty makes clear, “there is no easy way of dispensing with these universals in the condition of political modernity.”²¹ In fact, the “very critique of colonialism [is] itself unthinkable except as a legacy, partially, of how Enlightenment Europe was appropriated in the subcontinent.”²² The very project of provincializing Europe presupposes some form of global historical narrative. For Chakrabarty, the challenge is thus how to reimagine history while rejecting teleological assumptions about historical progress, whose theoretical subject is always and necessarily Europe. His proposed solution draws on Heidegger and suggests that there exists a plurality of histories: next to the universal history of capital, which he labels History 1, there are multiple, alternative histories that have their own integrity and independence, and that resist easy assimilation into the historicist narrative posited by Eurocentrism. According to Chakrabarty, these alternative histories—History 2—consist of “antecedents” to capitalism, life-worlds that do not contribute to the self-production of capital and that therefore have the power to interrupt it.

A similar idea is developed by Enrique Dussel in his work on analectics. “Ana”, meaning beyond, refers to the alterity or otherness that lie beyond totality. For Dussel, analectics thus designates a method “which begins from the Other as free, as one beyond the system of totality.”²³ He borrows this idea from Lévinas, for whom exteriority names the “otherwise than being, or beyond essence.”²⁴ Nonetheless, where Lévinas sees this alterity as belonging to an abstract Other, for Dussel the Other is a concrete human subject: the poor, the oppressed, or those that live in the periphery. As

19 For a classical formulation, see Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Fahamu/Pambazuka, 2012). See also Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Duke University Press, 2015).

20 Antonio Y. Vázquez-Arroyo, “Universal History Disavowed: On Critical Theory and Postcolonialism,” *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 451, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790802468288>.

21 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 5.

22 Chakrabarty, 4.

23 Quoted in Michael D. Barber, *Ethical Hermeneutics: Rationality in Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation* (Fordham Univ Press, 1998), 27.

24 E. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013).

he explains, it is by listening to, and learning from, the voices that are located beyond the exteriority of domination, that it is possible to formulate both a negative critique (of the oppression of the system) as well as a positive critique (which posits an alternative utopia, based on Indigenous traditions and world views).

While these formulations both yield alternative accounts of history, they rely on an ideal of authenticity and unmediated experience. In that they are not unlike the “ethics-first” approaches that we encountered in chapter 1. Where the ethical frameworks of Rawls, Habermas, Butler, and others rely on ontological universals that separate ethics and politics, Dussel and Chakrabarty instead seek to recuperate the “authentic voices” of the periphery which, they hope, might be able to steer political life in a more just direction. The problem, as Barbara Weinstein explains, is that Eurocentrism “boasts a long tradition of situating elements of 'oriental' culture outside of its historicist narrative.”²⁵ By grounding their projects in the existence of a supposedly uncontaminated alterity, Chakrabarty and Dussel therefore both “run the risk of replicating an 'orientalist' discourse that would certainly represent no challenge whatsoever to the eurocentric vision of the world.”²⁶ In contrast to Dussel and Chakrabarty, who both attempt to reimagine history from the position of exteriority, in what follows I argue that it in fact is possible to retrieve the disparaged idea of universal history *without* invoking the false universalism of the Enlightenment. To demonstrate how and why, I turn to Susan Buck-Morss's provocative work on Hegel and Haiti.

Interrupting History: Unhistorical Histories and Counternarratives

Susan Buck-Morss has in recent years sought to derive a reconstructed notion of universal history. Her work is directed against the colonial logic of Western emancipatory discourses, *as well as* the relativistic beliefs in plural modernities and multiple truths. As she explains, while “the postcolonial attack on Eurocentrism has done much to rectify the colonial distortions of global knowledge it has splintered the political response at the same time that the celebration of cultural difference has been

25 Barbara Weinstein, “History Without a Cause? Grand Narratives, World History, and the Postcolonial Dilemma,” *International Review of Social History* 50, no. 1 (April 2005): 87, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859004001865>.

26 Weinstein, 87. Ofelia Scutte has similarly argued that Dussel's ethics of pure, uncontaminated exteriority presupposes that the oppressed have to stay in the privileged position of exteriority in order to be able to speak to the established system of domination; “One must remain on the periphery if one is to receive the moral blessings associated with alterity.” Ofelia Schutte, *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought* (SUNY Press, 1993), 201.

assimilated into neoliberal discourse and marketing rhetoric with surprising ease.”²⁷ While Buck-Morss worries about the disappearance of a future-oriented emancipatory politics, she is also aware that a return to a discussion of universality “threatens to merge.... with the ideological needs of a newly constituted, global, ruling class.”²⁸ The problem can be summarised as: How might it be possible to rescue “the ideal of universal human history from the uses to which white domination has put it”²⁹ and to advocate a “universal history worth the name?”³⁰

Buck-Morss develops an answer to this question by returning to Hegel's dialectic of lordship (Herr) and bondage (Knecht). In *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* she argues that Hegel's dialectic of freedom was modelled on the real confrontation taking place between the enslaved and slave-owners in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, 1791-1804. Accounts of the insurrection were widely available in European journals and newspapers, including the German cosmopolitan magazine *Minerva* which Hegel read regularly. Between 1804 and 1805, *Minerva* published “a continuing series, totalling more than a hundred pages, including source documents, news summaries, and eye witness accounts.”³¹ As Buck-Morss explains, this leaves us with

“only two alternatives. Either Hegel was the blindest of all blind philosophers of freedom in Enlightenment Europe, surpassing Locke and Rousseau by far in his ability to block out reality right in front of his nose (the print right in front of his face at the breakfast table); or Hegel knew —knew about real slaves revolting successfully against real masters, and he elaborated his dialectic of lordship and bondage deliberately within this contemporary context.”³²

For Buck-Morss, this means that Hegel's master-slave dialectic should not be considered a mere philosophical metaphor, inspired by the writings of other European intellectuals. Rather it is a historically grounded metaphor, based on the self-emancipation of the Saint-Domingue slaves. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* cannot be fully understood without accounting for the black bodies that inspired it, *or* the European empires against which they rebelled. By interrupting Hegel's narrative, Buck-Morss thus also intends to interrupt the history of European modernity. The uncovered link between Hegel and

27 Susan Buck-Morss, “The Gift of the Past,” *Small Axe* 14, no. 3 33 (November 1, 2010): 174, <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2010-033>.

28 Buck-Morss, 174.

29 Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 74.

30 Buck-Morss, x.

31 Buck-Morss, 42.

32 Buck-Morss, 50.

Haiti, she argues, subverts the Enlightenment narrative from within, rendering Europe strange and no longer identical to itself: “[w]hat happens when, in the spirit of dialectics, we turn the tables and consider Haiti not as a victim of Europe, but as an agent in Europe's construction?”³³ The answer, she argues, is a decentering of the legacy of modernity that allows us to recover and rewrite, rather than reject, its universal intent. In other words, by reconnecting the disconnected histories of Hegel and Haiti, Buck-Morss demonstrates how the universal history theorised by Enlightenment thinkers must be understood as a product of the colonial system—and not of Europe's endogenous development. As she explains, “[i]f the historical facts about freedom can be ripped out of the narratives told by the victors and salvaged for our own time, then the project of universal freedom does not need to be discarded, but rather, redeemed and reconstituted on a different basis.”³⁴ Ultimately, by interrupting the very idea of universal history so central to both Hegel as well as the wider Enlightenment tradition, it becomes possible to formulate a counternarrative that holds on to a universal notion of freedom but which does so *without* invoking the false universalism of the Enlightenment.

Buck-Morss's attempt to rescue the utopian moment shares similarities with Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history. In his *Arcades Project*, Benjamin sought to formulate “a historical materialism which has annihilated within itself the idea of progress”, and which takes as its “founding concept... not progress but actualization.”³⁵ For Benjamin, the past is never fixed nor finalised, but endlessly reconstructed in its afterlife; what has been is always open to appropriation and erasure. To articulate the past historically does therefore not mean to recognise it the way it really was or happened. Instead, a truly historical understanding of the past seeks to “blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history” and to recognize “a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past.”³⁶ For Benjamin, revolutionary transformation is ultimately an *interruption* of history, rather than its *culmination*. Freedom is not internal to history—as it is for Hegel, Marx, and Kant—but is instead experienced as a rupture that blasts the past and present out of linear sequence. Hannah Arendt, in discussing Benjamin's work, referred to this as “pearl diving”, in which one “descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the

33 Buck-Morss, 80.

34 Buck-Morss, 74–5.

35 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 460. For an excellent overview of Benjamin's philosophy of history, see Brown, *Politics Out of History*; Beatrice Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (A&C Black, 2006).

36 Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings: 1938-1940* (Harvard University Press, 1996), 396.

rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths, and carry them to the surface.”³⁷ The sea here functions as a metaphor for the past, with the pearls being the forgotten fragments and crystallisations of time that only can be brought to light by someone—the pearl diver—who discerns meaning in them. Through its focus on pearl divers, Benjamin's philosophy of history not only centre-stages revolutionary, subaltern groups as the agents of history. It also re-conceives history as a discontinuity or “arresting of happening” that transforms rather than continues linear history. In the words of Theodore Adorno, “progress occurs where it ends.”³⁸

Like Benjamin, Buck-Morss also attempts to “blast open the continuum of history.” By rescuing the Haitian revolution from the oblivion imposed by the Hegelian understanding of universal history, she too seeks to grasp the universal, “not by subsuming facts within overarching systems or homogenizing premises, but by attending to the edges... the boundaries of our historical imagination in order to trespass, trouble, and tear these boundaries down.”³⁹ In other words, by breaking with the silence imposed by hegemonic narratives and giving voice to those sacrificed on the altar of progress, Buck-Morss seeks to formulate a counternarrative that liberates “our own imagination” and “inspire[s] action” rather than re-inscribes power.⁴⁰ The history of freedom thus conceived is not available to a priori reasoning: rather than a new meta-narrative of linear progress (be it the Hegelian march to greater consciousness or the Kantian universal peace) freedom is here understood as an insight that appears like a flash.

Pearl Divers: To Know the Time On the Clock of the World

We are now in a position to return to the question of how the emancipatory claims of the radical internationalism outlined in previous chapters are to be understood. Indeed, how might it be possible to hold on to the idea of total critique and emancipatory politics while also resisting teleological understandings of history?

37 Quoted in Dana Villa, *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 278.

38 Adorno, *Critical Models*, 150.

39 Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, 79.

40 As Buck-Morss explains in an exchange with David Scott and Sibylle Fischer, “the goal is to disrupt the intellectual order by exposing the blind spots that hinder conceptual, hence political, imagination.” Susan Buck-Morss, “The Gift of the Past,” *Small Axe* 14, no. 3 33 (November 1, 2010): 174, <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2010-033>. See also Sibylle Fischer, “History and Catastrophe,” *Small Axe* 14, no. 3 (November 26, 2010): 163–72; David Scott, “Antinomies of Slavery, Enlightenment, and Universal History,” *Small Axe* 14, no. 3 33 (November 1, 2010): 152–62, <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2010-031>.

Stuart Hall's formulation of a Marxism “without guarantees” offers tentative answers. If the universal arrives as an interruption of History (rather than through its linear advancement), then it becomes crucial to know “what time it is on the clock of the world”⁴¹, as Chinese-American philosopher and political activist Grace Lee Boggs once put it. Hall's work revolved around precisely this question. Like Cedric Robinson, Hall sought to develop a materialist analysis of ideology, identity, race, and (post)coloniality; and like Buck-Morss, he simultaneously tried to retrieve a conception of emancipatory politics, without invoking Eurocentric ideas of history-as-teleology. For Hall, this necessitated a sensitivity to the contingency of the present: what he called conjunctural specificity. As he explained in his famous 1983 “without guarantees” essay on Marx and the problem of ideology, the structure of social practices is “neither free-floating nor immaterial. But neither is it a transitive structure, in which its intelligibility lies exclusively in the one-way transmission of effects from the base upwards.”⁴² Indeed, the “terrain” of the present cannot be defined by “forces we can predict with the certainty of natural science” but must rather be assessed with attentiveness to “the existing balance of forces, the specific nature of the concrete conjuncture.”⁴³ Being sensitive to the contingency of the present, Hall argued, thus means abandoning the idea that the present rests on fixed foundations, and that it is shaped by a pre-determined past and pre-ordained future: instead, the present has to be analysed in its conjunctural specificity. To think conjuncturally—a framework he borrowed from Gramsci—was thus to remain attentive to the social forces, historical factors, and relations of domination and subordination which, at specific points in time, come together and conflict.⁴⁴ As Hall explains, a conjuncture is a “period when different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society and have given it a specific and distinctive shape come together, producing a crisis of some kind.”⁴⁵ Conjunctural

41 Grace Lee Boggs and Scott Kurashige, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* (University of California Press, 2012), xiii.

42 Stuart Hall, “The Problem of Ideology: Marxism Without Guarantees,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen, David Morley, and Former Professor of Tropical Child Health David Morley (Routledge, 2006), 44.

43 Hall, 44.

44 In Lawrence Grossberg's formulation, “A conjuncture is a description of a social formation as fractured and conflictual, along multiple axes, planes and scales, constantly in search of temporary balances or structural stabilities through a variety of practices and processes of struggle and negotiation... It is not a slice of time or a period but a moment defined by an accumulation/condensation of contradictions, a fusion of different currents or circumstances.” James Clifford, “Travelling Cultures,” in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (Psychology Press, 1992), 4.

45 Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey, “Interpreting the Crisis,” in *The Neoliberal Crisis*, ed. Katharine Harris and Sally Davison (Lawrence and Wishart, 2015), 57. As Hall explains elsewhere: “Gramsci

analysis—the teasing out of the particularities of the present—was for Hall thus always a political form of work, designed to reveal the possibilities for action and change in the present. In David Scott's observation, the power of thinking conjuncturally is precisely that “it promotes a conception of politics understood as *strategic*, as always *earned* rather than derived, as always a matter of ideological *struggle*, as an ongoing 'war of position.’”⁴⁶

If there is a universalism to such a politics—and, thinking with Buck-Morss, I would like to suggest that there is—then it is neither abstract (in a Kantian sense) nor free-floating (as it is for poststructuralists). Instead it arises in opposition to the universalising thrust of racial capitalism and the hegemonic narratives that accompany it. In Anna Tsing's formulation, “[u]niversal claims allow people to make history, but not under the conditions those claims might lead them to choose.”⁴⁷ Understanding the universal thus requires analysing how it is given content and force in specific conjunctures. The radical internationalism discussed in previous chapters can be understood in precisely this way, because it seeks to sabotage and interrupt the hegemonic discourses that frame the present as *postcolonial* and *postracial*, and capitalism as the inevitable endpoint of history. The struggles against police brutality in the United States, white nationalism in Europe, and neoliberal apartheid in Palestine and South Africa, do not so much change the direction of history as blast it open. Indeed, by challenging progressivist narratives that present the contemporary capitalist world as inevitable and irreversible, these struggles rupture the continuity of history that sustains this order: migrants are interrupting established interpretations that see Europe as the haven of democracy, liberty, and universal rights, rather than a physical and cultural space constituted through the entanglements of empire and racial violence; Black radicals challenge narratives of American exceptionalism by placing the struggle against domestic police brutality within a global struggle against the many afterlives of

argued that, though the economic must never be forgotten, conjunctural crises are never solely economic, or economically-determined 'in the last instance'. They arise when a number of contradictions at work in different key practices and sites come together - or 'conjoin' - in the same moment and political space and, as Althusser said, 'fuse in a ruptural unity'. Analysis here focuses on crises and breaks, and the distinctive character of the 'historic settlements' which follow. The condensation of forces during a period of crisis, and the new social configurations which result, mark a new 'conjuncture.’” Stuart Hall, “The Neoliberal Revolution,” in *The Neoliberal Crisis*, ed. Katharine Harris and Sally Davison (Lawrence and Wishart, 2015), 9.

46 David Scott, “Stuart Hall's Ethics,” *Small Axe* 9, no. 1 (2005): 6. See also John Clarke, “Conjunctures, Crises, and Cultures: Valuing Stuart Hall,” *Focaal: Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, no. 70 (2014).

47 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 270.

historical and ongoing colonialism; and Fallists call into question discourses that equate decolonisation with state reformation. These “pearl divers” invite the return of the oppressed: by seeking to redeem the unknown, the unremembered, and the unmourned dead, they are re-conceiving the relationship between the past, present, and future, *without* invoking Eurocentric notions of progress and teleology. Their revolutionary internationalism is thus at once productive and destructive. As Benjamin explains, “Marx says that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps it is quite otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on the train—namely, the human race—to activate the emergency brake.”⁴⁸ Rather than the inevitable culmination of a preordained and progressive history, the internationalism imagined here challenges the current direction of history. By bringing the world to a standstill, it turns the present into a revolutionary possibility.

Conclusion

In the history of Western political thought, emancipation has often been portrayed as a story of gradual progress towards freedom, equality, prosperity, rationality, and peace. In the words of Raymond Aron, “the dialectic of universality is the mainspring of the march of history.”⁴⁹ After the post- and decolonial critique of universal history, what remains of this project? In this chapter I have interrogated what it means to hold on to the dream of emancipation while recognising that universalism is intimately bound up with the history of European colonialism and domination. Drawing on Susan Buck-Morss, Walter Benjamin, and Stuart Hall, I have argued that it is possible to retrieve the emancipatory project of equality and freedom without invoking teleological, progressive readings of history. The universalism that underwrites this project is neither abstract (in a Kantian sense) nor free-floating (as it is for poststructuralists), but arises in opposition to the universalising thrust of racial capitalism—including the way in which it depends on gender subordination, border-making practices, ongoing primitive accumulation, the production of surplus populations, and the growth of a global “security archipelago.”⁵⁰ In enacting a radical internationalism, and telling an insurgent counternarrative, movements and groups such as Black Lives Matter, BDS, Rhodes/Fees Must Fall, and migrant activists remind us that there could have been a different world—and, indeed, that there still can be.

48 Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 402.

49 Raymond Aron, *Progress and Disillusion: The Dialectics of Modern Society*, 1968, 217.

50 Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* (Duke University Press, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Strikers in Saris: Poetry of the Future



Fig. 4: Jayaben Desai at the picket line at Grunwick

“What you are running here is not a factory, it is a zoo. In a zoo, there are many types of animals. Some are monkeys who dance on your fingertips, others are lions who can bite your head off. We are those lions, Mr Manager.”¹

With these words Jayaben Desai and five other workers walked out of the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories in North London. It was 1976. The following two years would see a historic strike unfold, led by East African and South Asian women workers, and against poor working conditions, low pay, misogyny, and racism. The “strikers in saris”, as they came to be known in the press, not only demanded trade union recognition. They also defied the racist patriarchal structures which reproduced them as a distinct class category—as “Asian women”, suitable only for the most low paid unskilled jobs in laundries, the clothing and hosiery industries, canteens, as cleaners and homeworkers. In her chapter in the now classic *The Empire Strikes Back*, Pratibha Parmar reflects on how Asian women at the time were conceptualised as passive and helpless victims: as subservient non-working wives and mothers, “whose

¹ “Grunwick Dispute: What Did the ‘Strikers in Saris’ Achieve?,” *BBC News*, September 10, 2016, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-37244466>.

problems are that they do not speak English, hardly ever leave the house... their lives are limited to the kitchen, the children and the religious rituals, and they are both emotionally and economically dependent on their husbands.”² Such stereotypes, she goes on to argue, were not only without foundation—indeed, a majority of the Grunwick strikers came from societies where women worked both outside and inside of the home, and had engaged in and supported anti-colonial national liberation movements. Moreover, these stereotypes also helped to elide the real institutional power structures, which subjected Asian women to virginity testing, placed them in dependent positions to their men vis-a-vis the British state, and confined them to the bottom of the ladder in terms of wages, long hours, and unsafe working conditions.³ As Parmar concludes, “The explanation for the ways in which a particular labour force, i.e. Asian women, were able to be controlled and consequently exploited in particular ways is not to be found in archaic and sexist practices within the Asian cultures, but in the process by which these patriarchal features are transformed by a patriarchal ideology invoking common-sense racist ideas about Asian women.”⁴ In claiming the picket line as their own, the Grunwick strikers thus not only confronted assumptions of Asian female domesticity. Indeed, they also transformed the very meaning of class in 1970s Britain. Their call for secondary picketing was heeded by miners, dockers, steelworkers, and other workers from across the country, who flocked to the small alleys around Dollis Hill tube station in North London where they joined the strikers in solidarity. While the strike ultimately ended in defeat, the mass support Desai and the other strikers managed to draw together demonstrated the power and, indeed, the possibility of building cross-racial and multi-ethnic coalitions against racial capitalism.⁵

2 Pratibha Parmar, “Gender, Race and Class: Asian Women in Resistance,” in *The Empire Strikes Back*, by Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Routledge, 1982), 249.

3 The Home Office regularly carried out vaginal examinations on Asian women to determine whether they were married or not and, thus, whether they were fiancées of men already living in Britain. These were based on the racist and sexist idea that Asian women were virgins until they married. Once settled in Britain, they were made dependent on their husband—the “head of the household”—who individually received all vouchers from the state. Consequently, “from the very beginning Asian women have been discriminated against not only because they are black but also as women in terms of their legal rights of entry and settlement.” Parmar, 240.

4 Parmar, 260. Indeed, “The image of passive and docile Asian women has been used by employers, first to manipulate and control the women in their workplaces, and second to harass and intimidate them when they withdraw their labour.” Parmar, 258.

5 For a detailed account of the Grunwick strike, see Amrit Wilson, “Finding a Voice: Asian Women in Britain,” in *Black British Feminism: A Reader*, ed. Heidi Safia Mirza (Psychology Press, 1997); Ruth Pearson, Sundari Anitha, and Linda McDowell, “Striking Issues: From Labour Process to Industrial Dispute at Grunwick and Gate Gourmet,” *Industrial Relations Journal* 41, no. 5 (September 1, 2010): 408–28, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2338.2010.00577.x>.

In this study I have explored the relationship between solidarity, materiality, and the global colour line. Why has the philosophical literature on global justice and cosmopolitan ethics had so little to say about the racial structuring of the international? What has this silence made possible, and what would it mean for cosmopolitanism to take seriously the problem of the global colour line? In search of answers to these questions, the thesis has made three distinct contributions—contributions which, as we shall see, take us back to Grunwick and the strikers in saris.

First, I have examined how, why, and with what effect cosmopolitan discussions of solidarity elide, neglect, and deny the role of race and colonialism in contemporary world politics. I have argued that the erasure of race is more than a mere accident or matter of oversight: cosmopolitanism is in fact an eminently political project because, in disconnecting connected histories and sidelining questions of political economy, it often helps to transform the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander. With that, questions of accountability, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform are turned into matters of hospitality, generosity, humanitarianism, and empathy. The rise of cosmopolitan thinking in the 1990s must thus be considered less a result of a steady, gradual climb towards global justice, and more a product of a set of historical and material conditions which in the late 20th century made it highly desirable for policymakers, activists, and intellectuals to think of world politics as an *ethical* space. The end of the Cold War marked not so much the beginning of a new global era as a return to the North-dominated global order of 1492-1945. As the global counterrevolutions to colonialism and capitalism came to an end and other internationalisms were brutally blocked, the ethical discourses that in the long 19th century had legitimised the colonial enterprise returned but in updated form. The result was a transformation of the very meaning of the term solidarity: as Kant displaced Marx, and discourses of empathy and suffering superseded the language of struggle and liberation, solidarity would increasingly come to be associated with ethics—and not the revolution. The cosmopolitan preference for abstraction, ahistoricism, and anti-politics should therefore not be considered an innocent, apolitical choice; rather it is an eminently political strategy that helps to uphold, legitimise, and entrench the current unjust and unequal racialized international order.

In response, I have—secondly—examined how a materialist reading of the global colour line might help us rethink the concept of solidarity. The project of radicalising and decolonising solidarity, I have argued, must begin with rethinking the racial structuring of the international through the lens of political economy. While the postcolonial focus on questions of cultural difference, Eurocentrism, and representations of the imperial Self and the colonial Other has been helpful in bringing certain features of the global colour line into view, it has also left other aspects to the side—in particular, the material and socioeconomic dimensions of race and racism. Drawing on Cedric Robinson and the literature on racial capitalism, I have instead theorised the global colour line as a racial ontology that enables the hyper-exploitation of non-white peoples and lands, while privileging others. Unwaged and less-than-free labour—such as chattel slavery, racialized indentured servitude, convict leasing, debt peonage, and gendered forms of caring work and reproductive labour—are not just incidental to capital accumulation (as orthodox Marxists might argue), but fundamental to its operations. In the neoliberal present these dynamics have been both systematised and reconfigured: indeed, while racialized and gendered forms of domination continue to pattern global politics, they have evolved to take on new forms, fit for the postcolonial and multicultural present. In this thesis I have focused on two aspects in particular: first, the hyperextraction of surplus value from racialized bodies and, second, the racialized violence of the penal and national security state. From the ghettos of Los Angeles to the slums in Cairo, the favelas of Rio, and the borderlands of Europe, a growing security archipelago is quickly taking shape, designed to protect the wealthy and powerful from those rendered surplus by the social and economic dislocations of racial capitalism.

Third and finally, I have examined what form of internationalist imaginary is enabled by such a materialist reading of the global colour line—in other words, what an internationalism that begins, not with universal ethics and moralistic abstractions, but from a global political economic critique of race and racism, might look like and mean. Undoing easy distinctions between “class struggle” and “identity politics”, a materialist reading of the global colour line uncovers new political possibilities. Indeed, the concept of racial capitalism not only compels us to think of racism, capitalism, and gender oppression as mutually constitutive forces in the world. It also calls forward an internationalist perspective, a political imaginary that links together the local and international dimensions of white supremacy. W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America*, written more than 80 years ago, remains one of the most insightful texts in this

regard. Exploring the relation between capitalism, slavery, and emancipation, Du Bois argued that the American Civil War was a proletariat revolution within a bourgeois republic; Black emancipation was “one of the most extraordinary experiments of Marxism that the world, before the Russian Revolution, had seen.”⁶ The book finishes with a call for an internationalist consciousness and revolutionary movement that reaches beyond national borders and embraces all the oppressed and exploited peoples of the globe:

“Immediately in Africa, a black back runs red with the blood of the lash; in India, a brown girl is raped; in China, a coolie starves; in Alabama, seven darkies are more than lynched; while in London, the white limbs of a prostitute are hung with jewels and silk. Flames of jealous murder sweep the earth, while brains of little children smear the hills.”⁷

Du Bois clearly recognised the connections between the struggle for abolition democracy at home and the rise of global capitalism and US imperialism. The triumph of white supremacy within the United States, he argued, enabled the creation of imperialist projects abroad. The fight against white supremacy therefore required a linking together of national and international struggles—not because these struggles were exactly and everywhere the same but, rather, because they were linked and interlocking. As George Lipsitz has noted, Du Bois's work thus “compels us to honour the particularities of place without becoming subsumed in them to look for unexpected alliances and affiliations across and within national boundaries without losing sight of the systemic, integrated and fully linked economic, political and ideological practices that shape exploitation, hierarchy and oppression everywhere.”⁸

Building on these insights, in this thesis I have argued that an internationalism that takes seriously the global colour line needs to link together a variety of different movements that often are considered as separate and “only” local. Through a close reading of migrant struggles in Europe, recent forms of Black-Palestinian solidarity, and a critical comparison of the anti-apartheid and BDS movements, I have argued that the struggle against racial capitalism must be national as well as international, local as well as global. My argument stands in direct contrast to dominant discourses that typically

6 W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880* (Simon and Schuster, 1999), 358.

7 Du Bois, 650.

8 George Lipsitz, “Abolition Democracy and Global Justice,” *Comparative American Studies An International Journal* 2, no. 3 (August 1, 2004): 279, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477570004047906>.

frame the struggles of migrants, Indigenous peoples, Blacks, women, and other minorities through the lens of recognition and identity politics—and, thus, as devoid of economic content.⁹ As thinkers in the Black Radical Tradition have long argued, it is a mistake to write off such struggles as non-class, identity based mobilisations, confined to a certain time and place—something that the Patriots and the Panthers recognised in 1969 when they set up the Rainbow Coalition, and which activists in Ferguson, Cape Town, Palestine, and the borderlands of Europe embrace when they make connections between their struggles. The struggles that I have analysed might appear distinct and unrelated but are, in fact, mutually constitutive and interlocking, different fronts of the same war against “the matrix of racialised empire and neoliberal capital.”¹⁰ Where hegemonic discourses insist on individualising struggles, my analysis thus reveals the importance of seeing them as part of a larger global framework. This does not mean that all place-based struggles should be unified and assembled into a coherent and homogeneous whole. Instead it points to the importance of understanding various local struggles against racism, gender subordination, settler colonialism, and capitalism as part of a global network carrying difference with a common cause; what the Panthers and the Patriots imagined as a “rainbow coalition” and Hardt and Negri describe as the multitude. In contrast to cosmopolitan visions—which typically unfold from abstract visions of a universal community of humankind—such an internationalism is inherently oppositional and centre-stages the struggle against racial capitalism, including the way in which it depends on gender subordination, border-making practices, ongoing primitive accumulation, the production of surplus populations, and the growth of a global “security archipelago.”¹¹

That such an internationalist imaginary is both powerful and possible is something that Jayaben Desai and her fellow strikers understood when they assembled at the picket line at Grunwick in 1976. In our contemporary era of Trump, Brexit, global sweatshops, mass migration, environmental catastrophes, #metoo, racialized police violence, and racist populism—where political elites and mainstream media continue to separate the interests of “material” class from “ideational” race, pitting white workers against racialized outsiders—such “a poetry of the future”¹² is not only politically

9 For a classic formulation, see Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism*, ed. Charles Taylor (Princeton University Press, 1994).

10 Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (AK Press, 2014), 75.

11 Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* (Duke University Press, 2013).

12 Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (ReadHowYouWant.com, 2006), 6.

explosive. It is also urgently needed.

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