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Mute Vol 2 #2 - Dis-integrating Multiculturalism

[IMAGE] ---

Since the advent of multiculturalism in the 1970s, the redefinition of race in cultural terms has gone hand in hand with an official discourse of respect for cultural difference and diversity. Today, in the wake of 9/11, the rhetoric of tolerance is visibly breaking down. As state policy shifts from the celebration of difference to an anxious call for assimilation, the racial other (whether citizen or immigrant) is under renewed pressure to integrate herself into society.

In this issue of Mute, contributors read the crisis of multiculturalism as political, scientific and social as both a neoliberal offensive and a challenge to rethink the relationship between particular identities and universal rights, evolutionary science and biopower.

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Texts by: George Caffentzis, Matthew Hyland, Daniel Jewesbury, Marek Kohn, Eric Krebbers, Hari Kunzru, Melancholic Troglodytes, Angela Mitropoulos, Luciana Parisi, Benedict Seymour

Your Country Needs You (To Be Other)

By Josephine Berry Slater

In the lead up to the May local elections in the UK, the selection of a Greek-Armenian candidate by the British National Party (BNP) has seen the party descend into turmoil. The admission of ‘ethnics’ to the party, hardliners have claimed on bulletin boards and in the national press, has destroyed one of the last bastions of white working class racists. The party’s ‘modernisers’, responsible for the selection of Sharif Abdel Gawad, are defending their choice using the new rationale of post-multiculturalism: this man is a ‘totally assimilated Greek-Armenian’, they say, and ‘not a Pakistani Muslim’. Ever since the advent of multiculturalism in the 1970s, race has increasingly been defined in cultural rather than biological terms. But if this era also saw respect for cultural difference come to the fore in official culture, the fallout from 9/11 and 7/7 has put an end to the widespread promotion of tolerance. Assimilation is back on the agenda, however this time around the onus is not on the ‘host’ culture to accommodate immigrants, but on individuals to integrate themselves (see Hari Kunzru, p.14, and Matthew Hyland, p.44).

In a biopolitical era which, as Luciana Parisi states in this issue, ‘has always dealt with the transformation of bios – organic life – into politics’, it may seem an irony that science has, by and large, rejected the notion of a biological basis for race (see p.54). But, as Matthew Hyland observes, ‘while either “race” or “culture” may be projected onto someone in order to assign them to a group only culture can then be attributed to the will of the presumed group members. Unlike race, they can be *held answerable* for it.’ This new culpability of the other for the social conditions which produce

and oppress them as (cultural/racial) other, is the logic of biopolitics writ large. In the name of producing harmonious co-existence, everyday life, indeed life itself, is opened up to scrutiny and exposed to the arbitrary rule of law. Against this reframing of racism along cultural lines, whose intent is to breed panic over the mass migrations of globalisation and rekindle the clash of Islamic and Christian civilisations for geo-strategic ends, this issue of *Mute* attempts to read the evident crisis of multiculturalism geo-politically, economically, in class terms and in relation to developments in science.

The signs of multiculturalism's demise are often stark – pace the introduction of citizenship tests across Europe, in the name of promoting 'shared values', as a new form of border control (see Hari Kunzru, *Melancholic Troglodytes*, p.22, and Eric Krebbers, p.96). The head scarf ban in French schools and the drastic new immigration laws in Holland which have stopped legal economic immigration dead and practically abolished the right to asylum are just a few cases in point. In the UK, the Terrorism Act has been upgraded, albeit with the collusion of so-called 'community leaders', to proscribe many Islamic organisations and speech acts which 'glorify' terrorism. But the rising intolerance was highlighted more worryingly, because more pervasively, by the Danish cartoons furor (see Daniel Jewesbury, p.66, and Benedict Seymour, p.88) where media pundits of all political hues, and using quite different rationales, jumped on the opportunity to argue for the accelerated integration of Muslim populations into social democracies. Amidst all the column inches this generated over the problems of multicultural societies, the underlying economic conditions which produce their tensions were seldom challenged and all too easily deflected by the limited discourse of free speech.

In this issue, many of the contributors have tried to think beyond the traps of multiculturalism and its flawed concepts of culture and race. Tracking multiculturalism to its limit point, Benedict Seymour, Daniel Jewesbury and Angela Mitropoulos (p.34) focus on capital's underlying unfreedom and inequality which make a mockery of the concept of rights and equality. Luciana Parisi and Marek Kohn discuss signs of crisis in science's culturalist rejection of race and debate whether or not biology's distinction between species is, in any case, intrinsically racist. The networked and mutant development of evolution across species, proposed by Parisi, finds a parallel in the *Melancholic Troglodytes'* discussion of the proletarian production of mutant and subversive systems which contest the bourgeois notion of respect. Disrespecting the false pieties of multiculturalism seems to be a popular occupation all round!

[IMAGE]

Josephine Berry Slater <josie AT metamute.org>

The Values on the Ground: Multiculturalism and the War on Terror

By Hari Kunzru

For a government waging a War on Terror based on the clash between 'good' and 'bad' values, multiculturalism is losing its appeal, says Hari Kunzru. Shifting its emphasis from tolerance to the need to impose 'shared values', New Labour is enforcing nationalism with the carrot of 'belonging' and the stick of exclusion

After 9/11 the British consensus around multiculturalism began to shift. In the wake of the 7/7 London bomb attacks, this process of change has accelerated sharply. Scanning the last nine months of media and government pronouncements, it appears the issue of the relationship between immigrant communities and our historically white Anglo-Saxon Protestant State is no longer primarily viewed as an economic or social issue; it's a question of national security. So they're here, they're cleaning our toilets, nursing our old people and tiling our kitchen floors (good), still in Bombay but stealing our back-office jobs (mixed), scamming the NHS and being assigned prime council houses for their improvidently large families (bad), but mainly they're settling among us and we have no guarantees about what they think. Any one of them might secretly be trying to murder us. Some of them definitely are (very very bad indeed).

The notion of a 'War on Terror' (WoT) is the intellectual framework now used by almost all commentators to understand both international relations and internal security. It's worth remembering that as a theoretical construct, (as opposed to what Dick Cheney likes to call the 'facts on the ground') the WoT is the co-creation of two highly ideological groups – Bin Laden's Islamists and the US Neo-Cons, both of whom have promoted the conflict as largely or wholly one of values, as opposed to a struggle over resources and access to political power. So instead of Bush reminding Americans that they have strategic goals in the Middle East or that Bin Laden started out as part of a popular religious movement dedicated to the overthrow of the House of Saud (a concrete political goal), he employs moral language (famously, the 'axis of evil') and talks about his enemies in what might be thought of as cultural terms: 'Remember, these are – the ones in Guantánamo Bay are – killers. They don't share the same values we share.' (2002) [<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR510492002>]

Lately (all quotes are from his press conference on 21 March, 2006), Tony Blair appears to be conducting a doomed rearguard action against the overwhelming binary logic of the WoT, a logic his own Iraq policy has done so much to reinforce. So it's down with Samuel Huntingdon ('This is not a clash between civilisations, it is a clash about civilisation') and up with values:

The only way to win is to recognise this phenomenon is a global ideology; to see all areas in which it operates as linked and to defeat it by values and ideas set in opposition to those of the terrorists ... This terrorism, in my view, will not be defeated until its ideas, the poison that warps the minds of its adherents, are confronted, head-on, in their essence at their core.

So, given that no one in charge appears to want to talk about any of the possible structural reasons poisonous ideology might start to eat away at the mind, we're stuck with the theory that it's the theory which is the problem: terrorism as bad meme. If (as a terror warrior) this is your approach, then you're likely to see the question of culture as a crucial battlefield.

The OED gives culture, among senses concerning plants, microbes, physical training and personal growth as 'a particular form or type of intellectual development. Also the civilisation, customs, artistic achievements, etc. of a people, esp. at a certain stage of its development or history.' This OED definition has a couple of interesting inflections. The first is the notion of 'a people'. The second is that of 'stages of development'. They make it clear that when we think about culture (at least in official British English) we're in the territory of 19th century Romantic Nationalism. *Kultur* is what defines the *Volk*, what makes it more than an aggregation of individuals, and what gives it the right to occupy a particular geographical space, the landscape which has reciprocally formed it, and so on and so forth. The idea of culture was geopolitical in origin, and remains so today.

Peculiarly, given its subsequent history, multiculturalism first emerged in Canada as a response to tensions between its English and French-speaking populations. Enshrined in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1971, it was quickly implemented elsewhere, and initially acted as a powerful

ideological corrective to the injustices of state nationalism, which insists (often against evidence) on the existence of unitary national cultures and demands absolute assimilation and the erasure of difference as the price immigrants must pay to gain admission. Current Canadian legislation aims to 'ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity.' The Canadian government runs a multiculturalism website, which lists the benefits as follows:

Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoisation, hatred, discrimination and violence.[1]

Multicultural politics have undoubtedly proved useful in reconfiguring the public discourse of former colonial powers such as Britain as they adapt to mass immigration, particularly in opening up institutions and providing a framework by which those who have no direct social experience of immigrants (and their second generation kids) can interact with them/us. No doubt about it, 'Chicken Tikka Masala' is a genuine step forward from 'no blacks, no dogs, no Irish'. However in recent years, many of the more challenging aspects of multiculturalist discourse (in particular its celebration of hybridity and the formation of new identities) have been sidelined in favour of those aspects which are easy to deliver as policy ('community relations' conducted as a dialogue between the centre and notional representatives of supposedly stable and fixed 'minorities'), or which suit prevailing political fashions. It's difficult, for example, to square 'respecting and valuing diversity' (a quintessentially information-age activity, performed largely through the production and consumption of various kinds of media, from street festivals to television advertisements) with the concrete realities of Britain's ruthless (and very popular) immigration policies. No amount of Benetton-style image making can negate the impact of dispersal, detention camps and forced removals. Multiculturalism is, in this respect, just a mask for the border police. Without accompanying action to combat social and economic inequality, it looks increasingly threadbare.

Now we face a Prime Minister who is declaring war on bad values, which means that 'respecting and valuing diversity' looks (from the 360 degree point of view of a terror-warrior) less like an unproblematically good thing (the way it used to, say, in the GLC chamber in 1984) than a girly-man weakness a modern social-democratic combatant government can ill afford. The message is that (rather like Middle Eastern democracy) diversity is good, as long as it's our kind of diversity: confined to those aspects of culture (food, music, dress and so on) which increase the array of consumer choices without challenging the fundamentals. Middle England wants its Asian babes in bikinis, not burqas.

There is in circulation a right-wing critique of multiculturalism which is exploiting the WoT to attempt to regain ground lost in the culture wars of the '80s. If terrorism is a bad meme and terrorism is the product of Islamic culture, then we can say with confidence that Islam is worse than whatever we're proposing as 'our' culture. In saying this, we accept the validity of making value judgements about culture in general, something which the right has always claimed the Stalinist commissars of multiculturalism specifically disallow. Leaving aside the truth or otherwise of such a characterisation, the secret desire (what Slavoj Žižek might call the 'obscene supplement') of this school of thought is that once we've loosened up on this issue, we'll start re-embracing other value judgements and developing a taste for the juicy treats beloved of a certain strand of social conservatism, dishes which have been off the menu for some years: black people's tendency to crime, homosexuality's destructive impact on the family-which-is-the-bedrock-of-society and suchlike. Then (oh happy day!) it'll be like the horrible '60s never happened.

Certainly, from a WoT perspective, if you ignore social, political and economic reasons for terrorism and concentrate purely on values, it's easy to make the initial Islam/terror case to the average British voter. Because of the fear of terrorism the field is open in a way it hasn't been for ten years for a reassertion of monocultural dominance. The new name for it is 'shared values' and it's present around the edges of such cultural sharp objects as the newly-introduced 'Life in the UK Test' [<http://www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk/>] for immigrants, which asks coyly about Christian festivals and saints days and the queen's ceremonial duties and trial by jury. Oh, and quangos. The test introduces the concept of a minimal standard of shared values as the price of admission to Britain. The political conversation now appears to be all about ownership of those values. This notion, which has obvious appeal to conservatives, is also attractive to the mainstream social democratic left, a tradition which in Britain now consists of three layers, rather like a Victoria sponge cake – a bottom spongy layer of methodist piety, a thin red jammy spread of second international socialism and most recently (1980's onwards) an overbaked top layer of communitarianism. All three layers lead social democrats to believe that the area of values is their natural terrain, good ground to pick a fight with the centre right and its founding model, the atomised individual of classical liberalism, so very silent about what happens when that individual comes into relationship with others.

It's worth remembering that Osama Bin Laden is also operating on the terrain of shared values:

It is to this religion that we call you; the seal of all the previous religions. It is the religion of Unification of God, sincerity, the best of manners, righteousness, mercy, honour, purity, and piety. It is the religion of showing kindness to others, establishing justice between them, granting them their rights, and defending the oppressed and the persecuted. It is the religion of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil with the hand, tongue and heart. It is the religion of Jihad in the way of Allah so that Allah's Word and religion reign Supreme. And it is the religion of unity and agreement on the obedience to Allah, and total equality between all people, without regarding their colour, sex, or language. [Letter to the American People, November 2002]

In Britain, multiculturalism (the make-shift post-imperial doctrine of diversity as the route to equality, of unity through managed disagreement) is under attack, not only from its traditional monocultural opponents, or from the classical liberals who've always disliked its whiff of groupthink, but from those who previously supported it most staunchly, the mainstream social democrats now scrambling to abandon it and sit on the high hillock marked shared values. Multiculturalism was, for many on the centre left, always a second-best option. Along with feminism and associated positions it grew in strength just at the time when the economic argument was being won hands down in Britain by the Chicago School monetarism of Keith Joseph, Margaret Thatcher and the Institute of Economic Affairs. In the '70s, traditional Keynesianism had ceased to produce good outcomes and by the mid-'80s the right was holding all the economic policy cards, so the left retreated to the terrain of language, visibility and culture, ground appropriate to its stronghold in the universities, the arts and the media. It was from this 'red base' that those of an egalitarian bent made forays into areas like social policy: multiculturalism, diversity and anti-discrimination legislation was the result. In doing this they ceded the economic ground entirely. Not much has changed. Thatcherism became Blairism. Management of inflation is still the primary goal. Redistribution remains a dirty word. However, New Labour now feels it 'owns' economics again and diversity can safely be dropped for a more muscular approach to community. David Blunkett's combative style as Home Secretary was particularly telling in this respect. The big stick was always lurking behind his talk of 'belonging'. Join in, Pakis, or we'll put you in Belmarsh.

Lacking belief in the power of their politics to produce fairness (the market being the mechanism of choice for that) our politicians are offering up the pageantry of respect as a consolation prize. Islam will be valued in law, on government websites and in glossy brochures as part of the tapestry of British

diversity, but individual Muslims will remain poor and marginalised. A hyper-sensitivity to issues of language and representation (exploited by cultural conservatives of all stripes and encouraged by religious offence legislation) is the pessimistic remnant of the multiculturalist dream. Instead of a new hybrid culture, we're offered what Amartya Sen has called 'plural monoculturalism', with power in the hands of self-identified community leaders who are defensive, patriarchal, hide-bound and antagonistic to change. Women, homosexuals and the young all suffer.

Perhaps the picture isn't all gloomy. Once upon a time the terrain of argument about difference was biology. Little by little, biological racism was demolished and culture became the main battle-ground. Even the BNP (which does cling to biology) now uses multiculturalist language to make its case. Its monthly magazine is called *Identity* and its defence of 'native British culture' is presented as a protectionist bulwark against a coffee-coloured global capitalism which wishes to erase difference to assist the transnational flow of labour, goods and services. Cultural essentialism is now in play everywhere from Nick Griffin's pamphlets to the pages of *Prospect*. The notion of shared values (as opposed to the crude group identity of 'culture' in its current political incarnation) as the basis for community is far from stupid. However, within the context of the war on terror (and that's the only context we're going to have for the next generation or so) the pressure will all flow in one direction. Immigrants will have to prove their right to belong, not just by hard work, but by displaying the approved set of values. Gordon Brown is already getting misty-eyed about flags on lawns and the pledge of allegiance. British Muslims are undergoing a near-constant media interrogation. If we're to avoid shared values becoming assimilation by the back-door, we need to ensure that the smug guardians of the mainstream put their own *idées reçues* under the spotlight, primarily the notion that bad values are an adequate explanation for the alienation many (not just young Muslims) feel from the current dispensation of things.

FOOTNOTES

[1] http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/multi/what-multi_e.cfm

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Disrespecting Multifundamentalism

By Melancholic Troglodytes

The term 'respect!' has gone from rude boy subcultural slang to reactionary Third Way spin, from grassroots contestation of power, to tool for disciplining the new dangerous classes. Melancholic Troglodytes offer a critical genealogy of the strategies used by proletarians to challenge bourgeois dignity and respectability and call for some new (use) values of our own

'Give respect, get respect!' – British government's action plan

It is essential to understand at the outset that Tony Blair's latest moral crusade based on returning respectability to cities and villages is not a gimmick or a quick fix but part and parcel of a protracted attack on the working class.

The aim of this text is twofold: first, to analyse the nature of this attack by showing the antagonism between bourgeois *respectability* and proletarian *respect*; and second, to demonstrate how this conflict is related to the demise of two of capital's most pernicious ideologies – that of religious *fundamentalism* and secular *multiculturalism*.

Perhaps understandably, some readers may balk at our contention that the journalistic inanity known as (eastern) fundamentalism and its flip side of (western) multiculturalism are in crisis. After all, are we not subjected in the media to a daily barrage of mullah-morons self-righteously preaching the finer points of Shari'a law? Do we then not have to endure the gormless liberal multiculturalist paternalistically tut-tutting his *uncivilised* interlocutors? Has not Hamas secured a major victory for fundamentalism in Palestine? Is not religion calling the shots in Iraq? Is there not sufficient evidence that the world has gone completely insane? Should we not adopt a bunker mentality and hide until this tempestuous madness has run its course? By tracing the vicissitudes of the notion of respect we hope to offer a more nuanced – as well as optimistic – assessment of the current state of class struggle.

'Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time, in you?' William Shakespeare Twelfth Night

Class society has always made use of both ideology (Marx) and discursive practice (Foucault) in order to secure the status quo. These mechanisms of regulation have in turn relied on nodal values through which *respectability* has been policed. These nodal values exist in a chain of signification and the study of their evolution can be instructive.

During what is lazily referred to as pre-modernity (more accurately slavery, serfdom, feudalism, etc.) the nodal value greasing the wheels of society was *honour*. The gladiator in ancient Rome, the crusader during the Middle Ages and the knight during feudalism accrued honour through a mixture of courage, skill and sacrifice. Their lower class counterparts – the slave, the serf and the peasant – remained in a permanent state of *shame*.^[1] Only occasionally could a lower class person wipe away the shame associated with their social status and gain honour. This required a superhuman endeavour. Spartacus stands as an archetypal example of such a move. Outside this cosy polarity between shame and honour, *respect* began to make a tentative appearance amongst the populace. Artisans and craftsmen who managed to monopolise certain trades began to be granted a grudging respect by the aristocratic elite.

[IMAGE]

From the 17th century onwards, with the gradual advent of the formal phase of capitalist domination, *absolute* surplus value extraction became the norm in many industries. Exchange value was characterised by the regulation of punctuality, sexuality and discipline. The nodal value that became associated with this phase was *dignity*, which implied that identity is independent of birth, institutional roles and hierarchy. The Dutch national liberation movement of 1579-1581, the English Revolution of 1640-60 and the French Revolution of 1789 represent a series of historical ruptures which transformed society's nodal value from honour to dignity.

To turn up at work punctually, engage in the production process conscientiously, look and sound orderly and discharge one's sexual duties spartanly (in other words to be a *good citizen*) were characteristics of dignity. By default, remaining unemployed, dirty and promiscuous became a sign of undignified behaviour, punishable by poverty and stigmatisation. The English Ranters were an early victim of bourgeois indignation. Naturally most radicals have been deeply suspicious of dignity. F. Palinorc has dismissed it as a shibboleth of bourgeois thought:

[Dignity is an] absurd, utopian cry under a system of total value domination, analogous to the battle cries of *democracy* and *liberty*. [2]

Later we will attempt to show how the situation is somewhat more complicated, but for the time being let us pursue the historical development of capital further.

Those societies that have negotiated the passage from formal to real domination have experienced a more flexible form of surplus value extraction and a greater disparity between the private and public spheres of human behaviour. Also, in this phase, workers begin to enter the economy as consumers of leisure and the bourgeoisie is keen to control leisure's 'moral misuse'. Dignity began to display its limitations and was gradually marginalised by a more sought after nodal attribute – *authenticity*. This is an individualised attribute which encourages political engagement based on the notion of *identity*. The ability to be *oneself* in public now becomes an ideal only available to a handful of clowns, method actors and 'mad' individuals who require neither dignity nor honour since they know no shame. The rest of us are reduced to purchasing tourist-authenticity in far off, 'uncontaminated' lands in the form of Nicaraguan coffee, Turkish whirling dervishes and the occasional divine miracle.

This historical chain of signification (honour – dignity – authenticity) is roughly aligned with pre-capitalism, formal capital domination and real capital domination. However, this schematic association breaks down on closer inspection. Raymond Williams, for instance, talks of three types of cultural artifacts: the *dominant*, the *residual* and the *emergent*. [3] All three usually co-exist in any one period of development. For instance, the dominant cultural node in contemporary India is dignity which corresponds to the formal phase of capital domination. But India is a complex society which also evolves around residual cultural artifacts like honour and emergent ones such as authenticity. Most Indians require a mixture of honour-dignity-authenticity for obtaining respectability but depending on their specific cultural-economic status, they prioritise this chain of signification differently. But, and here is the key question for us, what happens if you are a caste member who is denied access to this chain of signification? In other words, what if you are not considered a full citizen with a delineated set of rights and duties? How do you then seek self-worth and social status as a prelude for interaction with the rest of society?

'Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth.' Albert Einstein

The proletariat has historically employed three main strategies for overcoming the problems cited above. These three strategies correspond to varying degrees of proletarian empowerment:

1. Re-accentuation of respectability

The first strategy re-accentuates the meaning of nodal values when the proletariat does not feel strong enough to reject them (Bakhtin). For example, in the 1960s US 'blacks' defined dignity according to class markers. Bourgeois blacks, such as Martin Luther King, understood dignity to mean upright citizenship and demanded equal employment and educational opportunities. Under their scheme black dignity was to be guaranteed by enlightened leaders and enshrined in the law. The law may not be able to police racist prejudice but its admirers believe it is capable of changing discriminatory behaviour and that this in time might lead to cognitive alterations.

Other blacks, such as the Black Panthers, were also seeking reforms although in their case extra-legal actions were used in order to pressurise legislatures. Black Panthers understood dignity as full citizenship and since blacks were only considered three-fifth citizens, the strategy aimed to obtain the remaining two-fifths of rights denied them by the Constitution. Meanwhile, black welfarism would restore dignity to black lumpenproletarians left out of the circuits of capital accumulation.

Lastly, proletarian blacks had a simpler and more radical conception of dignity which was shaped by their everyday confrontation with racism. Proletarian dignity confronted both racist *behaviour* (e.g. discrimination in the shape of Jim Crow laws or segregation) and racist *attitude* (e.g. personal prejudice). The stable dictionary 'meaning' of the term, dignity, remained the same but the personal 'sense' in which it was employed had shifted dramatically (Vygotsky). Proletarian dignity, therefore, cannot simply be ignored or dismissed as bourgeois. It must be understood in its concrete context and as part of a dialectical supersession of all values.

It is essential to understand that proletarian demands for dignity, whether expressed by black American workers in the 1960s, Russian workers in 1905 or Palestinian workers crossing Israeli check-points are not a static entity, for they can fast evolve in one of two directions. Dignity can either solidify into reactionary *pride* or evolve into *proletarian respect*. Examples of the former include the notion of black pride promoted by fascists such as Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, Ahmadi-Nezhad's Iranian brand of Strasserism or perhaps even the BNP's opportunistic slogan of 'rights for whites'.^[4] Examples of the latter include the solidarity amongst British black proletarians during the 1970s and 1980s centred on respect. A similar phenomenon was witnessed amongst Native Americans in the 1970s during their struggle for land and an end to poverty, or during the first Palestinian Intifada when fighting both the Israeli army and Palestinian leaders simultaneously generated mutual respect within and between refugee camps.

2. Collective rejection of respectability

There are occasions when due to strength or sheer desperation, we manage to go beyond mere re-accentuation of bourgeois respectability and a deep seated rejection sets in. A minority faction within the anti-war movement in the run up to the war on Iraq achieved this in some measure (the rest, be they secularist or religious, remained within the bounds of bourgeois respectability). The honour and glory of war was rejected sometimes through rational arguments and sometimes through collective laughter and irony; the dignity of anti-Saddam victims who were opportunistically paraded in the media was exposed as a propaganda ruse and nullified. The authenticity of evidence put before us to justify the war was also queried at every turn. Some further examples of rejection of respectability may concretise the point: during a one-minute silence in a demo against the First Gulf War, bourgeois respectability was compromised when a group of radicals insisted on shouting, 'No War but the Class War'; at the beginning of the Second Gulf War an American protestor whose husband was killed in Vietnam said, 'I learned the hard way there is no glory in a folded flag.' Similarly, a sizeable minority of Iranian proletarians have rejected the concept of martyrdom and warfare as a route to heaven as is evident in the struggle against the burial of the 'unknown soldier' within university campus grounds. 'Queer carnivalesque' would be another instance where we have witnessed a break with heteronormative notions of sexual respectability as well as gay/lesbian essentialism.

[IMAGE]

Proletarian resistance creates a gap between reality and official ideology. This gap has to be filled by rhetoric. The further decomposition of the art of rhetoric in the speeches of Bush, Blair, the Pope, Ahmadi-Nezhad and Bin Laden is itself an indication that the chain of signification is losing its shine everywhere. The first canon of classical rhetoric as practised in ancient Greece was 'invention'. With the demise of the Sophists, invention was eclipsed by one or more of the other divisions, namely; 'arrangement', 'style', 'memory' and 'delivery'. Today's politicians have conveniently dispensed with memory and delivery, leaving arrangement and style as the only two vehicles for rhetorical discourse.

There are also moments of desperation which lead to a frontal assault on bourgeois respectability. Refugees and asylum seekers who are being forcefully removed have been known to go on hunger strike or strip to their underwear at airports as a final act of defiance against immigration authorities. Here, *respectability* which works through raising the threshold of shame (Goffman) is marginalised by the *grotesque collective body* (Bakhtin). Similarly, prison revolts undermine in a matter of hours the systematic work of chaplains, social workers and prison staff whose programme is to instil prisoners with etiquette and dignity.

3. Creation of new concepts like respect for by-passing respectability

When the balance of class forces is in our favour and we have the luxury of time and space, use value may temporarily eclipse exchange value. These preconditions not only make possible a rejection of bourgeois respectability but also foster proletarian respect. Moments of social rupture are usually preceded by a preponderance of mutual respect amongst the proletariat. This is not simply a case of positing our *morality* against theirs as Trotsky would suggest. Rather it is a case of rejecting exchange value and morality as the regulator of the private-public split in favour of a qualitatively different form of immeasurable value based on human need and solidarity. For instance, the term 'respect' finds its origins in Jamaica as part of the 'rude boy' slang subculture and is transported to Britain where it is picked up by the 'white' working class.

'Nothing is more despicable than respect based on fear.' Albert Camus

So far, we have postulated that respect is foregrounded among those sections of the proletariat traditionally denied access to the rulers' chain of signification. We have also suggested that its appearance is a sign of proletarian strength since it is generated from below.

Conversely, if proletarians today are not creating autonomous, organic concepts such as respect (strategy three) and if they are not effectively rejecting capital's nodal values (strategy two), and if re-accentuation of honour-dignity-authenticity (strategy one) is usurped by reactionaries and turned into pride, then it is logical to assume that capital is enjoying unprecedented hegemony over us.

Yet things are not as hopeless as they seem. In recent years, the two ideologies that have most effectively shackled proletarians world-wide have been *fundamentalism* and *multiculturalism*. Significantly, both emerged at times of massive structural crisis for capital. Fundamentalism (and we beg the reader's forgiveness for over-generalising here), whether in its early 20th century US manifestation or its late 20th century Middle Eastern variety, was suitable for overseeing the transition from formal to real capital domination. However, it failed in both arenas. At the risk of oversimplification we could state that religious fundamentalism in both the US and the Middle East emerged partly as a response to the failures of modernism and yet instead of replacing the latter, it ended up forging an uneasy alliance with modernism (especially in places where fundamentalism gained power). In the US it was military Keynesianism that ultimately completed the transition and in the Middle East a kitsch cocktail of military Keynesianism (in industry) is being employed in conjunction with neo-liberalism (in finance and banking), and populism (in agriculture), to bring forth the real phase of capital domination.

Both fundamentalism and multiculturalism prefer winning the cultural battle in the domestic sphere prior to restructuring the production of values in the public sphere. However, whilst fundamentalism is proudly monologic, multiculturalism is *falsely* dialogic (Bakhtin). It pretends to take the addressee into account, respecting difference and heterogeneity. In truth secular multiculturalism is as haughty as religious fundamentalism. It listens but does not hear. And now that its project of *integrating* the foreigner-within has reached an impasse, it has left the western bourgeoisie without a recognisable strategy for continued hegemony. The crisis of multiculturalism reflects the failures of both secularism

and postmodernism. The so-called separation of the Church from the state was always a mirage. Secularism took the hibernation of religiosity for its destruction and lulled itself into a false sense of security. Marx observed this bourgeois self-deception with uncanny clarity:

even when man proclaims himself an atheist through the mediation of the state [...] he still remains under the constraints of religion because he acknowledges his atheism only deviously, through a medium.[5]

What Marx is saying is that ideological atheism (or if you prefer bourgeois humanistic atheism) is merely the negation of theism. The synthesis is something else which is yet to emerge. This 'something else' we have characterised as *organic atheism* since it will be a product of everyday proletarian self-activity and not secular legislation or rationalistic discourse. The crisis of the (western) secular state is tied in with the falling out of favour of postmodernism within academia and also with the failure (so far) of western capital to complete its transition from real domination to what we have provisionally termed *surreal* domination.[6]

The slow death agony of fundamentalism and multiculturalism has left bourgeois respectability devoid of efficacy. The slowness of this process and the absence of new proletarian values may have obscured this tendency but the stench of bourgeois values is becoming harder to ignore everyday.

'We may not pay Satan reverence, for that would be indiscreet, but we can at least respect his talent.' Mark Twain

Satan may be worthy of both reverence and respect but the bourgeoisie has lost the plot.[7] In this final section, we will provide examples related to our masters' inability to maintain respectability over us.

Let us take the 'naming and shaming' campaign against paedophiles initiated by *News of the World* and taken up by the British government to tackle *disrespect*. Note that whilst the *News of the World's* crusade was (largely) against white working class men, the government's Anti-Social Behaviour Orders campaign is (largely) against children wrongdoers who in the past were not usually named for legal reasons. Shaming, as we have seen, is traced to pre-capitalism. Its modern bourgeois version never possessed the impact it needed for controlling proletarian behaviour. Today, this inappropriate usage of shaming has the ironic effect of granting *disrespectful* children a badge of honour amongst their peers. One final irony is that 'naming and shaming' was a tactic used by the radical plebeian press in the 18th and 19th centuries against the ruling class. If an impropriety (usually of a sexual kind) amongst the rich and famous was discovered, the radical press would blackmail the culprit for a hefty sum. Once the ransom was paid, the next issue of the paper would carry a titillating account of the sordid affair anyway in order to undermine bourgeois respectability. The *News of the World's* campaign seems an exact reversal of this original impetus.

Our next example is even more ominous for British capitalism. The inability of both Labour and Tory parties to reanimate a sense of modern nationalism has alienated a sizeable minority of the population who now voluntarily identify themselves as the 'other'. The *other* consists of two main camps: firstly, the alienated and atomised proletarians who attempt to regain their self-respect individually and, secondly, proud and self-righteous 'Muslims', 'Asians', 'country warriors' and 'White fascists'. Ex-Home Secretary David Blunkett and his faithful sidekick Trevor Phillips clumsily attempted to impose British values on people only to expose this 'imagined community' (Benedict Anderson) for the sham it has always been. Gordon Brown's recent call for a 'British Day' indicates his thinking runs along similar lines. Their new citizenship deal is an American rewriting of the social contract: once British values have been sufficiently inculcated and citizens have been coached in public displays of patriotism, the liberal state will graciously shower them with *tolerance*.[8]

The fact that a once secure sense of Britishness increasingly relies on ritualistic displays of patriotism is a sign of weakness not strength. Ironically, the state is relying on a colonial strategy for internal control at a time when that pernicious species of vultures known as *community leaders* are no longer in charge of their constituencies because they have lost the respect of the proletariat. It is arguable whether this atavistic cadre of vote-hunters ever enjoyed any genuine *community* support. Meanwhile, vacuous old multiculturalists are still harping about 'equal dignity under the law', 'recognition of difference' and the finer distinctions of 'integration' (which is good) and 'assimilation' (which is not). Multiculturalists are still in denial, they will need time to acknowledge the gravity of their defeat. Poor, pitiful hacks are still 'multi-ing' and 'hybrid-ing' our cultures in the hope of covering up the fact that an increasing number of us already feel *trans-cultural*.

[IMAGE]

One final example will suffice. The case of the Danish cartoons revealed cracks in both multiculturalism and fundamentalism (see Benedict Seymour's article in this issue of *Mute*, p.88). Danish capitalism demonstrated the thin line separating tolerance from intolerance when Danish racists were given the green light to provoke their Muslim counterparts. Over a number of months Muslim hate-mongers were in turn given carte blanche by Saudi Arabia and Iran to whip certain sections of their constituencies into frenzy. Once a number of scores were settled and political points underlined, the furore died down as mysteriously as it had been initiated.[9] In the process, European multiculturalism exposed its inherent intolerance and the might of Islam shook with trepidation before a few second-rate cartoonists!

'They cannot take away our self-respect if we do not give it to them.' Mahatma Ghandi

Official ideologies in the form of fundamentalism and multiculturalism have fought (old) proletarian values to a stand still. Community generated respect has been marginalised in the process. Organisations such as George Galloway's Respect Party and New Labour's 'respect campaign' based on ASBOs have discredited the very term. This much we grudgingly admit. But significantly, both religious and secular respectability have lost their momentum, partly due to individual and collective proletarian resistance and partly due to their own inherent contradictions. We are, therefore, in a face-off situation with the ruling class over values. Old monologic (exchange) values have been shunned and new dialogic (use) values are yet to emerge. Since proletarians from different parts of the globe will generate these new values from within different linguistic and cultural environments, our task is to make sure their commonalities are made recognisable to all. Meanwhile, we should remain vigilant against reanimated versions of bourgeois respectability and expose their anti-working class agendas before they have become embedded within culture.

Acknowledgements: Melancholic Troglodytes are indebted to comments by Richard Barbrook, Loren Goldner, Anthony Iles, Josephine Berry-Slater, Nils, Vahid and Fabian Tompsett

FOOTNOTES

[1] 'The concept of honour implies that identity is essentially ... linked to institutional roles' P.L. Berger et al., *The Homeless Mind*, Penguin Books, 1973, p.84. Once premodern institutions gave way under the relentless march of capitalism, honour became embourgeoisified and emptied of its substance. Cervantes's *Don Quixote* captures the demise of the knight-errant and his chivalric code magnificently.

[2] F. Palinor, *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 3, 2003, p.183, Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University.

[3] See Raymond Williams, 'Base and superstructure in Marxist cultural theory', *New Left Review*, 82, 1973.

[4] Whilst hating the Nation of Islam and the Iranian theocracy, the BNP is happy to learn strategy from them. The BNP's recent success in infiltrating the anti-Jerry Springer Opera campaign has prompted them to try to set up a church in Lincolnshire, under the name of the Christian Council of Britain. The head of this new church is a 'reverend' Robert West who believes that 'The mixing of races challenges the glory of god',
http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article60316bnp.shtml

[5] Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', p. 218, *Early Writings*, Penguin Books and New Left Review, 1984.

[6] The surreal phase we have postulated will come to replace the real phase of capital domination. What is interesting about this emerging phase is that it consists of four methods of surplus value extraction thus giving both capital and labour more flexibility. The two common forms of surplus value extraction (formal and real) are now becoming sandwiched between two more, provisionally named the pre-formal and post-real methods of extraction.

[7] You want to know how badly the stupid bastards have lost the plot? Get a load of this: Kevin Roberts is a high ranking bureaucrat with SAATCHI & SAATCHI. Recently he gave US Defence Intelligence Agencies a talk where he argued 'brand America' is failing because it is a 'High Respect, Low Love' kind of product. In contrast, he argues, there are brands that have 'High Love, High Respect' quotients such as Harley Davidson, Apple and JFK! So the trick is to make 'brand America' more like Harley Davidson and Apple and the rest of the world will fall in love with the USA (See M. Grimshaw, 'Religion, Terror and the End of the Postmodern: Rethinking the Responses', *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies*, 3(1), Jan 2006).

The conspiracy nut may interject here that the Sa'atchi (literally, clock-maker) brothers are originally from Iraq! Could theirs be a long-term Sufi strategy of undermining the efficacy of the US military 'intelligence' through subtle counter-productive spin? Are the Sa'atchi brothers Iraq's revenge on US colonisers?

[8] Regarding the generation of a British identity it is worth noting that outside the country various agencies, such as embassies, train prospective refugees in British culture before accepting them. Perhaps myths about British identity are easier to fabricate at a distance; in Africa, Middle East and the ex-colonies.

[9] The comparison with Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* is instructive. Then Khomeini's fatwa found an immediate and widespread echo, the reverberations of which are still with us today. The Danish cartoon controversy only managed a partial mobilisation of the Islamic *ummah* and even that needed months of preparation by 'flying mullahs'.

Following the recent acrimonious split within Melancholic Troglodytes, the splitting minority have formed themselves into the outfit Sad Cave-People. The majority can still be contacted at <meltrogs1 AT hotmail.com>

Under the Beach, the Barbed Wire

By Angela Mitropoulos

The 'race riots' in Cronulla at the end of last year made it clear that all is not well in Australia's multicultural paradise. Here, Angela Mitropoulos examines the racism, mechanisms of border control and changing conditions of work underneath the beach utopia

[IMAGE]

If for a certain imaginary, the beach has often evoked a realm of authenticity hidden under the concrete strata of urban development, capitalist spectacle and exploitation, the relentlessly iconised Australian beach has, in addition, been put to use as proof of egalitarian sentiment and vast democratic horizons. Here, the generic vista of the Western frontier is shorn of its embarrassing wars over land, the guns and forts lined up against the natives, and redrawn as pre-economic, pre-political idyll. Never quite acknowledged as urban but, even so, presented as more urbane and civilised than either rural, uncultivated or desert lands, the space of the beach is assumed to have shaken off the dissensions of politics and economics much as the figurative beachgoer is presumed to effortlessly shed clothing. Like Rousseau's state of nature, the mystical space-time of the beach operates as both a denial of the nation-state – the presupposition of the *contrat social* in its legal, political and not least, economic senses – and its naturalisation. And no more pronounced are these projections than in post-colonial spaces such as Australia, where persistent anxieties about unruly savages mingle with dreams of being closer to nature.

Popcultists have long campaigned for 'the beach' to be recognised as Australia's eminent utopia. Some five years ago, Craig McGregor argued that the beach represents 'our yearning for a world different from the concrete pavement universe that most of us inhabit for most of our lives. The beach today represents escape, freedom, self-fulfilment, the Right Path. It represents the way our lives should be.' Similarly, John Fiske contended that the beach 'is the place where we go on holidays (Holy Days), a place and time that is neither home nor work, outside the profane normality.' It is perhaps not surprising that such homilies have become more pious just as coastal areas have become more developed, increasingly the scene of bloated property values, mortgage anxieties and a burgeoning tourist industry run mostly on precarious labour. Indeed, these hymns to 'the beach' are a crucial affective support in this political economy and these industries. And they leverage affection all the more fiercely when deployed as eulogies or calls to restoration. Therefore, it is in part *because* beachside suburbs do not provide for an indifferent repose – longed for as both fortress and refuge against difference – that they have become the scenes of overt violence, riot police and emergency 'lockdown' laws that seek to restore, by force, the order on which seaside utopics were assembled.

The enchantment of 'the beach' began in Australia in the late 1940s – which is to say, in the immediate post-WWII period and at the ideological high point of Fordism and the Keynesian settlement. That post-war accord between unions and employers took shape as a nationalist compact between descendants of the English upper classes and working class Irish. Persuaded by clerical anti-communism, promises of property and class mobility – in the form of the post-war housing ownership boom and university admissions – the latter were seduced into forgetting their genealogy as convicts deported from Britain under policies justified by their depiction as a separate 'race'. This particular racialisation was set aside with the post-WWII Anglo-Celtic compact, which is the precise meaning of the figure of the Aussie and its egalitarian ethos – which is also an *ethnos* – of the 'fair go'. Frozen in that dehistoricised and dreamlike zone after colonisation had been accomplished and before the collapse of the 'White Australia' policy in the early 1970s, the ostensible peace and contracted

civility of the emblematic beachside has always depended on violence and separation, borders and fencelines, property and expropriation.

In the final month of 2005 in Sydney, it was these contingencies that would be laid bare and, with recourse to emergency laws, reasserted as necessary for the restoration of what was deemed natural. It is not clear what the immediate inducement was. Lifeguards were assaulted, it is said, because they made racist slurs while attempting to stop people playing football (soccer) on Cronulla beach and, in the ensuing fight, came off second best. Cricket and Australian Rules (i.e., Celtic) football are commonplace on beaches and elsewhere – soccer, on the other hand, is regarded as the ‘wog’ game. Moreover, lifeguards are drawn from local residents, and their role is just as much concerned with beach safety as it is with enforcing the bonds between property and propriety. Yet, their authority on this occasion, derived as it is from a customary consensus over their iconic status, faltered. And so, this apocryphal confrontation over land use and the perceived failure of Aussie supremacy would converge with earlier tales in Sydney of ‘organised ethnic gangs’ rapes of Australian women’ and fears of miscegenation (in which women’s bodies are considered above all as racial property) to produce what, elsewhere, would be called a lynch mob.

As is more or less well known, around five thousand people gathered in Cronulla on December to ‘Take Our Beaches Back’ or, as it was put less obliquely in other circulating leaflets and SMS, ‘bash wogs and lebs’. Slogans such as ‘ethnic cleansing’ and ‘Aussies fighting back’ were prominent enough, on placards, posters and scrawled on skin, given force with punch and kick. Draped in Australian flags, singing *Waltzing Matilda*, large parts of the crowd rampaged around the suburb beating anyone they assumed to be a ‘wog’ or a ‘Leb’, including one woman whose parents migrated from Greece and a Jewish man. Such is the populist version of racial profiling – officiated more recently by the phrase ‘of Middle Eastern appearance’ – that has become standard in Sydney and at a time of a global biowar. It might be noted here that the women who were raped in the most prominent of recent cases in Sydney would not so easily have ‘passed’ as Australian in Cronulla that day, and yet their attackers would not have been given such unprecedented sentences if they had not been identified in court and the media as a ‘Lebanese gang’ targeting ‘Australian women’. Indeed, given that migration officials have deported or interned over a hundred people whom they incorrectly assessed to be ‘illegal non-citizens’ – such as Vivian Solon, a permanent resident deported to a hospice in the Philippines from her hospital bed after being hit by a car – suggests that this moment in Cronulla was, despite all the denials, continuous with the normative inclination of public policy and the racialising demeanour of the rights-bestowing, and rights-denying, state.

[IMAGE]

Since the events at Cronulla, there have been numerous accounts from the commentariat whose affective range is distinctly more elitist than anti-racist, demonstrating far more shock at the appearance of an unruly mob than the pogrom it enacted. But contrary to that perspective, which can only elicit demands for the restoration of law and order, the vulgar calls to reclaim ownership were merely the coarse, volunteerist expression of, most notably, the Prime Minister’s civic declarations of sovereignty (‘We will decide who comes here and the circumstances under which they come’), the more than decade-long policy of the internment of undocumented migrants by successive governments and, more recently, a war that is legitimated on racist grounds. As border policing became central to the conduct of elections and government policy throughout this period, the border was bound to proliferate across social relations and spaces, and in circumstances both casual and administered. This is why the worst of the attacks occurred in the train station. That train takes people from Sydney’s Central railway station to the nearest beach and, given the composition of Sydney as a whole, this includes people from the suburb of Lakemba, which has a high proportion of migrants from the Middle East. Cronulla, for its part, is notable for being the most Anglo-Celtic of suburbs in Australia.

The Prime Minister once described the area as ‘a part of Sydney which has always represented to me what middle Australia is all about.’ Responding to the events at Cronulla, he would quickly deny that it was racism at work, adding: ‘I do not believe Australians are racist,’ and going on to propose that those who did believe such a thing lacked a cheerful disposition.

Over the subsequent three nights, there were retaliations. Hundreds of cars were smashed, people beaten and shops destroyed, as Cronulla and surrounding beachside suburbs were made unsafe for those whose belonging there had never before been threatened. One of the calls to retaliate declared:

Our parents came to this country and worked hard for their families. We helped build this country and now these racists want us out. [...] Time to show these people stuck in the 1950’s that times have changed. WE are the new Australia. They are just the white thieves who took land from the Aboriginals and their time is up.

In the midst of this, the NSW Police Commissioner remarked that the Cronulla rally to ‘Take Our Beaches Back’ was a ‘legitimate protest’. It was, according to him, born of a ‘frustration’ with the failure of the police and the state to do their job, which is to say, to ensure the Australian border remained secure *within* Sydney. The Prime Minister insisted that the problem of ‘ethnic gangs’ – which he unequivocally denied those at Cronulla might be regarded as – should be left to ‘policy’, ie, the state. On the third day of rioting, the NSW Premier announced emergency laws to give police, among other measures, the power to ‘lockdown’ those beachside suburbs under threat. This was, he declared, a ‘war’ and the state would ‘not be found wanting in the use of force’. And so the task of the Cronulla pogrom was more smoothly accomplished by the police acting as border guards, refusing entry to the beaches to those who could not prove that they belonged there. The ‘lockdown’ laws, in summary, allow the state to remove entire suburbs from the ostensibly normal functioning of the law for periods of 48 hours. Among other things, and within the designated ‘lockdown’ zone, the laws remove the presumption of bail for riot and affray, allow for the area to be cordoned off to prevent vehicles and people from entering it, empower police to stop and search people and vehicles without warrant or the standard criterion of suspicion, and to seize cars and mobile phones for up to a week.

In some respects, this could be viewed as a sequel to the so-called ‘anti-terror’ laws; recast here as an explicit attempt to reterritorialise the ‘moving mêlée’ – as one journalist described those engaged in the retaliatory riots. Yet, just as the failures of border controls have prompted recourse to measures both militaristic and ferocious they have also reanimated the search for ‘social solutions’. If the culture industry and its disciples remain enthralled by a depoliticising understanding of ‘the beach’, there is no shortage of more conventional disciplinary approaches that, for instance, have found renewed impetus in psycho-sociological clichés: deviancy, crisis of masculinity, youth alcohol abuse and, not least but most comically, ‘ethnic gangs’ who listen to rap music and use mobile phones. All of these constructs do not simply deny the existence of racism. They practically deploy racism through the assumption that the problem is a failure of integration. In other words, they reiterate the classical sociological preoccupation with social or, more accurately, *national* cohesion. Here, having assumed the nation-state as a natural entity – often by obliquely rendering it as ‘community’ or ‘society’ – it is the appearance of divisions that are not expedient for and normalised by the very assembly of national unity which are registered as a problem to be solved. That such a perspective has been echoed by much of the Left, in their calls for a renewal of multiculturalism as a response to recent events, should in no way surprise, given that much of the Left continues to aim for representing the nation and *its* people. And, as it implicitly denounces both pogrom and retaliations alike as the abetting or cause of ‘racial disharmony’, this is ironically where the Left discloses the affective pull of its overwhelmingly Australian identification – an identity which is assumed to bestow rights universally and without exceptions that are legitimated through racism.

What is, however, remarkable is the extent to which multiculturalism continues to be idealised as a way of managing the exercise of ‘difference-in-unity’ that the nation-state at certain moments requires without, presumably, having to resort to either violence or criminalisation. Which is to say, it was precisely alongside the much-touted apex of multiculturalism as official state policy in the early 1990s that the policy of automatic and extrajudicial internment of undocumented boat arrivals was introduced. In that moment, internment camp sat comfortably alongside tributes to Australia’s diverse cultural mosaic, just as the most recent regime of border controls around the world were ushered in along with the ‘globalisation’ of trade and finance. For if multiculturalism was initially tendered as a better form of governance at the time of lengthy wildcat strikes by migrant workers in the early 1970s, this is because it offered an improved means of assimilating certain differences while criminalising those that did not align with the imperatives of national labour market formation. This is what the paradigmatic post-Fordist border has sought to realise: the filtering of antagonism into competition, difference into niche markets, and the recapitulation of an ostensible consensus over the nation as household firm vying for position in the world market. And it is on these questions that the part of the Left which retains some commitment to notions of class struggle has been either silent or expressed its bewilderment. Coming just days after the introduction of the ‘Workchoices’ policy (which principally seeks to restrict, if not entirely abolish, any remaining non-individuated work contracts), the inclination here has been to understand recent events as a distraction, much like racism – and indeed sexism – are routinely theorised as the diversions of an apparently otherwise unified class consciousness.

[IMAGE]

Yet there is no experience of labour in capitalism that occurs outside a relation to the border. This association does not arise simply because migration controls create legally-sanctioned segmentations within and between labour markets that, in turn, condition or ‘socialise’ the labouring circumstances of both immigrant and citizen. Nor does it occur only because, for instance, it is possible to show that the recent tendencies toward temporary residence permits and that of so-called ‘flexibilisation’ were both responses by employers and governments to a similarly coincident and prior exodus from the Fordist factories and the ‘Third World’ in the 1970s. Nor is it solely due to the fact that jurisdictions, currencies and the hierarchical links between them are manifest in *every* pay packet – although this is so obvious and therefore naturalised that it often needs emphasising.

While all of these are crucial in illustrating the significance of the border to the labouring experience, they are not quite sufficient to explaining the force of that relation, its acquiring a necessary disposition. To put this another way: the particular – which is to say, *capitalist* – nexus between labour and border comes about because the asymmetrical wage contract only acquires *the semblance of a contract* through the delineation of the figure of the foreigner. Put simply, without the foreigner, the notion and practice of the social (or wage) *contract* – as a voluntary agreement between more or less symmetrical agents – falls apart. There are three aspects worth considering here, and certainly in more detail: the conversion of the chance encounter into naturalised ‘origin’, the transformation of imperatives into individual choice, and the punctuated temporality of the contract which normatively distinguishes wage labour from slavery.

Firstly, capitalism acquires a ‘law-like’ character through the establishment of borders, whether those of nation-states or, more generally, enclosures. For while Marx’s ‘discovery’ of the surplus labour that lies behind the formally equivalent wage contract is more or less well known, it is the border that permits the chance historical ‘encounter between the man with money and free labourers’ to *‘take hold’* – as Marx noted, and Althusser would emphasise in his later writings.

Secondly, the contract functions as the conventional mark of capitalism’s distinction from feudalism,

asserting that individuals have the power to organise their lives, *against* the pressures of inherited inequalities, if not strictly as a matter of *will*, then at the very least, as performativity. The contract is a theory of agency and self-possession. It formally asserts indeterminacy (or freedom) by explaining and *rationalising* the substance of any given contract as the result of a concordant symmetry. Consider here the Australian Government's 'Workchoices' policy that aims to replace 'collective' wage rates and conditions in particular occupations with individual contracts – that is, it is an instrument which seeks to generalise the conditions of precariousness that have existed outside the perimeter of the post-WWII 'settlement' referred to earlier. Responding to charges that this amounted to the reintroduction of coercion, since refusing to sign an individual work contract would entail not having the means to live, the Prime Minister responded: 'Everyone who wants a job will have one.' For the Prime Minister, the existence of coercion does not refute the contractual nature of waged work; it merely obliges a reassertion of contract theory.

Let us, then, consider Rousseau's argument that the 'social compact' requires 'unanimous consent' – or, more specifically, that 'no one, under any pretext whatsoever, can make any man a subject without his consent.' While this is often read as a foundational democratic argument against slavery and involuntary submission, it is more accurately the democratic substitution of the figure of the 'born-slave' with that of the 'foreigner-by-choice'. In this way, the existence of submission (or slavery) is redefined as the consequence of an individual's choice to reside within borders in which they do not belong – and they do not belong because they do not agree to the contract. In the *Social Contract*, after positing the natural foundations of the nation state in voluntary agreement, Rousseau goes on to argue:

If then there are opponents when the social compact is made, their opposition does not invalidate the contract, but merely prevents them from being included in it. They are foreigners among citizens. When the state is instituted, residence constitutes consent; to dwell within its territory is to submit to the Sovereign.

Just as Rousseau's perfect circle of democratic despotism cannot do without the 'foreigner', there is no semblance of the wage, as wage *contract*, without the border. This is the contingency of a specifically democratic capitalism, relating as it does to a certain axiom of money as universal equivalent and seemingly competent measure of all things, while preserving all the ambiguities through which repression, inequality, slavery and, not least, surplus labour-time are explained and stabilised. Given that there is no way in which someone might profit at the expense of another through an agreement that is indeed symmetrical, as the wage contract is asserted to be, racism (and sexism, which is never far away) *prepares us for, distributes and rationalises asymmetry*. The contractarian braces the contingent world of capitalist exploitation by ascribing it to individual authorship. Where this risks destabilisation, either by dissent or in the undeniable presence of inequality where all are born equal, the figure of the foreigner is put into service in the guise of the unpatriotic, the unassimilable and those deemed to be, for reasons of biology or 'culture', incapable of signing a contract, of the very capacity of individual authorship. It is the latter that most clearly emphasises the bond between exploitation and racism, between the surplus as understood by political economy and the extrinsic (the foreign) as conceived by demography.

Thirdly, while the punctuated duration of the wage contract customarily distinguishes wage labour from slavery, the 'normal working day' was always demographically and geopolitically rationed. Cronulla did not simply represent 'middle Australia', but also the 'normal working day'. Seen from outside this limited perspective, borders have long operated as a form of detainment, beyond which the conventional (and perhaps simply Fordist) delineation between the time of life and that of work is suspended. In this sense, the distribution of racism (and sexism) is also the distribution of a particular temporality. Yet, today, the 'regular' tempo of work more closely approximates the temporality of

slavery (and, not least, of housework), in that no firm distinction operates between the time of working and not working or, better: in the sense that unpaid labour time is laid bare as the condition of capital and the linear time of progress comes to a standstill.

[IMAGE] The question then is, as it always was perhaps, how unpaid labour (or exploitation) is distributed, as well as whether it is counted or not. The Cronulla pogrom was as much about space, belonging and property as it was about relative advantage: about who is counted and who is detained, who might be said to possess one's labour such that they might contract for its sale and who might be said to be a slave. Here, one might note the ways in which certain migrants are *held up* at the border, airport and detention centre, no less than the ways in which the *banlieues* have existed as a *de facto* space of internment. In this time of detainment, it is not labour (as something that might be disassociated and 'sold' by one's self) that is stolen, but whole lives. It is not surprising, then, that the moving *mêlée* emerged here, as both description of a response to the Cronulla pogrom as well as apparition of chaos. Neither discernible as individuals nor enumerated as collective, with an emphasis on motion that is as spatial as it is temporal (appearing as quickly as it disappears), the moving *mêlée* had a whirlwind temporality that provisionally cut through the time of detainment even while it failed to escape it.

Not surprising, either, that the 'lockdown' came into being here, as a reconfiguration of the mechanisms of detainment. And, it did not take long for a 'lockdown' to be invoked a second time. On January 1st in the country town of Dubbo, after indigenous teenagers fought with police against their attempt to arrest suspected car thieves, the police (as with the lifeguards in Cronulla) came off second best, and a lockdown was subsequently put into effect. Nevertheless, given the aim of halting movement through a shifting definition of lawlessness and a mobile decree of emergency zones, it needs to be emphasised that the form of the 'lockdown' predates the monumental pretext of 9/11. In a more direct sense, the 'lockdown' echoes the (offshore) internment camps and the excision of territories from the 'migration zone' that have characterised post-1992 Australian migration policies – a model that has since been explored by UK and other European governments. Moreover, much like the state of emergency declared in France after the riots of the *banlieues*, the suspension of the putatively normal functioning of the law duplicates the colonial encounter in a metropolitan context. For these reasons, it would be a mistake to construe this resort to emergency laws, such as the 'lockdown', as a mark of the triumph of border policing or, more generally, as cause for pessimism. Such instances do not signal a decline in our fortunes so much as they suggest the potentiality of a world that has surmounted its division into 'First' and 'Second', openly struggling with and against all the senses in which 'our' fortunes are dependent upon the expropriation of 'others'.

Angela Mitropoulos has been involved in *xborder*, and written on borders, class composition and migration, including 'Precari-Us?' (*Mute*) and, forthcoming, 'Cutting Democracy's Knot' (co-authored with Brett Neilson, in *CultureMachine*), and 'Migration, Recognition, Movement' (*Constituent Imagination*, AK Press)

Proud Scum â The Spectre of The Ingrate

By Matthew Hyland

The term integration has been turned upside down. Once it was the demand for the white majority to integrate the racial other into 'society' by abolishing formal racism within the state and its institutions. Now, writes Matthew Hyland, the (culturally) racialised other is required to 'integrate' into the majority

At some point following the ‘riots’ late last year in France, that country’s interior minister and aspiring president Nicolas Sarkozy is reported to have threatened kicking out ‘those families who refused to integrate’. Regardless of whether he actually uttered it, the phrase exemplified a sleight of ideological hand that’s become all too familiar.[1] I mean the one where the terms of a question about what institutions do are inverted to make it sound like it’s about the behaviour or the character of single subjects. The point being, of course, to hold people retrospectively responsible for what has happened to them. The statement attributed to Sarkozy amounted to a proposal that the state should make use of its borders to distinguish which foreigners were adequately : henceforth, those whom the interior ministry had not chosen to expel would by virtue of this be shown (provisionally) not to have ‘refused to integrate’. It never would have been announced in quite that way, but it was already de facto policy thanks to the Sarkozy-ordered emergency provision of fast-tracking for deportation any non-citizen *arrested* (note: not convicted) near the ‘disturbances’.

As well as showing the workings of a mechanism commonly used in the rhetorical production of false social problems, the story also drew attention to a remarkable upheaval in the usage of ‘integration’, a term that has lately become a key banality of racial politics.

The racial integration famously demanded and gradually obtained by the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and ‘60s had a strictly circumscribed meaning: the abolition of *formal* racial segregation in institutions such as electoral politics, schooling, public transport and local administration in general. Integration in this sense could have been imagined by no-one but its stubbornest opponents to imply the breakdown of the wider economy of racism. (That is the object of the older, bloodier and ongoing struggle of which the limited Civil Rights/integration victory should be seen as one important episode.) There can be no doubt, though, that at the moment when the term entered popular political vocabulary, the sense – i.e. the direction – of the imperative to ‘integrate’ was clear. It was obviously directed at a racial majority: self-constituted ‘white’ America was forced to suffer a change of circumstances not willed by it, and the agent of alteration was the racial other whose minority (in the sense of ‘childhood’: supposed incapacity for rational, effective exercise of power) was a myth essential to that of whiteness.[2] It’s also crucial that at this stage the meaning of ‘integration’ entailed logically that it be demanded not of individuals, however personally bigoted, but of institutions in a chain of responsibility ultimately leading up to the nation-state itself.[3]

Returning to the Europe of 2006, in which the Sarkozy-phantom cited above and countless others warn foreigners to integrate or leave, we find that the sense (i.e. direction) of the integration-imperative has been upended over the last 40 years. The command to integrate is now incessantly delivered *to* presumed ‘others’ in the name of a majority. This reversal implies that of the other essential characteristic of the earlier meaning: the imperative is now delivered *by* the state and its secondary agencies *to* single subjects. (It makes no difference, incidentally, if a multitude of loudmouthed freebooters joins in the admonishing. Whether they notice or not, every time they talk about ‘getting tough’ they’re identifying with the state and invoking its protection.)

What was a transitive verb (e.g. ‘the state must integrate *the school*’), then, becomes intransitive, or implicitly reflexive (‘the alien must integrate [*herself*]’). Integrate herself *into what?* Into ‘society’, ‘the community’, ‘democratic values’, etc. That such names which aspire to the universal are standard aliases for the nation state, as Angela Mitropoulos has observed, is spelled out clearly in this case, *where the act of (self-)integration required by ‘society’ is defined only negatively, by the state action policing its omission.*[4] Rephrased this way, the Sarkozy doctrine at least reminds us that lack of intelligible content in a command certainly does not mean it isn’t backed up by (police) force. Rather, the law’s content remains permanently provisional, to be revealed only retrospectively in each particular instance by the agency delivering the consequences of non-compliance.

There is a widely noted tendency for ‘culture’ to replace biological ‘race’ in British government discourse and the debate around it, with an ensuing confusion of ethnic, religious, linguistic and biological categories. In attempting to understand this phenomenon, it should be remembered that, while either ‘race’ or ‘culture’ may be projected onto someone in order to assign them to a group, only culture can then be attributed to the will of the presumed group members. Unlike race, they can be *held answerable for it*. This exposure to the blackmail of ‘responsibility’ makes culture a more useful category than race for a complex of formal and informal policies and public discourses revolving around a term like ‘integration’, which positively designates nothing less than (certain) subjects’ open-ended obligation to the state and its proxies.

How this works can be seen in almost any mainstream British political party statement or ‘serious’ media/think tank commentary on identity, migration, security, anti-sociality, etc. Between supporters and opponents of particular policy initiatives there reigns a remarkable consensus that (a) something called ‘we’ or ‘society’ exists, (b) its perpetuation is desirable, but (c) is threatened by the cultural self-marginalisation of certain subjects who (d) must therefore be made to change their behaviour. The only disagreement is about which particular outbreaks of alienation do or do not threaten ‘us’, and what combination of enticement, coercion and expulsion should be used to bring about the change desired.

Recently in Europe such language has mostly been directed at ‘Muslims’ (recast as a culture, and, even more absurdly, a unitary one), but there can be no doubt that it is ripe for wider application. By now the logical stitch-up has acquired a fairly regular rhetorical form. First a fact is invoked that lays claim to the utmost moral gravity (the diaspora of Oriental bombs in Western metropoli being the obvious but by no means the only example), followed by some observations on the dis-integration of cultural behaviour (preferably a fusion of anecdote and dislocated statistics, as in: ‘only x per cent of Muslims born here think of themselves as British, and in parts of town nobody speaks English’). The necessary causal relation between one set of phenomena and the other is presumed to be too obvious for statement, and the Expert moves straight on to consider what, in particular, should be done in order *to induce self-identification with ‘society’ among culturally dis-integrated subjects*. Only around the latter, almost technical question can there be any debate: all commentators solemnly and question-beggingly agree that failure to do *something*, i.e. to intervene in some way on this (cultural) territory, would be tantamount to accepting bombs, gang war, sweatshops or whatever other (material) social evil was cited in the first place.

In bourgeois democracies a degree of personal autonomy is generally imagined to come with submission to state power (i.e. acceptance of individuation for criminal liability and taxation purposes). But although the ingrate (as we shall henceforth call the dis-integrated subject, the culturally-profiled recipient of intervention) is already as much exposed to the law as anyone, her intimate subjectivity is regarded as public property pending a satisfactory performance of national identification. Private individuality must be *earned* through public subordination of other group attachments. Unlike anyone else, the ingrate is called on to demonstrate subjective commitment to ‘society’ through *supplementary* gestures beyond those specifically prescribed by law. Thus not only is she asked to adjust cultural practice to the preferences of an imagined majority, the ingrate is expected to *assume responsibility* for her already-existing subjection to the state, to *will* it retrospectively.

All this falls squarely into the mainstream of institutional racism in the post-formal-integration period, despite the recent downplaying of ‘race’ within some racist discourses. Whether spuriously classified by ‘race’ or ‘culture’, the same combinations of skin colour, geographical background, language and religion still systematically receive a gross disproportion of institutional invasions like criminal profiling, compulsory mental health treatment or confinement to the informal labour market. That is, the law is literally the same for everyone, but the ingrates have to do (or do without) more to avoid

falling foul of its force. As has always been the case, the effect is the violent internal stratification of the wider working-and-policed class.

In the essay *Under the Beach, the Barbed Wire* (this issue, p.34) Angela Mitropoulos precisely diagnoses the role of such racism in the ‘free’ labour market. At the heart of classical social contract theory, and in particular the individual labour contract as conceived in classical economics and revived with eschatological vigour in recent years, lies the coercing of constrained subjects (or as Mitropoulos puts it, those on the losing side of an asymmetrical relation) into the formal, retrospective willing of their condition. Whether it is income that is ‘chosen’ over destitution or residence over statelessness, responsibility for the *terms* of the decision is assumed – or rather received – by the subject those terms are imposed on. Of particular importance here is the way the coercive power of the contracting regime (whether citizenship in general or employment in particular) depends on its border and the horror of the barely-subjective life beyond it:

Put simply, without the foreigner, the notion and practice of the social (or wage) contract – as a voluntary agreement between more or less symmetrical agents – falls apart.[5]

This is so because of the essential historical role of borders and jurisdictions in the elevation of private property into uniformly enforced law, but also because of accumulation’s dependence on a global division of labour, which in turn depends on national and supranational (e.g. EU, British Commonwealth) borders and *all the secondary stratifications internal to them*. In order that anyone should willingly contract a losing deal, what lies outside the arrangement must be kept conspicuously worse. Hence the fundamental role of the abject foreigner, the extra-legal alien, who has no power to contract anything but remains at the disposal of institutional and/or illegal arbiters of subsistence.[6] The irremediable foreigner’s legally-created ‘inability’ to contract is blamed, of course, on her innate racial, deep-seated cultural and/or plain moral incapacity. The usefulness of this figure of the alien lies in the fact that its condition can be extended *provisionally* to millions of partial or potential *foreigners* to the social/wage compact: all the ingrates from whom supplementary unwaged effort for the privilege of contracting is expected. The long-term benefit claimant, the ASBO-candidate and the non-compliant mental patient, for instance, along with the cultural foreigner who strives insufficiently to integrate, are made aware that in failing to adjust their subjectivity willingly to whatever terms are offered they run the risk of a kind of reverse assimilation, absorption into the *abstract foreigner*, whose incapacitating otherness supposedly threatens society’s integrity and is therefore perpetually exposed to pre-emptive policing and material dependence.

Supplementary contracts-you-can’t-refuse for the wilfully uncontracting and dis-integrated have become a popular institutional tool in Britain, used in welfare crackdowns, school discipline, mental health, public housing and the widening margins of ‘criminal justice’. The device’s relative normalisation is perhaps not surprising given the longer-term spread of conditions once clearly identified with the ‘foreign’ side of the border around the national/wage contract. As Mitropoulos writes, the wage contract customarily distinguishing wage labour from slavery ‘was always demographically and geopolitically rationed’, but with the unlimited interpenetration of labouring and unwaged temporalities, today’s “regular” tempo of work more closely approximates the temporality of slavery (and, not least, of housework).’[7] The spectre of the absolutely incommensurable foreigner still mobilises aggressive cross-class national identification in some people and forces a desperate scramble to be counted on the right side of the border among many others, but those ‘on the inside’ are no longer usually distinguished and rewarded by a stable waged position with ‘life’-time separate from work. Visible and permanent success at ‘integrating’ tends to disappear along with the regular employment status that used to announce it. Meanwhile, provisional, ad hoc and personalised contracts or pre-contracts proliferate, requiring unreserved pledging of subjectivity to prevent their unilateral foreclosure. In this sense the ‘demographic rationing’ of forms-of-life and work is less simply

demarcated than before, but it distributes privation and coercion more extensively than ever.

Of course the development of complex hierarchies of provisional ‘foreigners’ should on no account be mistaken for the ‘democratisation’ of anything, even of wretchedness. As the Sydney pogroms and the current projection of ‘terror’ onto culture in Europe suggest, the phenomenon is likely to entail more rather than less ideological deployment than before of the abstract foreigner and the threat to national-social integrity.[8] More fundamentally, nothing whatsoever has happened to alter the extreme racial concentration of *exposure* to (and, at the opposite pole, relative shelter from) particular forms of exploitation and material constraint. ‘Equal opportunities’-bound institutions such as private job markets or public police forces are instantly betrayed by any statistical breakdown of WHO stands WHERE in relation to them: the present-day demographics of their clientele reveals their shared origin in a directly racial organisation of work and slavery. The consciously articulated racist sentiment to which official antiracism restricts its reference (psychologising it even when calling it ‘institutional’) emerges almost as an epiphenomenon of these gross, long-standing material facts.[9]

In fact the extension and intricate subdivision of ingrate status will probably only provide new opportunities for those inclined to do so to invert responsibility for the worst effects, in best Malthusian fashion, attributing them to the subjective deficiency of the afflicted. (Obviously, the idea of ‘culture’ is particularly useful for explaining such mass outbreaks of personal moral pathology.) Thus, for example, following the Paris fighting, many right-wing bloggers (the qualification is probably redundant) and other commentators didn’t bother to deny the *supplementary* difficulty encountered by young ‘Africans’ and ‘Arabs’ of all educational levels in trying to find work. They simply blamed the candidates’ cultural eccentricity: they may or may not be technically competent, but they are *unemployably unintegrated*. A more complex but similar logic seems to run through a recent, highly publicised sociological work on the East End of London.[10] The book addresses inter-cultural hostility around perceived English-Bangladeshi competition over housing allocation. However, quantitative facts, i.e. the drastically reduced volume of council housing stock available due to the ‘right to buy’ policy and the lack of new building, are played down due to survey respondents’ apparent lack of interest in ‘the economy’. Instead, the interpretive focus is on ‘Bangladeshi claims on the welfare state, their rights and entitlements’, an alleged ‘encouraging of dependency’ among those ‘who had put nothing into the pot’,[11] which is attributed to a welfare system based on need rather than on a somewhat less concretely defined ‘national culture of responsibility, mutuality and solidarity.’[12] Thus the authors perform the neat trick of simultaneously displacing responsibility for racism onto the Bangladeshis, while, inasmuch as more of the final blame falls on the state which should have ignored their material need in favour of abstract ‘family’ and ‘reciprocity’, they are denied agency even in relation to what they are held responsible for.

The integration imperative can be said to traverse a polarity with the multicultural utopia of full, ‘economically active’ assimilation into the national first person plural at one extreme and at the other the abstraction of the socially pathogenic foreigner, who is unassimilable to the state and therefore subject to its unlimited force. The toxic foreigner is a fiction, but it is concretely embodied in the mechanisms whose existence it justifies: first the border enforcement and detention system itself, then all the other lockdown regimes that pullulate across the social body (entrapping ‘ethnic minorities’ disproportionately but not exclusively) from secure wards and special and ordinary prisons to dispersal areas and ASBOs. In the zone of permanent provisional administration between the poles of ‘diverse’ assimilation and hunted illegality, invocation of the Unassimilable (and therefore of its deadly institutional embodiment) functions as an implicit but punctual command to those whose admission to the ‘ownership society’ remains undecided, suspended or revocable.[13] Galvanised by rational fear, potential ingrates are expected to improvise gestures repudiating the abstract alien and distancing themselves from it, in order to keep its very real pursuers away. Exactly *what* is required is indecipherable, as the Thing to be repudiated has no concrete existence and therefore no particular

attributes, but the penalties are real enough. This is the immediate, practical meaning of the doctrine that integration must be defined only negatively by the forces policing it, apparently expounded in veiled (so to speak) terms by Sarkozy. And it is in this way that the ingrate confronts in its most acute form a logical impossibility which operates throughout capitalism and its legal appendages, in that she is *commanded to assume responsibility* for her condition.

Backdated Epilogue

In mid-November 2005, in the immediate aftermath of the streetfighting, Sarkozy was interviewed by Denis Jeambar of right-wing French weekly *L'Express*.^[14] The interviewer took the minister to task for his notorious reference to those fighting the police as *racaille*, a word usually though not altogether satisfactorily translated into English as 'scum'. Unlike the recipients of the epithet and some self-proclaimed supporters on the liberal left, Jeambar had no problem with the insult as such. Instead he complained that Sarkozy had *failed to declare anyone guilty*: because the word *racaille* is used 'every day' in the banlieues in a *collective sense*, it is ineffectual against '*individuals who have lost all sense of personal responsibility*'. From this point, unsurprisingly, interviewer and interviewee went on amicably and earnestly to discuss ways of restoring guilt and personal responsibility in the ghetto, both as psychological 'sense' and juridical fact. Might they, however, inadvertently have called forth a new figure of non-integration to counterpose to that of unlimitedly liable, state-saturated 'illegal'? From another point of view, is it possible without falling into the trap of uncritical riot-celebration to formulate the political question of how to draw on and develop strategically a refusal of impossible personal 'responsibility' so unyielding that it can only be *insulted* in collective terms?

[1] Neo-Habermasian sociologist Ulrich Beck thought he heard it at least, and he repeated it in *The Guardian*. Protracted searching yielded no further trace. But, as belaboured at length above, the trace is not the point here.

[2] A majority self-constituted precisely through active practices of exclusion, both formal and informal. The fluidity of the majority's border and its constitution through these practices is attested to by the transitions-into-whiteness from outside it of immigrant groups such as the Irish, Jews and Southern Europeans in countries including the US and Australia. The cross-class Anglo-Celtic 'Aussie' compact described by Angela Mitropoulos in *Under the Beach, the Barbed Wire* in this issue of *Mute*, p.34, is an instructive example of this process.

[3] Related struggles – against endemic casual racist violence in the South, or the overwhelmingly racialised structure of labour exploitation and the 'criminal justice' complex – are also institutional, but 'integration' is in no way adequate to describe their stakes.

[4] Mitropoulos, *ibid*: 'They practically deploy racism through the assumption that the problem is a failure of integration. In other words, they reiterate the classical sociological preoccupation with social or, more accurately, national cohesion. Here, having assumed the nation-state as a natural entity – often by obliquely rendering it as 'community' or 'society' – it is the appearance of divisions that are not expedient for and normalised by the very assembly of national unity which are registered as a problem to be solved.'

[5] Mitropoulos, *ibid*.

[6] A position today stereotypically inhabited by the ‘asylum seeker’ or the illegal ‘economic migrant’, but the same role in the formation and discipline of (contracting) ‘society’ has been occupied in the past by the barbarian, the savage, the slave etc. The mainstream Italian insult ‘extracomunitario’, where ‘community’ refers literally to the EU but also retains a ring of ‘community’ in the sense of village-like shared social identity, as in English, is indicative of the entwining of institutional fact and folk superstition in modern racist practice.

[7] Mitropoulos, *ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] As in the ‘Stephen Lawrence Report’ by Sir William MacPherson of Cluny, which simultaneously introduced ‘institutional racism’ to institutional discourse and drained all particular meaning from the category, by making it refer to the amount of anomalous personal racism among an institution’s employees, rather than the racism – i.e. the racial distribution of material possibility – that its structure administers when functioning normally.

[10] Geoff Dench, Kate Gavron and Michael Young, *The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict*, Profile Books, 2006.

[11] Geoff Dench, promotional summary of *The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict*, in *The Guardian*, February 8 2006: <http://society.guardian.co.uk/socialexclusion/story/0,,1704158,00.html>

[12] The new East End: kinship, race and conflict, quoted in review by Jenny Bourne, IRR News, February 22 2006: <http://www.irr.org.uk/2006/february/ha000021.html>

[13] To use the perfectly apt term coined for George W. Bush’s re-election campaign (and echoed in mainstream British political discourse on housing in particular) for a national state tending towards a property qualification for full citizenship.

[14] <http://www.lexpress.fr/info/societe/dossier/banlieue/dossier.asp?ida=435791>

Matthew Hyland, a refiner of symptoms and founder of the Journal of Childish Psychology [www.c8.com/wolverine/], insists that there’s nothing wrong with observation that blindness wouldn’t improve

Dividing the species: Race, Science and Culture

By Marek Kohn and Luciana Parisi

For decades the notion that race has any grounds in biology has been taboo. Ethnic and racial characteristics are cultural constructs, and science has tended to confirm this view. However, with the return of scientific racism in the 1990s (notoriously Charles Murray’s *The Bell Curve* which argued that black people are inherently intellectually inferior to whites), the gap between biology and culture is being put into question again. But does the notion of a continuum between biology and culture have to produce a racist essentialisation of cultural traits? Or can a non-racist evolutionary science help us tackle the return of scientific racism by engaging its claims head on? Or is science itself intrinsically racist? Marek Kohn and Luciana Parisi, two very different proponents of a critical engagement with

scientific evolutionary theory, took up *Mute*'s invitation to discuss these issues

Mute: If scientific appeals to race as the basis for physical or cultural traits have been taboo since the end of World War II, is the multicultural notion of a hard break between biology and culture now itself in crisis and, if so, what does this mean? Are we regressing, returning to Victorian notions of racialised identity - cf *The Bell Curve* - or is there something progressive about a return to the notion of ongoing intercourse between culture and biology?

Marek Kohn: As time and controversies go by, I become ever more convinced that progress in understanding the human condition depends on the ability to synthesize biological and cultural ways of looking at humankind. We have an intellectual cold war instead of a constructive engagement. Both sides are looking the worse for it.

The contested ground extends far beyond race, but race remains the awful warning against mixing biology and culture. It might not be where you'd want to start on a re-integration of the two perspectives, but it's the issue that needs to be addressed if the taboo is to be examined.

This entails engaging with hereditarian and racial claims on their own terms as well as in terms of their context. Pointing out that an idea is Victorian in heritage does not falsify it. And a Victorian context is not necessarily a misleading one. Marx recognised that Darwin had discovered a fundamental process of life, while observing 'how Darwin rediscovers, among the beasts and plants, the society of England.' Today's hereditarians – the intellectual descendants not of Darwin but of his cousin Francis Galton – consider their claims to be independent of context. Those claims have to be examined within the framework of science as well as from outside.

Luciana Parisi: Although the crisis of multiculturalism may be thought as the crisis of the cultural relativism in definitions of difference – sexual as well as racial differences – it may be that a more subtle notion of crisis defining a limit point or transformation of such a notion points to the way multiculturalism is in the first place not without racism. As argued by Michel Foucault and recently by Giorgio Agamben and Antonio Negri (although through very distinct arguments), the biopolitics of control of species and populations necessarily operates by racism – the division and classification now operating less on the integrity of the organism and more on the integrity of genetic units.

In this context, multiculturalism, which has politically fought for the achievement of human rights, has at the same time indirectly acted for a state legalisation of Victorian forms of racism, since it has not questioned the biology of evolutionary science so as to reopen the question of how to account for material differences without predetermination. Through the lens of relativist culturalism it has rather avoided altogether an engagement with what materiality is.

Thus, rather than a hard break between biology and culture, since it has not challenged these givens in their own right, multiculturalism has used biological givens as a source of cultural constructions.

The crisis of multiculturalism therefore also points to a crisis of biopolitics based on racism. This means that rather than progressing or regressing we are facing the complexity of biopolitics, which has always dealt with the transformation of bios – organic life – into politics.

In this sense we cannot account for a linear progression or regression but only for the transformations of power that takes bios as its object of investment. The distinction between nature and culture entails not exclusively epistemological change but also more importantly, the ontological question of what is a human body and what counts as being under certain conditions? This is the question that multiculturalism had to face in an age of advanced bioinformatic capitalism where the distinction not only between populations of the same so-called species – humans – but between species (human,

animal and machines) is put in crisis by molecular biology, and indirectly biotechnology, questioning the centrality of hereditary evolution in eukaryotic cells – based on the transmission of chromosomes or nucleic DNA – through an investment in bacterial and viral colonies that transversally connect plants, animals and humans, organic and inorganic matter.

MK: It seems we have to discuss bacteria before we can discuss race! But we seem to see them rather differently. The world of bacteria certainly looks very different to the worlds of other organisms. They don't have proper species and their sexual arrangements are far less clearly defined. They stretch our ideas about life. But they don't cast any doubt on the standard account of heredity or natural selection in our own species; nor does molecular biology. I'm not aware of any sense of crisis among biologists. Molecular biology has extended and largely confirmed pre-existing descriptions of the relationships between living organisms, so if anything its effect has been to consolidate rather than to challenge.

For ideological projects based on ideas about cultural diversity and equality, the role of biology is to affirm the invalidity of race as a biological concept, and thereby to discredit claims that innate mental characteristics vary between populations. This seems to be one area where science is invoked as a reliable source of authority, in contrast to the sceptical stance that is adopted in other contexts. Since the 1960s science has provided the required reassurance, and nowadays does so without being prompted when seeking to reassure the public about its activities, such as sequencing the human genome. Recently, however, this position has been challenged by authors arguing that race is biologically real after all, and that studying it may be beneficial in terms of public health as well as scientific understanding. So the basis of the belief that race is biologically meaningless is now being explicitly contested.

Whether this will cause any problems for multiculturalist positions remains to be seen. Their advocates can still pick out the authorities whose views fit their beliefs better. That will have the effect of strengthening the hereditarian camp, by failing to challenge it, and by feeding its self-perception that its adversaries lack intellectual integrity. If that state of affairs carries on, we certainly will end up with a crisis.

LP: The point that bacteria cannot be rigidly classified into species with a corresponding race and sex does not mean that the recent rethinking of the importance of bacteria – for example the theory of endosymbiosis[1] – and of the difference between eukaryotic and prokaryotic cells[2] does not contribute to questioning what biology is and how bacterial genetic variation does indeed affect the eukaryotic realm. If we want to discuss why biology is coming back to define difference it may not be sufficient to say that the old eugenic discourse is revitalised in current debates. It may be important to open biology and the notion of biological heredity to the networks of relation amongst genomes where the distinction between eukaryotic and prokaryotic DNA is in question. Here heredity is not just accounted for by chromosomes but also by mitochondrial DNA. Mitochondrial DNA lies outside the nucleic DNA and, according to Lynn Margulis among others, splits like bacteria. Indeed research on mitochondrial DNA does sustain the argument that eukaryotic cells are symbiotic assemblages of bacteria.

On the other hand, however, the fact that talking about race is no longer meaningless and that as you suggest there is some fundamental scientific truth about race may need more careful elaboration in the redefinition of biological race if we do not want to just attribute an essence or a trait to the complexity and nonlinearity of biological difference. I agree that it is important to contest the ideological silence about race, but we don't need a re-essentialisation of biological difference to do it. The point for me is to consider the biopolitical organisation of life and see how such organisation aims to restrict the field of variation of biological difference into individual traits on a predetermined grid. Thus, biopolitics – appealing to science – works both to restrict biological difference to a set of possibilities – genes,

traits, characteristics – and to open up the question of what counts as biological difference under certain circumstances.

MK: Sure, everybody has accepted that mitochondria (energy-generating structures within cells) were once free-living bacteria. But I'm not at all clear why this phenomenon, fundamentally important as it was, is significant for questions about variations between human populations. Mitochondria have a dozen genes, presumably devoted to their own replication; the chromosomes in the nucleus contain tens of thousands.

On race, one of the issues we need to address is that people arguing for its biological reality (and I think I should point out that I am not one of them; I am simply calling attention to their claims) might well say that their vision is not essentialist. Contemporary enthusiasts for racial science don't claim that races are strictly bounded units that can be defined by a set of characters possessed by, and unique to, all their members. They say that races are 'fuzzy sets' whose boundaries aren't clear, and that have plenty of overlap with other sets, but are nonetheless real. This view fits neatly with the claim that their vision has no policy implications: the only requirement is that individuals have the opportunity to fulfill the potential indicated by their IQ scores.

I'd be interested to hear how you would see this individualist position in terms of biopolitics. It's an ideology which urges the state to get out of racial organisation – affirmative action is utterly anathema to it – and to let what it sees as natural capacities determine individual performance through market processes. It affirms that race is biologically real but socially meaningless.

LP: The point that I wished to highlight is that hereditary variation and the famous germline discussed by Weismann should be enlarged to mitochondrial transmission as well. Although such transmission involves a smaller quantity of genes, it does not mean that such quantity is less qualitatively important than nucleic DNA. Indeed, the understanding of junk DNA as useless has actually been questioned in molecular biology. The transmission capacities of these portions of a chromosome or genome's DNA sequence for which no function has yet been identified are not at all known yet. The point is that genetic variations between populations do not only obey a tree logic of evolution (variation with descent) since genetic heredity occurs through parallel strings of DNA – nucleic, mitochondrial, but also transversally through the continual effects that bacterial populations and viruses (and retroviruses) have on eukaryotic DNA. Thus, the point is not that these amplified genomes can explain the distinction between populations but that they can question the separation between human and nonhuman populations in the first place. For me the important point is to engage with the materiality of difference without re-appealing to the essentialism of nature. Not the reduction to one code but the opening of the human so called species to populations of microbodies, to entire genomic networks that render the biological distinction between populations problematically ideological.

I see your point: the emphasis on fuzzy sets of genes does not preclude claims about race. This may be because such sets, although more flexibly combined and recombined, are still pre-defined unities. Thus rather than one individual fixed unit you have smaller individual yet mobile units. The point is that such a pluralist argument happens to be a more sophisticated essentialist argument, but is in the end very essentialist indeed. These claims are metaphysically and ontopolitically rooted in a logic of individuality – formed substance – that will always reduce the indeterminate materiality of the body to biological facts.

Biopolitics entails how power is already invested in the organisation of life, the action of forces on forces in nature, which produce certain material effects directly activating the body: the activation of the body in relation to sex – sexual reproduction – and race – skin colour – for example. I am not sure if you think that biopolitics is an ideology but for me it produces certain effects of power rather than

representing certain interests or repressing certain ideas. However the operation of biopolitics is definitely twofold: on the one hand, it organises a field of equity – where all humans are equal and have equal rights – on the other, it subjectifies the body, makes the body an individual subject or performer whose actions totally depend on its biological capacities. In such a twofold dynamics, biopolitics operates through racism, continuously sorting out, classifying, ordering biodifferences at the molecular level whilst maintaining equity at the molar level. Yet, as suggested before, the question of what a human body is and what counts as biological difference – encompassing organic and inorganic life from cells to rocks – does not remain the same because these questions are attuned to ontogenetic transformations of life that is less a substance than an immaterial consistency. The biopolitics of governability rivals such transformations by using at once the most despotic and the most liberal modes of power, which, as you say, affirm at once that race is biologically real and socially meaningless. This is a trait of contemporary neo-conservatism.

MK: It seems to me that you are trying to rewrite biology in order to find a moral that is already written in it. The theory of evolution proposed that the barriers between species were not absolute. It implicitly questioned the separation between human and non-human populations. That was what caused, and is still causing, all the trouble. It was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, challenges that essentialist views of life have ever faced.

If you were to ask me for contemporary knowledge that challenges essentialist views of life, I think I would point to the tree structures, showing genetic relationships, which affirm the astonishing extent to which inherited information is shared throughout living forms, rather than the detection of viral DNA in host genomes. And I think it's important to try not to lose a sense of scale. The great mergers that incorporated free-living bacteria into complex cells took place several billion years ago. Claims about racial differences among human populations concern developments said to have happened within the last few thousand years – or even the last few hundred, as in the case of the hypothesis published last year which proposed that sociopolitical conditions in Europe had a selective effect on the intelligence of Ashkenazi Jews.

Claims such as these rely upon the assumption that natural selection can act upon human mental characteristics rather quickly. In this respect they appear anti-essentialist – especially when contrasted with the programme to which the term evolutionary psychology usually refers, dedicated to describing a universal human nature. Likewise eugenic doctrines are based on concerns about the degeneration or the improvement of populations: what preoccupies them is precisely that populations don't have an essence that resists change. But of course it is also clear that racial arguments encourage an essentialist view of populations – one group is said to be clever, another good at running, and so on. So, contemporary racial arguments operate by rejecting essentialism formally while promoting it informally. They know how to have their rhetorical cake and eat it. But do you believe that their essentialism goes deeper than that?

Whatever their structure, though, they are not in power. You describe a twofold biopolitical process in which equality is constituted on one side, while on the other, individual actions are defined in terms of the individual's biological capacities. This certainly sounds like the state of affairs that contemporary hereditarians would like. But the dominant ideology at present is highly reluctant to acknowledge the possibility of systematic variations in capacities, and vehemently rejects the possibility of mental differences between ethnic or racial groups. Hereditarians like Charles Murray, the co-author of *The Bell Curve*, are left bemoaning what Murray calls 'Orwellian disinformation about innate group differences.' Do you think they would need to achieve hegemony for the biopolitical process to occur, or do you see it as something which can operate even though its premises are denied?

LP: It is not me who attempts at rewriting biology but, as Isabelle Stengers says, science is not a given affair, not a concluded history. Science is always in the course of being rewritten, remaking itself, challenging itself through the thousands of voices – including the sound of matter itself – claiming the achievement of objects of science. In a sense, science is a battlefield of perception, conception, affection – a messy combination of transagents – and not a mere paradigmatic establishment of truths. At the core of this standpoint is an issue of nonlinear time, which entails an infinite series of microdurations, microstories, small events that coexist with dominant views in science and that indirectly yet ceaselessly slip through to impact on such views. The important claim that endosymbiosis makes is to pose a hypothetical question to the dominant story of linear descent with modification. It is the fact that endosymbiosis poses a challenge by asking science: what if tree structures were not the whole story, what if scales of evolution are not so rigidly segmented across assumed simple and complex organisms, what if the very eukaryotic scale of animals, humans and plants was instead open to the rate of mutation of bacterial populations, what would it then mean to be human, to be an oxygen breathing creature, to have an immune system, to have sex differences.

Endosymbiosis challenges exactly the linear conception of time and scale which assumes that the evolutionary past – the bacterial past of eukaryotic cells – is confined somewhere in a box at the bottom of a forgotten ocean and thus that specific scales are all that we ought to be concerned with. What is central to such theory is a challenge to androcentrism in evolution. Yet it is true that such androcentric essentialism was already questioned by Darwinism, where the intrinsic relation between populations and territories, degrees of mutations and contingent natural selection was already challenging the Aristotelian Great Chain of Being – at the top of which was White Man. However, the legacy of Darwinism is also the focus on speciation, on formed complexities of genetic variance, on groups of individuals, on the molar scale of molecular assemblages. What instead endosymbiosis shows is that supposedly higher scales of evolution are coexistent with microscales of genetic trades running through nodes such as human, animals, and plants and affecting the genetic variance of such molar organisms. In this sense, it may be useful to consider that claims about race go hand in hand with claims about purity from infection, contamination, with preservation of individual unity – species – as opposed to the dissipation in mixtures of genetic variations. This may perhaps be one of the ways in which the microscale of evolution has always been relevant to the macroscale of evolved species, whereby issues of purity have to do with keeping the bacterial realm away from eukaryotic species.

I find it interesting that while we are discussing this level of evolutionary thinking, where for me the ‘scientific’ perception and conception of evolution entails the way science is entangled in material mutations themselves, your argument slips straightforwardly into the discursive level of claiming the truth as if this were the only level at which the notion of race becomes politically relevant and the investment of power in the organisation of life occurs. In other words, it seems to me that your argument is supported by a sort of cultural constructivist understanding of science, the body and politics. In a sense, to argue against essentialism through culturally constructed lenses for me entails a problematic dismissal of the materiality of the body in terms of the challenge that recent philosophies and sciences of the body have put forward: to rethink matter in terms of potentials – not the optimisation of already determined traits – but unpredictable capacities to change, to step beyond initial conditions, to decline from linear trajectories, to reverse the line of transmission and so on. This is the sense in which the notion of biopolitics has been used, implying a nature-culture continuum, by which is meant not identity but dynamics of differentiation, where culture is the becoming of nature and not the interpreter of natural facts. Here biopolitics is not an ideology but a matter of relations of force operating through many levels of affective power – material, biological, semiotic, technical and so on – based not on essence and construction, body and mind, biology and culture, but involving an ontological rearticulation of what is a body and what a body can do, what is mind and what mind can do.

In this sense, a biopolitics concerning the impact that natural selection has on individual groups entails an anti-essentialist position based on environmental conditions and not internal traits. Yet, it also shows that the difference does not lie between internal essence and external constraints since they are both embedded in an ontopolitics of determination, based on the constant return to sameness. Either internal essence or external conditions determine material difference, implying that the body is a passive recipient of chromosomal traits or natural selection of the fittest – the most adapted to external changes.

Whilst it is true that eugenics realises the impossibility of preserving internal traits because of the external influence of natural selection, it is also true that Darwinian eugenics is strictly based on the role that sexual reproduction has in the filiative transmission of hereditary genes undergoing only small changes. The problem of such eugenic Darwinism here entails, as Henri Bergson argued, the passivity of internal difference unable to differentiate from itself. Thus in a sense, both claims about internal and external differences are based on an ontopolitics of determination – internal or external, aiming at preserving life under controlled conditions. In this sense, biopolitics does not need to achieve a hegemonic dominance since its power is at the core of the political investment in what counts as life. *The Bell Curve* book is a symptom of the explicit expression of a biopolitics concerned with the government of life and appealing to an ontopolitics of determination of material differences.

MK: Endosymbiosis and what's known as 'lateral' or 'horizontal' gene transfer certainly poses a question to biologists about whether there is more to life than Darwin's tree of shared descent. There does seem to be more to it in the bacterial world, where new knowledge about the likely extent of lateral gene exchange now makes trees look like only part of the story. But I infer from your comments that you are referring to the possibility of such processes acting upon complex organisms, including humans. The evidence for this is doubtful and sparse. A few years ago it was claimed that human genome sequencing revealed the presence of about 100 genes derived from bacteria, but this interpretation of the data has been challenged. Similarly there have recently been claims of extensive lateral gene transfer in one plant species, but alternative explanations are possible.

There is also the question of the significance of a small number of bacterial genes in a very large genome. I gather from your comments, though, that for you this is an issue of principle rather than quantity: that the presence of genes from distantly related organisms poses questions about the reality and nature of species. Biologists themselves have plenty of questions about the nature of species, and a number of competing concepts of species. They are possibly less sure what and how important species are than they were, say, twenty years ago.

All extant human populations are potentially capable of interbreeding with each other, and with no other populations; which means that we are a good species by the criterion of the widely-used 'biological species concept'. But the situation in our evolutionary past is highly controversial. There are bitter disputes over how extinct hominins (the lineage dating back to the common ancestor we share with chimpanzees) were related, how they should be classified, and whether they interbred. Evidence from mitochondrial DNA has supported a story in which modern humans emerged from Africa about 100,000 years ago and replaced all the other hominins, such as Neanderthals, without significant interbreeding. This story has been challenged by a number of researchers including the geneticist Alan Templeton, who has analysed patterns in a range of genes and has calculated that the likelihood that modern humans completely replaced all the others is extremely remote. He has produced diagrams of gene flow between human populations in different parts of the world, going back almost two million years – not a tree, but a 'trellis'.

So it is possible to reflect on the question of human species and to come up with a network model instead of a tree, without invoking genetic transfers between very different organisms. And race has long been a powerful presence in discourse about human evolution. But even so, we haven't reached a point where ideas about species can be used to intervene in current controversies about race and science. Contemporary advocates of racial theories would be equally happy with any of the current accounts of the origins of modern humans, 'tree' models or 'net' models. Racial-scientific claims are claims about variation within a species. What it is to be human is another question altogether.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Editor's note: 'The endosymbiotic theory concerns the origins of mitochondria and plastids (e.g. chloroplasts), which are organelles of eukaryotic cells. According to this theory, these originated as separate prokaryotic organisms, which were taken inside the cell as endosymbionts, and mitochondria developed from proteobacteria (in particular, Rickettsiales or close relatives) and chloroplasts from cyanobacteria. [...] The endosymbiotic hypothesis was fleshed out and popularized by Lynn Margulis. In her 1981 work *Symbiosis in Cell Evolution* she argued that eukaryotic cells originated as communities of interacting entities [...] According to Margulis and Sagan (1996), "Life did not take over the globe by combat, but by networking" (i.e., by cooperation), and Darwin's notion of evolution driven by natural selection is incomplete (see *Evolution and natural selection*). However, others have argued that endosymbiosis constitutes slavery rather than mutualism.' From Wikipedia, <http://www.wikipedia.org>

[2] Editor's note: 'A eukaryote [...], also spelled eucaryote, is an organism with a complex cell or cells, in which the genetic material is organized into membrane-bound nucleus/nuclei. Eukaryotes comprise animals, plants, and fungi – which are mostly multicellular – as well as various other groups that are collectively classified as protists (many of which are unicellular). In contrast, other organisms, such as bacteria, lack nuclei and other complex cell structures; such organisms are called prokaryotes. The eukaryotes share a common origin, and are often treated formally as a superkingdom, empire, or domain.' From Wikipedia, <http://www.wikipedia.org>

Marek Kohn's [<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/marek.kohn/>] most recent book is *A Reason for Everything: Natural Selection and the English Imagination*, Faber, 2004

Dr Luciana Parisi <L.Parisi@gold.ac.uk> convenes the Interactive Media MA at Goldsmiths College. She works on endosymbiosis in models of information transmission and her book *Abstract Sex: Philosophy, Biotechnology and the Mutations of Desire*, was published by Continuum Press, 2004

Show Some Disrespect!

By Daniel Jewesbury

If multiculturalism has become a toxic mix of regressive relativism and biopolitical control, what comes next? Daniel Jewesbury retraces its development and argues that an anti-racist, anti-capitalist politics must move beyond race to a renewed left universalism

Multiculturalism is a term that has never had a stable meaning. It has been both attacked and stalwartly defended by critics at all points on the political spectrum, identified as a central rhetoric in a dominant organisational hegemony, a cynical mechanism through which everyone can be kept in their place while the 'centre' is shored up, or a relativist, cultural studies inspired attack on materialist readings of

class and politics; for others still, it is simply a pernicious expression of political correctness, yet another means by which national cultures and values have been undermined.

How could such a promiscuous and apparently universally threatening concept hope to survive? And if we were to try and assess whether it has succeeded, failed, or just ceased to exist, how might we begin, where might we start? *Which* multicultural project might we choose to examine? How would its 'success' be measured – for whom? For those at the 'centre' doling out 'respect' to the various Others? Or for those Others, standing in single file to receive their good citizenship medals? Different imperatives can clearly be identified through the kinds of 'success' being measured by different 'stakeholders' in multiculturalism: for the state, employing multiculturalism as a divisive discourse of 'recognition', its success lies in the ease with which we are now 'interpellated' by a technocratic order which will soon have our DNA on record and our biometric data at command; for the liberal, conversely, success lies in the relativisation of political discourse, and the apparent 'empowerment' of diverse sub-groups around appeals to rights.

Success and failure: the impossibility of respect

Since the first British anti-discrimination laws were introduced in the mid-1970s, multiculturalism has rapidly ascended to a position of dominance in cultural discourse: indeed its rise can be seen as symptomatic of a more general sublimation of the traditionally 'political' into the field of 'culture' (a process still very much underway – witness the emergence, from nowhere, of the Ulster Scots language movement amongst Northern Irish Protestant unionists). The terminological slippage discussed above can actually be interpreted as a progression – multiculturalism's rather confused status has something to do with the fact that, at different times, it has been valorised by different groups for different reasons. This progression can be mapped onto particular moments in recent British cultural history: those first race laws of the 1970s coincided with a reconfiguration of parts of the Left around new readings of colonialism and culture, and with attempts by that 'New Left' to fuse the Marxist analysis of class with a *parallel* concern with race. It was not until well into the 1980s that this exercise reached out of the academy to influence mainstream politics, but by the mid-1990s, it had come to predominate, largely displacing earlier assimilationist ideas – such as Norman Tebbit's 'cricket test'. It's crucial to keep in mind a clear differentiation between assimilation and integration in this discussion, since contemporary multiculturalism weaves a path somewhere between the two, managing to function as an *accommodation* of the minority community exclusively in terms of the 'host culture', and seeking to control the manner of their impact upon the 'centre'. Multiculturalism, as state policy, is unavoidably based on a logic of minority and majority, on an untroubled, essentialist ethnic taxonomy and on the notion of equidistance. It involves keeping cultures separate, at arm's length from one another. The minority is 'tolerated' by the majority, tolerance equating in liberal circles with the respect of difference. Nikos Papastergiadis touches on all these concerns when he writes:

The selective incorporation of the other and the (restricted) permission to celebrate diversity have emerged as the dominant modes for articulating new forms of cultural identity. This inversion of the status of cultural identity has generated a new range of personal choices in private lives and stimulated the gastronomic options in the leisure industry of metropolitan cities, but it has also left within its wake ... the lazy tolerance of cultural relativism which, as Warren Christopher noted, is the last refuge of repression.[1]

The very fact that multiculturalism must be based on essentialism means that it cannot account for inconsistencies, internal differences, within minority groups. An example of the way that multiculturalism enforces its categorisations is in the practice of identifying 'community leaders'. Following, for example, bouts of urban unrest between minority groups and police, these 'leaders'

(community workers, local councillors, school governors, and so on) will often be called upon by politicians and the media to persuade the community to refrain from further violence. The fact that large numbers of young, disenfranchised second or third generation black and Asian Britons often feel the need to distance themselves from these 'leaders' who would speak on their behalf – often from the vantage point of a very different social position – must surely underline the problems with such an approach.[2] Why is it that there are never any 'white community leaders'?

Cultural relativism, then, often functions by imposing a presumption of homogeneity upon internally diverse, heterogeneous groups. This has the effect of reifying or abstracting the group, with the result that an issue like the subjection of women comes to be considered a 'cultural' question. Such an approach, Floyd Anthias argues, assists the more orthodox elements within the community in question to disavow other secular or alternative voices in the group:

Debates on cultural diversity confuse culture and ethnicity ... Is it the boundaries that should be kept or the cultural artefacts that are their barbed wire? However, the question is not just about homogeneity, but also about western cultural hegemony.[3]

Slavoj Žižek develops this point when he argues that multiculturalism is:

an experience of the Other deprived of its Otherness (the idealised Other who dances fascinating dances and has an ecologically sound holistic approach to reality, while practices like wife-beating remain out of sight...).[4]

This is extremely significant, and leads us to the question of the great logical inconsistency – the radical *intolerance* – that is at the heart of multiculturalism. 'Tolerance' itself – the notion of some 'permission' issuing from a privileged, central position – is clearly problematic, even without further investigation. That the demands for recognition that were the kernel of the struggles against racism in the 1960s have been transformed into a right to be tolerated is, on its own, breathtaking. Stanley Fish, however, goes further, and argues that:

the trouble with stipulating tolerance as your first principle is that you cannot possibly be faithful to it because sooner or later the culture whose core values you are tolerating will reveal itself to be intolerant at that same core; that is, the distinctiveness that marks it as unique and self-defining will resist the appeal of moderation or incorporation into a larger whole ... At this point the strong multiculturalist faces a dilemma: either he stretches his toleration so that it extends to the intolerance residing at the heart of a culture he would honour, in which case tolerance is no longer his guiding principle, or he condemns the core intolerance of that culture ... in which case he is no longer according it respect at the point where its distinctiveness is most obviously at stake. Typically, the strong multiculturalist will grab the second handle of this dilemma (usually in the name of some supracultural universal now seen to have been hiding up his sleeve from the beginning).[5]

Fish goes on to prove that 'no one could possibly be a multiculturalist in any interesting and coherent sense', since:

[t]he strong multiculturalist takes difference [so seriously as a general principle that he cannot take any particular difference seriously, cannot allow its imperatives their full realisation in a political program, for their full realisation would inevitably involve the suppression of difference].[6]

Clearly, Fish argues, if one is really to respect difference then the first principle of liberal relativism, that a person's freedom must be protected so long as it does not impinge on the freedom of another, has to be discarded; and since this cannot be done, multiculturalism is nothing but posturing.

Å½iÅ¾ek also objects to multiculturalism but on more traditional ‘materialist’ grounds, arguing that it accepts the logic of global capital and, moreover, actually precludes politicisation.[7] The first point is argued from the position that since the ‘fluid’, cosmopolitan subjectivities of today are only occasioned by the transnational flows of global capital, they therefore represent a *de facto* accommodation with that system. Å½iÅ¾ek appears to argue that the new patterns of labour and consumption that result from capital’s global restructuring, facilitated by the development and growth of networked technologies, should not in turn occasion any contingent, improvised cultural change; or at least, that if they do, there cannot possibly be any interruptive or disruptive potential in these changes. More than being simply a reiteration of the Foucauldian view of Power and its incorporation of resistance, this is a return to the old Marxist saw dictating that any other site of oppression and struggle – race, gender and so on – must be subordinated to the class struggle, which is the basis of all other antagonisms in society. In arguing that multiculturalism precludes politicisation, Å½iÅ¾ek is on firmer ground. His claim – that all previously ‘ideological’ positions have become neutralised in a kind of cathartic post-politics, where we must all live and let live, brings us on to questions of the usefulness of a politics built on liberal ‘rights’ and ‘mutual respect’, and of where and how to *fight against* the violent *disrespect* of (for instance) racism, rather than simply conversing with it, to which we’ll return later in this text.

Fish and Å½iÅ¾ek differ fundamentally from one another in their characterisation of the central figure of the multiculturalist. Fish argues, convincingly enough, that the multiculturalist bases his or her ‘respect’ of the Other in terms of a kind of permitted particularity:

Taking pleasure in one’s ‘particular identity’ is perfectly all right so long as when the pinch comes, and a question of basic allegiances arises, it is one’s universal identity that is affirmed...[8]

The universal to which he’s referring here, then, is the already existing ‘host culture’, which not only somehow remains intact and unchallenged, but itself becomes transcendent – becomes the standard. The multiculturalist is sitting at the centre, giving expression to his or her culture without let or hindrance; moreover, that culture is shown to be innately superior, since it is *defined*, in part, by the tolerance and respect that are largely absent from the Other’s culture.

Å½iÅ¾ek argues that this presentation of the situation, whilst persuasive, is mistaken, and that it evacuates the relationship of any political dimension:

What about the rather obvious... argument that the multiculturalist’s neutrality is false, since his position silently privileges Eurocentrist content? This line of reasoning is right, but for the wrong reason. The particular cultural background or roots which always support the universal multiculturalist position are not its ‘truth’, hidden beneath the mask of universality – ‘multiculturalist universalism is really Eurocentrist’ – but rather the opposite: the stain of particular roots is the phantasmatic screen which conceals the fact that the subject is already thoroughly ‘rootless’, that his true position is the void of universality... today’s capitalist... still clings to some particular cultural heritage [but] this very reference to a particular cultural formula is a screen for the universal anonymity of Capital. The true horror does not reside in the particular content hidden beneath the universality of global Capital, but rather in the fact that Capital is effectively an anonymous global machine blindly running its course, that there is effectively no particular Secret Agent who animates it. The horror is not the (particular living) ghost in the (dead universal) machine, but the (dead universal) machine in the very heart of each (particular living) ghost.[9]

Given this brief overview of contemporary accounts of multiculturalism, it would appear to have been rather successful as a political discourse; paradoxically, this success could hardly be said to have benefited many of the groups who championed it at its inception. Somewhere in its rapid transformation from leftist stratagem to dominant liberal discourse, multiculturalism managed to divide many of those who were its chief proponents. Furthermore, recent events have demonstrated that it simply cannot be the basis of a viable approach at times of great political conflict, particularly when these come disguised as cultural conflicts.

After multiculturalism – universalism and disrespect

The *alternatives* to multiculturalism are not so easy to identify at first. Multiculturalism is now so firmly established that any government celebration of ‘Britishness’ is sure to feature it as an unchanging standard of what makes us who we are; Gordon Brown has recently been wrapping himself in the Union Flag, proclaiming that for him it is not the scarlet banner, but the ‘butcher’s apron’ (as it’s sometimes known abroad) which is the hope and pride of our people, of every race and religion.

In America, where multiculturalism was always a substantially different animal, separatist politics such as those of the Nation of Islam have continued to hold great currency amongst minority groups. Separatism has also found growing appeal amongst British Muslims, and not only since the launch of the disastrous and ill-conceived ‘war on terror’ (Hanif Kureishi’s film *My Son the Fanatic*, his representation of the political climate in a Muslim community in the north of England, was first screened in 1997). Seen in one light, separatism is a clear rejection of multiculturalism, and as such it is a radical reinvention of the demand for recognition. Should the anti-relativist Left therefore applaud it as an ‘authentic’ articulation of the oppressed? The answer, quite unambiguously, must be no: the only grounds on which such applause could be offered would be on the basis of a reinvented multiculturalism anyway, a spurious, patronising ‘toleration’ of that which is ultimately utterly inimical to our own political goals (inimical as these may themselves be to liberalism).[10] Contemporary separatism, as perhaps distinct from various Afrocentrist and pan-African projects of the 19th and 20th centuries, rejects anti-racism outright, because it actually seeks to mimic (and outdo) the oppressive structures which foster and create racism, but ‘for us’ rather than ‘for them’. Paul Gilroy identifies and anatomises, within black separatism, a fascist drive that is indistinguishable from that within white supremacism or mainstream racist capitalism.[11]

The definition of a political identity according to one’s supposed race is not only a reactionary move but also a profoundly limiting one. Gilroy, amongst others, has argued for a cultural politics that is capable of superceding categories of race altogether.[12] In a gesture that epitomises the confusion that marks these debates, Gilroy persists in describing his project as a ‘multiculturalist’ one; even more confusingly, he labels it a ‘conservative’ for his criticisms of the kind of multiculturalism that he (Gilroy) is specifically not advocating himself.[13] Gilroy’s position is not simply a banal multiculturalist ‘colour blindness’, which amounts to a refusal to acknowledge actual discrimination on the basis of ‘race’; rather it is a refusal to constitute one’s politics on the basis of the racialised rationale for that discrimination. In other words, the marker by which one is discriminated against – which is arbitrary, and which is anyway a product of the racist European imperialist imaginary – should not be the foundation from which one sets about countering that discrimination.[14] Gilroy is following Frantz Fanon in arguing for a radical humanism that extends anti-racism beyond merely a well-mannered plea for ‘equality’. The terms on which any equality might be shared have to be completely re-imagined: rather than being based on the granting of a token of admission into ‘equality with’ a centre that remains unrevised, the centre must itself be completely revised so that the achievement of equality is a *mutual one*. Given that the nationalist, patriotic cultural identities of the ‘imagined community’ of the centre are themselves structured on racist bases – on global economies

arising from historic inequalities and exploitations, on structural exclusions within the territory of the state itself, on racialised immigration controls that exclude from that territory – there can be no simple accommodation of the excluded with these privileged identities.

So a *parallel deconstruction* of the identities of the marginalised and of the dominant (what I would argue it is still valid to call a hybrid process of identification) is required. The only genuinely anti-racist approach to identity is one which seeks to expunge the destructive, artificial category of race from the conversation altogether. Separatist appeals to an ‘alternatively racialised’ future, as historicised by Gilroy, must, he argues, now be exceeded in the name of an internationalised anti-racist project for humanity.[15] The well-known recent critiques and revisions of ‘whiteness’ (again, drawing in part on Fanon’s profound reading of the psychology of race as well as on W.E.B. Du Bois) have rendered ideas of racial separatism even more problematic.[16] A processual, situational reading of identity has begun to gain ground, with more widespread acknowledgement of our multiple inflections and affiliations. Against this, any attempt to search for ‘freedom’ on the basis of the ‘overdetermination from without’ that is race is not just counterproductive, it may be actively racist, inasmuch as it seeks to perpetuate race as a marker of affiliation (albeit a supposedly progressive one).

And yet, since violent discrimination continues to be practiced *on the basis of race*, is it not a little abstract to advocate the deconstruction of the category at a time when its existence continues to be sharply felt by those to whom it is applied? Is it necessary, in other words, to maintain the category in order to most effectively organise a resistance? This would obviously be the reaction of many Marxists and anti-colonialists: just as the anti-colonial struggle had to be organised around movements of *national* liberation, at least in the first instance, so any struggle against a particular type of domination must be gathered together in terms of that affiliation which is being attacked, or denied. The idea of ‘strategic essentialism’ is an attempt to confront this situation:

Such a position enables minority groups to ‘preserve’ identities that facilitate struggle, resistance and solidarity while maintaining a critique of reified notions of ‘race’. Asked to expand upon the implications of strategic essentialism, the term’s progenitor, Spivak, comments: ‘The only way to work with collective agency is to teach a persistent critique of collective agency at the same time... It is the persistent critique of what one cannot not want.’[17]

Whether such a strategy is feasible in terms of anti-racist struggle in a post-colonial (or neo-colonial) context is not clear. Here we re-encounter the schism between those who would argue for a broad class-based politics and those who stress that such an approach re-inscribes the marginalisation of the already marginal. We’ll return to this problem a little further on.

Recently, Western liberals have been tying themselves in a range of rhetorical knots following the publication of cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammad in a number of European newspapers, and the subsequent violent protests carried out by Muslims across Europe. Discussions regarding the defensibility of both the publication of the cartoons and of the Muslim response to them invariably centred around ideas of free speech and freedom of expression. Unfortunately all these recourses to ‘principle’ were incapable of deciding what should happen when one person’s exercise of their ‘rights’ drastically undermines another person’s ability to exercise theirs, or when the ‘expression’ concerned is itself calling for the curtailment of the freedom of expression. Most commentators were left trying to construct elaborate exceptions to the rule, with John Stuart Mill’s dictum on the limits of freedom being reconfigured in a number of ingenious and tortuous ways. Did they think that the cartoons should have been published? Well, yes, the newspapers must have the freedom to publish the images, but it was probably unwise to do so; yes, they should have been published and are a demonstration of the robustness of our democracies in which any idea can be expressed and the people are the judge; yes, of course, although it was a relief that the British newspapers chose not to republish them. Should

British Muslims have been allowed to call for the execution of the editors of these newspapers? Yes, this is their right, and however much we detest what they say, we must protect that right or we end up in the kind of societies that these people so energetically endorse. On and on and on the commentators opined, uneasily offering the endless permutations and qualifications of their arguments.

I was struck that no commentator that I came across said that they thought that the cartoons were racist, offensive and should not have been published, but that the protests were also odious and inflammatory and should have been prevented. Such a point of view, of course, would be wholly incompatible with a rights-based response to the situation. And yet, as an anti-racist and a socialist, this would have been my approach. Returning to Fish and to Å½iÅ¾ek, we find some helpful insights into the question of how to avoid perpetual liberal hand-wringing. Fish asks, ‘will speech codes dispel racism?’ Will the multiculturalist’s insistence, in other words, on giving one’s opponent the freedom to speak and hoping to disprove their arguments actually work?:

If you think of hate speech as evidence of moral... confusion you will try to clean the confusion up by the application of good reasons; but if you think that hate speakers rather than being confused are simply wrong – they reason well enough but their reasons are anchored in beliefs (about racial characteristics, sexual norms, and so on) that you abhor – you will not place your faith in arguments but look for something stronger.[18]

In other words, we must be able to restore some faith in *universal ideas*, not disguised with a phony ‘tolerance’ which can be withheld when it proves inconvenient, but openly stated: racism is not a relative value, there is no right to express racist ideas, and my ‘freedom’ to state this is derived not from an abstract ‘right’ but from my own convictions. Å½iÅ¾ek is also clear in this respect, stating first of all that:

there is no way to avoid being partial, since neutrality involves taking sides... humanitarian liberal equidistance can easily slip into or coincide with its opposite and effectively tolerate the most violent ‘ethnic cleansing’.[19]

Å½iÅ¾ek then dismisses the ‘easy’ gesture of demonstrating that a particular interest hides behind an abstract *universal* – such as, for instance, saying that white male interests are served by multiculturalism – and argues that precisely the opposite approach is required: to identify a *universal* interest at the most *particular* point in society, at the very ‘point of exclusion’ from society: to identify the cause of the immigrant, or the homeless, with the cause of humanity in its totality.

One could illustrate Å½iÅ¾ek’s theory with a story, one that as it turns out is not true, but which is nevertheless extremely handy, and whose dubious veracity is itself part of the story. During the Second World War, it came to be believed that the King of Denmark, reacting to an order by the occupying Nazi army that Danish Jews all wear the yellow star, went out on his horse the very next day wearing the star himself, and that as a result of his courageous identification with the Jews, the order had to be rescinded. In fact, no such decree was ever issued, and Christian X was never required to perform this act. It seems likely that the source of the myth was a cartoon, published in a Swedish newspaper on 10 January, 1942. The king was shown with his former prime minister, who asked him, ‘What are we going to do, your majesty, if Scavenius [the Nazi puppet prime minister] makes all the Jews wear yellow stars?’, to which the king replies, ‘We’ll all have to wear yellow stars.’ Perhaps, now that we’ve learned to take cartoons seriously, we should try to react to them with the courage of our convictions.

Å½iÅ¾ek is not just restating a deterministic Marxism; he argues stridently that the appeal to sectional causes undermines or negates the more general and immediate struggle to be fought against global capitalism, but his own appeal to the 'point of exclusion' identifies those very people whose exclusion specifically does not simply arise on arbitrary economic grounds, but on grounds of racism, sexism, xenophobia and so on. Racism is an effect of capital, and in order to confront capitalism one must confront racism (and vice versa). Therefore the argument extended for 'strategic essentialism' is redundant: any call to rally around the undeconstructed signs of one's exclusion merely defers a greater struggle, one which, likewise, is not 'prior' to the anti-racist or anti-colonial struggle, but which is logically inseparable from it. As Fanon noted in his essay on 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness', [20] written at the height of the anti-colonial movement, the cost of the national liberation struggle is that it always ends while it is still incomplete, before the true 'liberation' takes place; and a new obstacle is barring the realisation of that goal, a national bourgeoisie who assume control and who set about administering a capitalist economy for their own profit. So too with any anti-racism that is not at the same time aware of the influence of capitalism: a legalistic accommodation might be reached, an extension of 'rights', but at the expense of the installation of a leadership whose position depends on the maintenance of the very racialised categories which were contested in the first place. [21] Such an outcome clearly represents no challenge to Power at all.

So Fanon, Gilroy and even Å½iÅ¾ek can, with a little creative appropriation, be used to construct a *post-multiculturalism*, centred around a reinvigorated Left universalism, and dependent on the disrespect of the 'cultures' of racism and sexism, wherever they might be manifested.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Nikos Papastergiadis, 'The Elastic Metaphor: Modernity and the critique of the self' in Dan Fleming, ed., *Formations*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 149.

[2] The Cultural Policy Collective have commented on the phenomenon of 'community definition' in the context of 'ethnic festivals', observing that they 'tend to be dominated by the preferences of the first generation gerontocracy whose memory is often of romantic and conservative cultural values'. Cultural Policy Collective, *Beyond Social Inclusion: Towards Cultural Democracy*, Glasgow: Cultural Policy Collective, 2004, p. 29.

[3] Floyd Anthias, cited in Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) 'Ethnicity, Gender Relations and Multiculturalism' in Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, eds., *Debating Cultural Hybridity* (London: Zed Books), p. 198.

[4] Slavoj Å½iÅ¾ek, cited in Jodi Dean 'Å½iÅ¾ek Against Democracy' in *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 1:2, 2005.

[5] Stanley Fish 'Boutique Multiculturalism, or Why Liberals Are Incapable of Thinking About Hate Speech' in *Critical Inquiry* 23, 1997, pp. 382-3.

[6] *Ibid*, p. 384.

[7] See Dean (2005) for a fuller account of Å½iÅ¾ek's argument on these points.

[8] Fish (1997) *op cit*, p. 380.

[9] Slavoj Å½iÅ¾ek 'Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism' in *New Left Review* 225, 1997, pp. 44-5. Unfortunately, for the sake of brevity, I've had to omit Å½iÅ¾ek's joke about how one starts with an innocent group sex orgy and ends up sharing meals in a Chinese

restaurant, but trust me, it doesn't really add much to one's understanding of the basic argument.

[10] See Ardeshir Mehdad and Yassamine Mather, 'Political Islam's Relation to Capital and Class', in *Variant* 25, 2006, www.variant.org.uk.

[11] See Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps*, London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2000, particularly chapter 9.

[12] Ibid; also *The Black Atlantic*, London: Verso, 1993.

[13] Gilroy (2000) op cit, p. 242.

[14] This is not to say that British Muslims are necessarily putting forward their religious, cultural and political objectives solely *in response* to their discrimination: Islam is not merely a reflex action, some necessary dialectical 'corollary' of Western racism.

[15] Gilroy, op cit, particularly chapters 7 and 9.

[16] For a recent critical overview of theories surrounding 'whiteness' see Andrew Hartman 'The Rise and Fall of Whiteness Studies', in *Race & Class* 46:2, 2004, pp. 22-38.

[17] Alastair Bonnett 'Constructions of Whiteness in European and American Anti-Racism', in Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, eds., *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism* (London: Zed Books), 1997, p. 187.

[18] Fish, op cit, p. 393.

[19] Å½iÅ¾ek, op cit, p. 50.

[20] See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, chapter 3.

[21] An excellent description is given in Linton Kwesi Johnson's dub *Di Black Petty Booshwah*, available on the album (Island Records).

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Acts of God and Enclosures in New Orleans

By George Caffentzis

The relief effort in New Orleans has had far graver implications for the city's inhabitants than the physical devastation of hurricane Katrina – it represents one of the 'largest and swiftest urban enclosures' in US history. Far from returning things to normal, Bush's neoliberal administration is using the disaster as an opportunity to evict its black working class residents, hand land over to big business and drive down wages – argues George Caffentzis

Dedicated to Megan Perry, who died in New Orleans while in struggle against the New Enclosures[1]

When Hurricane Katrina blew through New Orleans on 28 August 2005, the levees broke and a large part of the city was flooded. Hundreds of New Orleanians drowned and hundreds of thousands fled the city. Katrina was one of the worst *natural* disasters in US history, but what made it so disastrous was the *governmental* response to it. Inevitably, this response became a prism to critically analyse the politics of the Bush Administration. The main motives that have emerged to explain its complicity in the disaster are racism and hostility to ecological considerations. The critics agree that if New Orleans was not a majority black city, then the Bush administration's assistance would have been swifter and more generous and that Bush's pro-corporate agenda impeded efforts to preserve the Mississippi Delta wetlands that could have blunted the impact of the storm.

These analyses of the causes of the New Orleans disaster in the Bush Administration's 'right-wing' ideology are sound, but they do not get at the stark meaning of Katrina on New Orleans in class terms. Below I claim that capital will have to stop or ameliorate natural disasters such as Katrina (whose aggravation by capitalist development makes the distinction between natural and man-made disasters moot) *unless* it can use them to accumulate!

We are at a historical moment similar to the one at the beginning of the nuclear weapons era. In August 1945 the US capitalist class made clear its support for the use of nuclear weapons to destroy any (inter- or intra-class) opponent that seriously threatened its domination, but the question still remained: would the use of nuclear bombs become a *normal* part of warfare in the future? If there had been a consensus that such warfare increases the average rate of profit, I believe that there would already have been many 'nuked' cities. But there was enough fear that the normal use of these weapons might lead to a world-wide revulsion towards and rebellion against capitalism or, at least, a loss of control over workers in the US in the event of a nuclear war that Hiroshima and Nagasaki have remained the only cities to be attacked with nuclear bombs up until now. Similarly, unless capital concludes that the hurricanes, floods, droughts, and mass fires caused or aggravated by global warming, for example, cannot be used to impose greater control over workers and to achieve higher profits, what we have seen in post-Katrina New Orleans will be normalised and applied throughout the world. This is what makes the fate of the city so important both for New Orleanians *and for the rest of us*.

Furthermore, the contemporary model for managing the working class in disasters is increasingly warfare. Workers in a disaster are increasingly being turned first into right-less beings and then, when they resist, they become the 'enemy'. In this logic, the refugee quickly turns into the terrorist.

I argue that the Bush Administration's path to making Katrina a moment of development is through an enclosure, i.e. by uprooting and dispersing a combative, culturally rich and largely black community strategically placed at the geographical centre of the US's oil, natural gas and chemical industries and replacing it with a 'more profitable' and politically docile population. The US military's intervention during and after Katrina was crucial to stripping black New Orleanians of their rights, even their property rights, in this enclosure.

I will make my case for this analysis by examining the role of the government agencies most involved in the New Orleans disaster: the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the US military. Their behaviour will show that war has become the model for disaster relief and profit the measure of its success.

A Short History of Emergency Management in the US

It is important to have a historical perspective on FEMA's Katrina performance because it was a turning point in the US government's 'emergency management'. Let us review this history in three phases.

In the first phase, lasting from the beginning of the republic to the 1930s, there was no Federal commitment to respond to disasters (natural or man-made). They were legally categorised as *acts of God*, i.e., unforeseen and uncontrollable natural events, in order to indemnify one party in a contract against the occurrence of a disaster that prevents him or her from carrying out the contract's terms. As a private party would not be contractually responsible to act when God acted, the only disaster relief that could be relied upon was from the *ad hoc* resources of communities affected and the 'charity' of the onlookers. In the paleo-liberal logic of that time, any general commitment to subsidise those who lose property due to an 'act of God' is an illegitimate use of public funds.

The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 is a good example of this laissez-faire approach to emergency management. Local capitalists were in charge of dealing with the broken levees and controlling the poor, mostly black refugees. Their main concern was to keep their work force physically tied to the land and not to provide them with funds to escape. But Federal policy towards disasters was changing, for in the following year the Congress passed the Flood Control Act of 1928 that allocated \$325 million for the construction of new levees on the lower Mississippi.

The second, 'Keynesian' phase began in earnest in the 1930s, responding to the working class refusal to take the unemployment and hunger caused by the Great Depression as another 'act of God'. Key to this period was the Federal government's new commitment to the reproduction of the nation's labour power. The working class then had to be recognised as an agent in the social equation and its value preserved or at least negotiated even in disasters.

This transition can be seen by comparing the Flood Control Acts of 1928 and 1936. The first Act was very specific as to the locales of aid, but the 1936 Act recognised that flood control was a 'proper activity of the Federal Government in cooperation with the States, their political subdivisions, and localities thereof'. Subsequently, the US Army Corps of Engineers was budgeted the funds and given the authority to initiate flood control projects throughout the nation. Other agencies were then formed to deal with a wide set of disasters besides floods. By the late 1970s there were more than a hundred Federal agencies committed to responding to major disasters like the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant incident.

FEMA was created in 1979 to centralise these agencies. It often operated as a last remnant of Keynesianism during the neoliberal era of the 1980s and 1990s, since it was in charge of putting a bottom to the value of labour power in extremis and of having a plan to deal with the full spectrum of emergencies. This was a distinctly Keynesian brief in a time when economic planning and welfare programmes designed to overcome 'market failures' were being rejected by both political parties. FEMA remained as a comforting (or troubling) relic of a time when the Federal Government was committed to preserve (if not increase) the value of the working class. Indeed, with the end of the Cold War, FEMA's direct military role (in civil defence) actually decreased and it focused almost completely on preparing for natural disasters.

The third phase of FEMA begins with the presidential coup that was September 11, 2001, that brought it under the administrative control of the newly formed Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The 'War on Terror' then became its major brief and it also finally fully aligned itself with the neoliberal project whose basic premise is that labour power is to be denied a guaranteed value. The Federal Government's approach to Katrina revealed both a neoliberal *and* militarised approach to emergencies. The government imposed itself through its *selective absence* as well as its *militarised presence* in

post-Katrina New Orleans, just as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) throughout the Third World involved the use of a tremendous state violence to end state 'control'.

FEMA and the New Orleans-Hurricane Katrina Coincidence

Though FEMA's behaviour in New Orleans overtly failed to fulfil any part of its bureaucratic mandate – 'responding to, planning for, recovering from and mitigating against disasters' – it covertly put into place the third phase of emergency management: neoliberal militarisation. Consider first its overt failures.

Planning for: Emergencies are supposed to be surprising, but FEMA predicted in 2004 most of the damage Hurricane Katrina caused. In fact, *National Geographic* in October 2004 published predictions from a FEMA-sponsored simulated response exercise that correctly described the course of damage Katrina inflicted in New Orleans a year later, including the breaching of the levees. Plans were made on the basis of this foreknowledge at least a year before the hurricane. The problem, of course, was with the plans themselves, not the lack thereof. They took as a given that about a hundred thousand New Orleanians would be 'left behind' and be 'on their own' for several days, since they had no private transportation and/or needed extra assistance.

Responding to: Tens of thousands of those who remained in the flooded city went by foot to the Superdome and the Convention Center expecting to be bussed out. The buses did not arrive for days. Louisiana Governor Blanco said that she had 500 school buses that were ready to go into New Orleans immediately after Katrina passed, but FEMA rejected their use as they were not air conditioned and could cause heat stroke! FEMA, according to Blanco, said that it would provide buses, but since they were chartered from Greyhound and other firms (many from out of state), they did not reach New Orleans until 1 and 2 September, more than four days after the storm had passed and the levees had been breached.

Recovering from: FEMA's role in the recovery effort in New Orleans had much to do with alternative housing for what became Katrina's 'refugees', i.e., paying for hotel or motel rooms throughout the region and setting up trailers in the New Orleans area to help the return of the population. As of January 2006, more than four months after the hurricane struck, FEMA was paying for over 25,000 hotel rooms and claimed to have 30,000 trailers available (but not yet set up) to house returnees, once they had been properly sited.

The story of the hotel rooms has been defined by FEMA's efforts to end the subsidies as soon as possible (even though there was no long-term housing available for many of the displaced New Orleanians). FEMA continually changed the termination date for subsidies from the start of the process. Consequently, the scattered refugees did not have a guarantee that they at least would have a roof over their heads until they could return.

FEMA's major 'recovery' strategy seems to have been to spread displaced New Orleanians as far from their homes as possible and to provide as little support for their return as possible. This is where the trailers come in. If they were sited in the neighbourhoods people fled during the floods, there would be a concrete incentive and legal cover for the renters and owners to return 'home'. But the continual shifting of FEMA trailer siting commitments has undermined the will of thousands to return.

Mitigating against: The main 'lesson' in mitigating future disasters that FEMA has apparently learned from its adventure in New Orleans is that it should defer to the military in Katrina-sized disasters.

The Militarisation of New Enclosures

A striking aspect of the post-Katrina New Orleans story was FEMA's public humiliation. Accusations of failure were first aimed at FEMA director Michael Brown, and they continue to be directed at other FEMA-related figures to this day. For example, in its recent study of Federal agencies' Katrina responses, the Government Accounting Office harshly criticised Michael Chertoff, the chief of the DHS, for poor leadership (while lavishing praise for the work of the Coast Guard and the Pentagon).

Indeed, a couple of weeks after Katrina, President Bush himself, who is so averse to admitting error, accepted responsibility for FEMA's 'failures'. This surprising presidential admission, however, was functional to his administration's larger strategy: transferring disaster response to the military. *FEMA had to 'fail', in order for the military to 'succeed' in New Orleans.*

In the past, the military in the form of the state National Guards was often dispatched to scenes of disaster. These Acts of God not only opened up 'a state of nature', but they also posed the possibility that the common bonds of mutual aid developed during the suspension of civil government would open up new modes of social coordination outside the control of the state and capital. The arrival of the National Guard at the disaster site usually marked the end of both the state of nature and the carnival of new possibilities revealed in the complex mixture of terror and hope disasters evoked. But the military's role in New Orleans was not only to set the framework of a return to 'normality', *it was to create a new territorial and demographic reality.*

Within one week the military presence in the area affected by Katrina grew dramatically. On Wednesday, 31 August there were 10,000 National Guard troops on hurricane duty in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida and seven Navy ships staged or on route; by 7 September there were 41,000 National Guard troops and 17,000 Active Duty troops in the area, the Navy had 21 ships south of Mississippi and Louisiana, the Coast Guard had 4,000 sailors on hand while different branches of the military provided 350 helicopters and 75 aircraft.

The military defined the 'rescue' for the public. Within a few days after the hurricane hit, the dramatic pictures of the floating bodies of the dead and the bitter, angry or frightened faces of the thousands of mostly poor and black New Orleanians trapped in the Superdome and Convention Center were replaced by rumours that the city was 'out of control'. Apparently the streets were filled with 'looters and rapists' and the roof-tops were sprinkled with 'snipers' shooting at the rescuers. The story became 'the Army rescues New Orleans from its people', instead of 'the Army rescues the people of New Orleans'.

On Friday, 2 September, Brigadier General Gary Jones, commander of the Louisiana National Guard's Task Force, said to the press:

This place is going to look like Little Somalia. We're going to go out and take this city back. This will be a combat operation to get this city under control.

While the stories of large-scale looting, rapes, and sniping were being debunked as urban legends by mid-September, the true target of the military occupation of New Orleans emerged. It was directed against resistance to one of the largest and swiftest urban enclosures in the country's history. The US soldiers and sailors gave a forceful external face to the Mayor's and Governor's evacuation orders and the prohibitions on return. It was one thing to face down local police officers (who might be your neighbours) when you tried to return to your 'condemned' home, but it is another to refuse an order to leave from a squad of soldiers fresh from battles in Iraq.

The militarisation of New Orleans and the degradation of its black population, therefore, were essential to the mutation of a 19th century 'Act of God' into a 21st century 'Icon of Capital'. Without them the current estimates from a recent National Science Foundation (NSF) study that up to 80 percent of the New Orleans black population will not return would not be credible. Otherwise, by now, instead of much of the city being empty, with almost two-thirds of its pre-Katrina population living outside, the 'natural' drift of the population would have brought many back and transformed places like the 9th Ward into an improvised, informal but lively community similar to those found throughout the Americas struggling with the authorities for resources and autonomy. The US military and not Katrina performed the role required in every enclosure: *the violent force that separated and continues to separate workers from their community of support and subsistence*. True, the soldiers and sailors did save some New Orleanians from the floods at first, but their major long-term role is to be the bailiffs of the enclosures.

For the object of the New Orleans enclosures is the opposite of the local ruling class's goal in the 1927 flood. Instead of fixing black workers to the soil (a plan which ultimately failed, since many of them fled north in the 1930s), the aim now is to remove *en masse* a black working class population that was 'too expensive' and antagonistic to reproduce on site and scatter them throughout the South, further undermining already low wage levels there by intensifying the competition between documented black citizens and undocumented Hispanic immigrants at the bottom of the labour market.

The one thing that has not changed, however, is the old contradictory/ complementary structure of racist stereotypes deployed in justifying the 1927 'concentration camps' and the 2005/2006 'enclosures'. This structure's tried-and-true 'logic' dictates a metamorphosis from the image of the black person as being totally dependent on external assistance to one of the black person as irrationally angry, vengeful and violent. The endless substitution/juxtaposition of these images from 'right wing' talk shows and internet blogs to photos in major media outlets leads in the public imaginary to the denial of any autonomy to black people in the disaster and to the erasure of their rights. That is why it was so easy to switch the New Orleans storyline from one of compassion to fear and hostility almost instantaneously.

The main use of this ancient racist machine now is to justify the replacement of poor and black New Orleanians in the city by another 'more valuable' population that would make the investment in levees and other flood prevention measures worthwhile. Katrina is to be a moment of neoliberal 'punctuated social evolution'. As the NSF-sponsored study mentioned above showed, of the 354,000 people who lived in New Orleans neighbourhoods where flood damage was moderate to severe, 75 percent were black, 29 percent lived under the poverty line, more than 10 percent were unemployed and more than half were renters. It would make no sense from a neoliberal perspective to invest billions of dollars on state-of-the-art levees that can withstand category 4 or 5 hurricanes at the cost of tens of thousands of dollars per resident unless the persons subsidised were 'worth it'. Of course, this does not mean that a new population of well-healed and docile 'urban pioneers' will automatically appear on cue. Indeed, it might be that the flooded areas of New Orleans will not be repopulated for years to come and the wrecked and abandoned hulks of homes in the 9th Ward will become symbols of neoliberalism's disastrous hubris.

But for the moment, the military intervention's success in carrying out and legitimating the expulsion of and banning of much of the black population from New Orleans made it possible for the Bush Administration to unveil the next step in its new conception of emergency management. This transition from the civilian to military was first embodied on 9 September, 2005 when Michael Chertoff replaced FEMA director Brown with Vice Admiral Thad W. Allen, Chief of Staff of the US Coast Guard, as the immediate supervisor of Katrina relief efforts. On 15 September and later on 25 September President Bush suggested that the US military should have responsibility for emergency

management in all cases of major natural disasters. He asked:

Clearly, in the case of a terrorist attack, that would be the case, but is there a natural disaster – of a certain size – that would then enable the Defence Department to become the lead agency in coordinating and leading the response effort?

The response he got from some generals was quite positive. Major General John White, for example, said that the response to Katrina was a ‘train wreck’ and called for ‘a national plan’ for responses to natural disasters. Soon after this discussion, the Department of Defence began a review of the 1878 *Posse Comitatus* Act that restricts the US military from taking on police functions like arrest, search, and seizure on US territory. The coming debate over the revision of this old law will be the legal face of the effort to go to a new level of militarising emergency management for the purpose of shoring up neoliberal policies. New Orleans is to be the model of the future!

The Right to Return

Can these militarised enclosures be defeated? We have not yet seen in New Orleans the type of massive and decisive resistance to the neoliberal logic of post-disaster relief that occurred after the 1985 Mexico City earthquake when thousands of people in the poorest neighbourhoods refused to accept the government’s conditions on reconstruction aid. This is not surprising, because the majority of the *real* potential subjects of resistance were driven far from the city and remain outside until now (compared to the ‘multitude’ of looters, rapists and snipers inhabiting the media’s imaginary). These people are now making a sober assessment of the possibilities of return versus the often positive aspects, at least in the short-term, of their new site of life. For the New Orleans enclosure to be successful, a large percentage of these displaced workers must find the return too risky and repulsive and/or their present situation more guaranteed and attractive.

The forces of enclosure, from the Bush Administration to the real estate developers, are working quietly and effectively to have these displaced ones stay away, while a wide variety of organisations have launched campaigns to call them back. They range from old-line social democratic organisations like The National Urban League and the NAACP, to the community activists of ACORN and the Common Ground Collective, to the various forms of black-identified organisations like the African American Leadership Project and the Nation of Islam. All are, in different ways, demanding that the displaced have decision-making power on the use of Federal funds and on the plans for reconstruction of the flooded parts of the city, including the levees. These ‘right of return’ declarations also demand that they be given preference in the process of rebuilding the city either in terms of jobs and wages or loans for refounding businesses.

The ‘right to return’ is a logical demand to make in the face of an enclosure, but for it to be more than rhetorical, *a large number of those demanding the right to return need to have returned. Moreover, the international movement against neoliberalism must put support of this right at the top of its agenda.* Otherwise, the New Orleans enclosure might succeed, encouraging capital to use coming disasters (from the avian flu pandemic to catastrophic species extinctions) for its profit.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Note on Megan Perry: Megan Perry, a member of the People’s Free Space in Portland, Maine, organised an effort to bring volunteers and resources to New Orleans in November 2005. The crew left on the Free Space’s biodiesel-powered ‘Frieda bus’ and on arrival in New Orleans they worked with the Common Ground Collective in a wide variety of projects from mould removal to opening a community garden. On 10 December, 2005 the Frieda bus had a road accident on I-10 in New Orleans.

Meg was killed and a number of other volunteers were injured. Since then a new organisation was formed in Maine, the Hurricane Autonomous Workers Collective, and the Common Ground Collective dedicated a community garden to Meg. For more information on the project and Meg, write to the Hurricane Autonomous Workers Collective in Portland, Maine <hawc AT riseup.net> and to the Common Ground Collective in New Orleans: <http://www.commongroundrelief.org>

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Free Speech as Shibboleth: on the Danish Cartoons

By Benedict Seymour

How did the racist provocation of Muslims turn into a debate about free speech? If the discourse of freedom acts as a mechanism of exclusion and both classical bourgeois rights and their crisis-ridden multicultural corrective reproduce fundamental inequalities, should we assert our right to free speech, or listen instead for determined voices in the growing political silence?, asks Benedict Seymour

The spectacular controversy over the Danish cartoons, which came to a head in January of this year before rapidly dissipating, neatly summed up the meta-racist dialectic of multiculturalism.

The right-wing *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper kicked things off with a direct, but strikingly unremarked, racist provocation. Although very few liberal commentators seemed capable of recognising this for what it was, preferring to pass immediately to the heroic position of defenders of free speech, tolerance, etc., the basic racism of the cartoons is the primary issue. The cartoons cannot be treated as a free floating instance of ‘free speech’ but should be situated squarely in the context of the ongoing and intensifying repression of Muslims in Denmark and other European states. The notion that *Jyllands-Posten*’s only offence was to trample over religious sensitivities is also misleading. Not only was the representation of the prophet Muhammad in the cartoons per se calculated to provoke (many if not all Muslims indeed consider pictorial representation of Muhammad blasphemous), but the direct reference to Islam as a source of terrorism – without any simultaneous critique of Christianity or capitalist imperialism – was simply racist. In this respect the cartoons’ ideological effect consists both in what they put in – the prophet, the bomb in his turban, etc. – and what they left out: any indictment of the real sources of terror in today’s militarised multiculturalism.

One might object, as some of the cartoons’ authors have, that religion is not the same as race, and that criticism of religion is not racism. This is true, in the abstract, but in the concrete conjuncture in which Islam is both a target of the West and a (dubious) refuge of the working class it is more than disingenuous to pretend the playing field for religious criticism is level. Formally neutral though the space of representation might seem, it is in fact never equal, since context and content overdetermine form. We have mentioned the context, what about the content? The chain of ‘different’ but ostensibly equally valid perspectives given in the 12 cartoons – from a semi-abstract ‘modernist’ image of Muhammad with a stylised sickle face and starry eye to an apparently sympathetic image of a young 2nd generation Danish Muslim boy who derides *Jyllands-Posten*’s journalists as reactionary etc. – is overdetermined by the instances of direct provocation: the prophet with a bomb in his turban, the scimitar wielding Muhammad, etc. In fact, the more anodyne or auto-critical images act as an alibi for the ideological pay load. Between the lines – the true level of ideology’s operations – the statement is clear. This kind of ‘diversity’ of perspectives is already close to the macro-logic of multiculturalism which hides the truth of *inequality* behind united colours of *cultural difference*.

Jyllands-Posten's editor Flemming Rose is not himself a proponent of multiculturalist diversity, however, as his comments to *The Washington Post* on 19 February show. His defence of a (forced) inclusion through the imposition of pseudo-equality should remind us of similar acts of coerced initiation performed in the camaraderie of Abu Ghraib:

The cartoonists treated Islam the same way they treat Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions. And by treating Muslims in Denmark as equals they made a point: We are integrating you into the Danish tradition of satire because you are part of our society, not strangers. The cartoons are including, rather than excluding, Muslims.

But to return to our argument, although their content was already a racist provocation, the cartoons themselves were only the raw material for the meta-racist multicultural position in which the particular status of Muslims in relation to a fundamentalist fringe demands not equal treatment, but rather renewed and intensified acts of discrimination. Rather than interrogating *Jyllands-Posten*'s attempt to present the initial affront as a free speech issue, itself a way of claiming victim status (we are suffering from self-censorship! Muslims have no right to special treatment!), liberal responses ignored the asymmetrical economic position of whites and Muslims in Danish society and focused on the (stage managed) violence of the Muslim response to the cartoons. Racist provocation was displaced by a fascinated disgust for the 'extremist' protests and calls for yet another inquest into the 'problem' of Muslim (dis-)integration into democratic societies. The focus of liberal commentators and police became (some) Muslims' reaction to the cartoons, rather than the cartoons' content itself. Earnest homilies on the tensions between freedom and faith, or rousing statements about the need for a consistent application of equal rights (with some rights reserved) covered over the racial insult that began the affair. Through indifference to the real asymmetry between different instances of 'free speech', the liberal centre accomplished what the right on their own could not.

By a logic of retroactive inculcation, Muslims became de facto, and sometimes de jure, responsible for the whole debacle. In kicking back against their aggressors they were found to confirm the cartoon's initial diagnosis of Islam as predisposed to violence and intolerance, incapable of respecting the multicultural virtues of pluralism, democracy and respect. The racist diagnosis implicit in individual cartoons in the series (Islam is violent, terroristic), disavowed through their formal multiplicity of perspectives (not all Muslims are violent and terroristic), returns, at a higher more insidious and effective level in the liberal decision on the affair's outcome (some Muslims do not understand or indeed actively oppose liberal freedom, we need to redouble our efforts to help them integrate).

This meta-racist dialectic not only serves to blame the initial victims for their victimisation, but provides the conditions for a reassessment of the terms of all Muslims' 'inclusion' as citizens. (See Matthew Hyland's 'Proud Scum', p.44) While most European governments condemned the cartoons as regrettable and tactless, expressing sympathy with Muslims as a vulnerable group in society, and in some cases opposed the reprinting of the cartoons in their press (Britain's media and politicians showed exquisite sensitivity on this point, given their support for the ongoing slaughter of Muslims in Iraq), they nevertheless used the incident to reopen discussion on the 'problem' of cultural incompatibility and the need to integrate the non- or dis-integrated. The racism of false equivalence articulated by *Jyllands-Posten* thus returns as a racism of differential treatment once it has been processed by multiculturalism's pragmatic approach to rights. Precisely because we are not all in reality equal, Muslims deserve special treatment. Multicultural racism thus accepts some of the assumptions of the right-wing version, but in the mode of redress and compensation accepts the need for a particularised response to specific 'problems'. The problem with both the classic bourgeois notion of equality and the multiculturalist supposition of cultural difference is that neither challenges the underlying economic conditions of these propositions. Where the right acts as though equality exists in principle and must now be imposed in practice, the liberal centre prematurely dispenses with

the illusion of equality and invokes the need for special treatment, more refined interventions and intensified scrutiny.

In the UK, *The Guardian* was swift to call for an appropriate and considered response to the Muslim protests which would not simply fall back on 'Britain's strong tradition of tolerance'. No dupes of formal equality, they advocated not only the immediate limitation of Muslim protestors' free speech which had passed into a 'hateful' state of provocation, but also the intensified monitoring of UK communities to weed out the rotten apples. ('Muslim protests - Threats that must be countered', Leader, *The Guardian*, 6 February, 2006). We can't just sit around while a few extremists terrorise people by dressing as suicide bombers, went the argument, we have to act pre-emptively. Again. Muslim communities should not be censured en masse, of course, we know that only a hardline minority are responsible for these outrages. Rather we must pay them EVEN CLOSER ATTENTION to make sure we can isolate the fanatics. *The Guardian* had no doubts about the limits to Muslim protestors' freedom of speech, or indeed of their other liberties as (presumptive non-)citizens. Unlike Jyllands-Posten's carefully qualified act of intimidation, *The Guardian* argued that the protestors' open threats of violence should be punished with arrest and if necessary imprisonment. Having invoked 14th century legislation to back this up, it concluded by affirming the equality of Muslim fanatics and white racists before the law. In the final invocation of the need to defend our 'tolerant way of life', there is a striking conjunction of an exaggerated (fundamentalist?) resort to the authority of the past, an indifference to the immediate context for protest, and the reassertion of the very abstract equivalence – colour and class blind – which multiculturalism was supposed to compensate for. Such statements suggest that multiculturalism's efforts to correct the de facto inadequacy of capitalism's formal freedoms with new formal inequalities (such as positive discrimination) has reached a terminal impasse. We will return to this in a moment.

Like the egalitarian coexistence of multiple particular viewpoints supposedly offered by the cartoons themselves, the open series of different ways of life offered by multicultural societies at the formal level is overdetermined by one particular content (liberal democratic capitalism), rendering this multiplicity ultimately monological. The supposed universality of freedom then functions not only as the particular property of those that advance the interests of a specific social class, but as the mechanism by which stratification itself is (re)produced. Again, wasn't this the condition which multiculturalism was created to overcome?

While capitalism is indeed, at one level, the 'Eden of the rights of man' – liberty, equality, property – this (political, contractual) equality is the form of appearance of (economic, social) inequality. Marx added to the liberal capitalist chain of universal rights the ugly, all too material supplementary term 'Bentham', i.e. the father of utilitarianism and ideologue of self-interested economic reason. Bentham is the item that overdetermines all the others. We should understand multiculturalism as an attempt to add yet another supplement to this bad supplement. Rather than taking on capitalism's constitutive economic differential whereby, however free and equal the act of exchange, those with the capital to buy labour-power have an inherent advantage over those with only their labour-power to sell, the ultimately conservative logic of multiculturalism has been to add another level of qualifying inequalities to the basic capitalist freedoms. Affirmative action, preferential treatment in allocation of certain resources, etc., in the guise of correcting the economic disparities of the system not only create new divisions and internecine rivalry in the working class 'beneficiaries' of the multicultural supplement, they effectively jam the potential for finding common cause with other culturally-defined particular identities, and allows capital to suppress the fundamental class antagonism at the origin of this cultural conflict.

Instead of seeing fundamentalism as excluded from and radically opposed to multiculturalism, then, it is more correct to view it as its symptom or product. This is apparent in the eagerness with which reactionary Muslim clerics fanned the controversy in this case, seizing on the issue and turning it into another opportunity to articulate opposition to western imperialism in cultural rather than economic terms – the basic depoliticising move of fundamentalism and multiculturalism alike. The priority of the economic over the political, or rather of the already political character of capitalism's economic arrangements, is effaced by multiculturalism's presentation of class as one form of difference among others rather than the overdetermining element in the series race, sex, class. While the media focused on the cartoons affair, the contemporary struggles of Muslim workers in Iran against the theocratic state's imposition of neoliberal reforms passed almost unmentioned. The possibility of a universalising political articulation of economic divisions – an exercise of freedom which as Å½iÅ¾ek puts it would politicise the economic sphere – is what multiculturalism and fundamentalism alike exist to prevent.

So what should the response to the cartoons have been? How are we to confront racist (free) speech acts? In a situation where the state seems to be shifting its emphasis from the multiculturalist 'respect for cultural diversity' (however cosmetic) to a programme for increased security through the imposition of 'shared values', giving the state new powers in the name of anti-racism seems short sighted. It would be more useful to dedicate our energy to finding new ways to talk to each other outside the framework of the state than attempt to bolster its powers of discriminatory action. The *Jyllands-Posten's* provocations would have had little impact if Muslim 'community leaders' had not demanded that the state 'do something about them', an example of the circular and mutually-empowering dialogue between these ostensible antagonists.

Rather than getting involved in the rush to demand new restrictions, should we instead assert our right to do and say nothing? A right to remain silent, or, a la Melville's *Bartleby*, to enunciate only our refusal of the pseudo-options on offer? 'I would prefer not to' (join in the debate on free speech). But this does not mean simply remaining schtum. In response to the question, 'free speech or anti-racism?', we have to first withdraw and point to the unspoken racism of the debate, the inherent injustice concealed and effectuated by both the classic bourgeois discourse of rights and the multiculturalist meta-language which tries to drown out the ground bass of economic inequality under the prattle of fetishised difference. Above all, we should listen out for others who, like us, have problems pronouncing the liberal shibboleth of freedom. While the fundamentalist clerics and other media manipulators were working on their publicity materials to create the outrage the right had anticipated, the non-citizens in the French banlieue were rioting against... what? These free and rightless products of the post-Fordist enclosures, though native Francophones, speak no language the political class can understand. Though they may have failed to articulate demands, or a politics in the terms recognised by the statist and social democratic left, they at least express the true autism of the situation. Their empty 'No' perhaps opens the space for a programmatic response to capitalism's intrinsic racism in a way that speech codes and affirmative action today cannot. We have reached a point where in antinomic counterpoint to the discourse of particularised rights, a vast global surplus population, 'supernumerary' in respect of state and state-constituted humanity, is starting to speak a potentially more universal language of its own.

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The Netherlands: from Multiculturalism to Forced Integration

By Eric Krebbers

Dutch parliamentary democracy has long worn the mask of multi-culturalism, but its swing to the right in recent years has exposed the limits of Holland's famous tolerance. Now that it looks like the UK government may be following suit, we present here a new version of Eric Krebbers' text on Dutch assimilationist racism originally published in *De Fabel van der illegaal* in January 2005

On 4 November, 2004, just two days after the death of film-maker Theo van Gogh, independent member of parliament Geert Wilders announced that he was going to found a new conservative party.[1] According to some polls at the time he could win almost 20 percent of the votes and that would make his party the second largest in the Netherlands.

Wilders has been crusading against Islam for years. 'Our own culture is in danger because of the more than one million Muslims in our country,' he said. According to him Muslims have 'a backward culture.' 'Why are we afraid to say that Muslims should adjust themselves to us, because our norms and values are simply of a higher, better, nicer and more humane level of civilization? No integration, assimilation!' He promised that if he became a minister, he would immediately ban head scarves and send imams, who 'almost call out for a holy war, back to their caves in Saudi Arabia, or wherever. He also wants to exclude Muslims from constitutional rights like the freedom to found schools and organisations, because Islam supposedly cannot be reconciled with 'Dutch culture' and the 'democratic rule of law.' To arrest the Islamisation of Dutch culture, immigration should stop and every non-integrated immigrant should leave the country. 'You adjust, or get out of here', he argued.

Wilders' opinions are quite extreme, but not really new or unique in the Netherlands. In the last five years many opinion makers have voiced this kind of racist thought. Wilders was kicked out of the conservative-liberal party VVD on 2 September 2004, because of the extremity of his right wing ideas. But, seeing him become so popular so quickly, three months later the party asked him to come back. The murder of Van Gogh had made his opinions acceptable to the mainstream. Wilders didn't return.

Wilders' popularity is the result of some 12 years of anti-immigrant campaigns by opinion makers, social scientists and conservative, liberal, Christian democrat and social democrat politicians. Feelings of racial superiority dating back to the colonial period surfaced again. People began to perceive migrants and refugees primarily as a problem. As a result, many harsh anti-immigration laws have been introduced without much protest. The individual social-fiscal number was introduced in 1992, compulsory identification in 1995, and the Linking Act in 1998, a law by which all governmental databases are linked to exclude undocumented people from all services. In 2001, a new Immigration Law made it almost impossible for refugees to obtain asylum in the Netherlands. In 2002, for instance, only 103 refugees received a residence permit as political refugees. That was only 0.55 percent of the total 18,667 applicants. At the same time border controls were expanded, the number of police raids at workplaces grew, as did the number of special jails for undocumented people. The extreme right, however, is unable to gain political ground in this racist atmosphere. This is because it is still associated with the Nazi occupation during World War Two, and also because the electorate has seen 'decent' mainstream politicians proposing policies historically belonging to the extreme right.

Multiculturalism

Until about 2000 multicultural ideology was still central to mainstream politics. Policy makers, opinion makers, the professional middle class and worried citizens, almost all could be considered multiculturalists. Central to this multiculturalism was the 'recognition of the cultural diversity' of the Netherlands. Other 'national cultures' had to be respected as much as possible. And the different habits and traditions of immigrants had to be seen in their 'cultural context' and therefore not condemned too quickly. On the pretext of 'unity in diversity' immigrants were given their own place in society in order to preserve 'their own culture.'

When we look at society, our political vision determines what we see. The radical left, of course, first and foremost sees capitalist, patriarchal and racist power relations that have to be fought. Multiculturalists, on the other hand, see a multitude of 'national cultures' that differ a lot from each other, and which should all be preserved if possible. Thinking in terms of 'cultures' and their accessory, 'peoples', is a nationalist political choice. Like nationalism, multiculturalism also suppresses the awareness of power relations within these alleged 'peoples' and the oppressive practices within these alleged 'national cultures.' Actually 'peoples' and 'national cultures' are nothing but imaginary formations promoted by people in power. 'National cultures' and the multicultural society only exist as a product of continuous activities aimed at 'preserving' those 'cultures'.

Immigrants and refugees were addressed solely in connection with their 'national culture.' They were supposed to see themselves in the first place as representatives of one 'national culture' or another. In this way 'Moroccan culture' supposedly determined the behaviour of boys whose parents or even grandparents had left Morocco long ago. Even those immigrants and refugees who regarded the 'culture' in 'their own country' as too restrictive and fled to the Netherlands to escape it, were here being glued to 'their culture' again by multiculturalists. The government always recognised and sponsored the most conservative immigrant and refugee organisations as best representing 'the original cultures' of the countries of origin. For instance they regularly met with imams and mosque leaders as if they represented all immigrants and refugees from Turkey and Morocco. Organisations based on more progressive ideas were supposedly not 'authentic' enough in a 'cultural' sense. Thus the government affirmed the unequal power relations within immigrant and refugee communities and weakened the position of workers, women and minorities.

Because they could count on the warm support of immigrant communities' conservative elite, multiculturalism remained an interesting ideology for the Dutch political elite for a long time. Multiculturalism created separate communities centred upon different 'cultures'. It resembled the model that dominated Dutch society since the beginning of the 20th century and proved so effective against radical resistance. The working class was in this way kept divided and each part was ruled by the elites of their respective communities (catholic, protestant, socialist and so on). That maintained a situation in which solidarity was difficult and organising counter-power from below virtually impossible.

Multiculturalism also came in very handy when promoting the exploitation and exclusion of worker migrants. Multiculturalists always stressed how much worker migrants and refugees contributed to 'our' economy and 'the cultural life.' They told moving stories of hard working Turks cleaning 'our' toilets, of artistic Africans crafting such beautiful art for 'us' and the Vietnamese spoiling 'us' with their spring rolls. The multiculturalists were much less interested in immigrants or refugees who could not, or were not allowed to, make themselves useful for 'our economy'. These people should not count on support from multiculturalists when threatened with deportation, for instance. Although multiculturalists did protest against racism expressed by the extreme right, they never did so against the racism of the state or the deportation machine.

Integration debate

By the end of the '90s the growing racism and the dominance of the right led to the political elite dropping multiculturalism. The multicultural nationalism that advocated 'to every group its own culture' was traded in for a conservative nationalism with a policy of forced assimilation. In the spring of 2000 former communist opinion maker Paul Scheffer published a famous article on 'the multicultural drama.' He argued that migrants and refugees did not integrate enough into Dutch society. Most opinion makers agreed and said that the Dutch have been too tolerant towards foreigners, who have 'barbaric' ideas and habits that 'we liberal Dutch do not approve of.' They all posed as great defenders of the Enlightenment, and argued for equality between men and women, for the separation between church and state, for the rights of the individual and so on, ideals that have supposedly all been realised for a long time in the 'free West' by people like themselves. In reality, insofar as they have indeed been realised, these ideals have been struggled for by the left and feminists, mostly *against* people like these 'defenders'.

Surprisingly, the opinion makers were able to mobilise virtually the entire society. By continually arguing that the head scarves which some Islamic women wear are by definition repressive to women, they even managed to win over large parts of the women's movement. The same thing happened with the gay movement. After some imam said that being gay is a sickness, his remark was blown up into a giant scandal. Strikingly, a similar statement by a protestant Christian a few months earlier didn't cause that much anger. Increasingly problems such as fundamentalism, homophobia, patriarchy, and also anti-Semitism were seen as 'un-Dutch' and imported by foreigners. This is, of course, utter nonsense, which is not to say these problems are non-existent among migrants and refugees. They just have nothing to do with nationality.

As a result of these debates the political atmosphere became rather heated. During the period immediately following 9/11 dozens of mosques and asylum centres were attacked. That same summer, opinion maker Pim Fortuyn decided to go into politics. Being a university professor he was allowed to state the kind of racist views for which neo-Nazi's formerly were convicted. He called Islam 'a backward religion' and often suggested that gay men like himself no longer felt safe because of gay bashing Moroccans. He warned of the 'Islamisation' of 'Dutch culture' and argued for a 'cold war against Islam' because 'Muslims are busy conquering Western Europe.' Foreigners should learn how to be Dutch or get out of the country, he said. He often referred to foreigners as criminals. We should be free to mention these 'truths' about foreigners, without being called racists, said Fortuyn. With every racist remark his popularity grew. On 6 May, 2002, only 9 days before the elections, Fortuyn was assassinated by Volkert van der Graaf. Tens of thousands of his fans took to the streets for days, to honour the man 'who wasn't afraid to say what we all think.'

Opinion makers and politicians can now bash immigrants without ever being criticised for it, by choosing themes like female circumcision, honour related violence, head scarves and Muslim fundamentalism. By seemingly coming to the aid of the female victims of violence, the right manages to create a humane image of itself. Many progressives and anti-racists, on the other hand, keep silent about these themes for fear of also attacking immigrants and in that way aiding the right. This causes the right to continually have the initiative, and the left has had to watch powerless as racism is normalised. By permanently and one-sidedly stressing the violence of immigrant men the right uses the centuries old, but still surviving, colonial and racist stereotypes of threatening black rapists and of 'primitive people' being more emotional and violent. The left should speak out against all forms of domestic and sexual violence, including honour related violence, but should not join in discussions on the supposedly 'cultural background' to this violence. Neither the immigrants nor 'their cultures' are the problem, but patriarchy and violent men in general.

In September 2002 the 'integration debate' started in parliament and the media. For two years almost every day politicians and opinion makers came with racist remarks and proposals for even harsher measures against immigrants and refugees, who were continually being depicted as backward barbarians and religious fanatics in need of civilizing by the Dutch. The nationalist atmosphere almost made the differences between the right and the left disappear. In spring of 2004, 40 of the most prominent opinion makers, from far left to conservative right, wrote an open letter together in which they asked the government to make this consensus into law. Most parties wanted compulsory integration contracts in which immigrants would declare themselves adherents of Dutch values. As a result of the debates, all first and second generation immigrants now have to successfully complete €6,000 'integration courses' or be excluded from social security and even deported. One of the most important goals of the new policy is to make immigrants more useful to the Dutch economy. The borders are being completely closed to immigrants with little education, and plans are being developed to make social security unavailable to new immigrants. Plans are also being made to forcibly distribute immigrants to the cities and neighbourhoods where the economy needs them.

Van Gogh

Just when the integration debate was slowing down a bit, Van Gogh was murdered. In his columns and other texts he had called Muslims 'goat fuckers,' or for instance 'pimp of the prophet' or 'bootblack of Allah.' According to Van Gogh, Muslims are 'messengers of the utmost backward darkness,' and he always warned that 'Islam is a faith which threatens our freedoms.' Together with conservative liberal (VVD) member of parliament, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, he had produced the short film *Submission* in which negative statements from the Quran about women are painted on women's bodies. It was certainly not women's emancipation which drove him to make this film; he often spoke with much contempt for women and feminism. 'Maybe a man who really beats them up is actually very attractive to some ladies,' he once said. Van Gogh also wrote many anti-Semitic articles. In one he imagines Jewish writer Leon de Winter performing the 'Treblinka love game' with 'a piece of barbed wire' around his 'dick'. He also fantasised about 'copulating yellow stars in the gas chamber.' In this way he reproduced the anti-Semitic myth of Jews' perverse and all-consuming sex drive. According to Van Gogh, even in the gas chambers this drive got the better of them.

After the murder, most members of parliament called for extremism to be met with strong measures. But, as if this were self-evident, they only meant Muslim fundamentalism, and not the 'Dutch' extreme right with its dozens of attacks on mosques, or right wing extremist MPs like Geert Wilders. Opinion makers repeated over and over again that extremism was produced by 'Muslim culture,' but kept quiet about 'Dutch culture' which, according to the same nationalist reasoning, was logically responsible for the fascist school bombers who committed more than 100 attacks in the weeks immediately after Van Gogh's murder.

This anti-Muslim agitation by opinion leaders and politicians was extremely successful. In a survey by the bureau Motivaction a week and a half after the murder, some 80 percent of the respondents wanted a tougher integration policy, 90 percent wanted more rights for the police and the secret services, 60 percent wanted to allow the police to break the law when fighting terrorism and 40 percent even said that they hoped Muslims would start to feel less at home in the Netherlands. The government recognised the favourable situation and immediately started to implement new repressive measures on top of those already taken after 9/11.

All Muslims and immigrants were expected by opinion makers, politicians and even some left wing activists, to immediately distance themselves from the murder. By demanding such condemnation one makes them into suspects. Furthermore, to specifically ask Muslims and immigrants suggests that it is not self-evident for them to reject murderous acts. In this way Muslims were slowly dehumanised.

There were Muslims who on principal refused to distance themselves, and who justly answered: ‘What has this guy, this murderer, to do with me?’ A student with a Moroccan background argued: ‘Do you see us believing that every white person is a fascist, now that Islamic schools are being set on fire?’ Moreover, Van Gogh’s murderer, Mohammed Bouyeri, is not only a Muslim, but also right wing, male and Dutch, just to name a few possible identities. It is a nationalist choice to specifically ask Muslims and immigrants to distance themselves, and not, for instance, all right wingers, all religious people or even all men.

Many politicians and opinion makers nowadays analyse conflicts in terms of ‘cultures’ and religions. According to them there is a global ‘cultural war’ between ‘us’ and ‘Islam’. This nationalist view has grave consequences. Immigrants are now being addressed more and more as Muslims by the government and the media, and in a sense they are being made into Muslims. In these politically stressful times the government hardly consults immigrant organisations at all anymore, but instead exclusively addresses the Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid (Muslim-Government Contact Organisation), which is founded, paid for and dictated to by the state. This is the way the government supposedly keeps in contact with ‘the community,’ as if all immigrants are Muslims or want to be represented by Muslims.

Muslim fundamentalists also create cultural and religious identities and force these upon people. Sometimes literally. In his ‘Open letter to Hirsi Ali’ Van Gogh’s murderer, for example, called conservative liberal (VVD) member of parliament Van Aartsen a Jew, which he isn’t. According to the murderer, Dutch politics are completely dominated by Jews. In the eyes of this kind of religious fascist all their opponents are Jews or lackeys of Jews. And just like many opinion makers and politicians they promote the idea of a ‘cultural war’ and are strongly opposed to every left and feminist struggle.

Both sides use this alleged ‘cultural war’ to attract, mobilise and control the population. The opinion makers want us to choose between democracy and terror, or – in left wing terms – between capitalism and feudalism. Here, in the rich West, the choice for capitalism with its relatively generous civil freedoms is, of course, easily made. But the radical left should not let them force upon us such a choice between reactionary alternatives. Our goal should remain the achievement of a socialist and feminist world.

Much of the extra-parliamentary and radical left, unfortunately, have also started arguing in terms of clashing cultures, instead of left and right. For fear of criticizing Islam as a whole, they refuse to speak out against Muslim fundamentalism, or for that matter, the Arab nationalism of the Arab-European League. Fundamentalists and nationalists are even considered possible allies because of their ability to mobilise many immigrants. But Muslim fundamentalism is nothing but religious fascism, and Arab nationalism is all about crushing the left and feminism. Turning a blind eye to the extreme right character of these currents has, for instance, led to anti-Semitic, patriarchal and anti-gay slogans and violence on demonstrations organised by the left against the war in Iraq or the Israeli occupation. ‘ Hamas, Hamas, all Jews to the gas’ has become a popular slogan.

So, it is by now ‘politically correct’ in the Netherlands to be against multiculturalism. Every day politicians and opinion leaders are bashing ‘the completely failed multicultural society’, as they call it. The current right criticism of multicultural society always contains barely disguised racism against immigrants, refugees and Islam. Although the radical left is also critical of multiculturalism, it is not wise to start attacking it right now. It is better to fight racism, without defending multiculturalism. The radical left should not have anything to do with thinking in terms of ‘cultures’, nor be seduced into classifying humans in terms of ‘cultures’ or ‘peoples’. Neither pleading for dialogues between supposed ‘cultures’, nor striving for ‘cultural conservation’, nor for a ‘cosmopolitan culture’. Instead of looking for the cause of all kinds of injustice in ‘cultures’ and ‘religions’, the radical left should

simply focus its attention on unequal power relations and fight them.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Editor's note: The party Wilders founded was called Groep Wilders, then became Partij van de Vrijheid – Party of Freedom. According to Wikipedia, 'in polls released following the assassination of Theo van Gogh, it was estimated that Wilders' party could win 29 (out of 150) seats in the Dutch parliament (Tweede Kamer). With the uproar over the killing of Van Gogh subsiding, this number declined to a low of one in October 2005. In February 2006, after the *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons controversy, it rose again to three seats.'

Eric Krebbers is a member of De Fabel van de illegaal [<http://www.gebladerte.nl/>] with whom he publishes a bi-monthly newsletter

Photography project to accompany Mute Vol 2 #2 - Dis-integrating Multiculturalism

By Alessandra Chila

All photography by Alessandra Chila (except where otherwise credited), taken in Tower Hamlets and Leyton, London, March 2006

[IMAGE]

[IMAGE]

[IMAGE]

Mural (1976-93) commemorating the Battle of Cable Street in October 1936 when East Londoners, including Jews, Socialists and Communist groups, forced back fascist Oswald Mosley and his Blackshirts as they attempted to march through the area under the protection of the police

[IMAGE]

[IMAGE]

[IMAGE]

Monument to Edward VII on Whitechapel High Street (circa 1905). Poor Jewish inhabitants of the East End donated money to erect this memorial as a show of loyalty and gratitude to the Crown in the context of mounting state and informal racism in the UK and Poland

[IMAGE]

[IMAGE]

[IMAGE]

n/a