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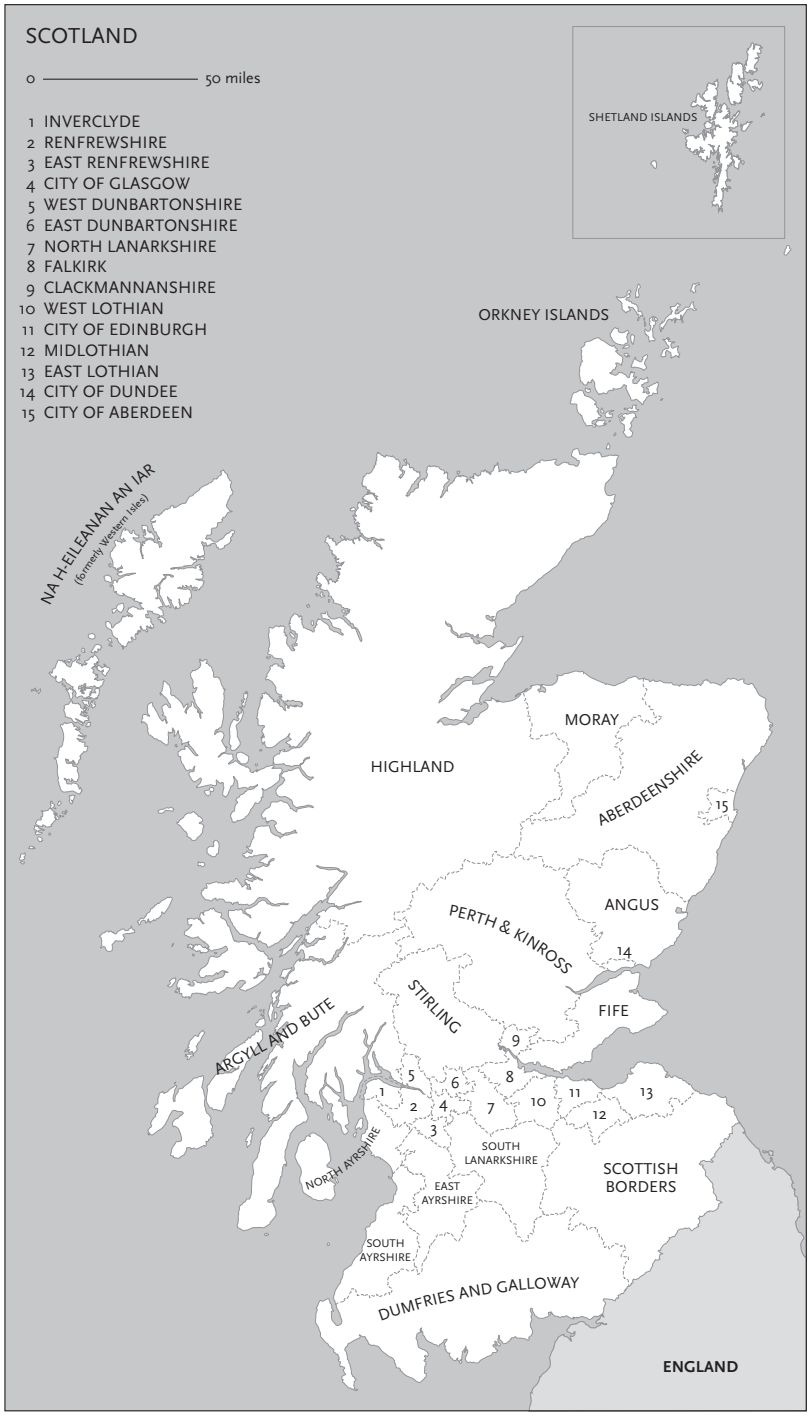
NEIL DAVIDSON

A SCOTTISH WATERSHED

The odds were huge. On one side, the might of the British state, the three parties of government, Buckingham Palace, the BBC—still by far the most influential source of broadcast news and opinion—plus an overwhelming majority of the print media, the high command of British capital and the liberal establishment, backed up by the international weight of Washington, NATO and the EU. On the other, a coalition of the young and the hopeful, including swathes of disillusioned Labour voters in the council estates—the 'schemes'—of Clydeside and Tayside, significant sections of the petty bourgeoisie and Scotland's immigrant communities, mobilized in a campaign that was at least as much a social movement as a national one. Starting from far behind, this popular-democratic upsurge succeeded in giving the British ruling class its worst fit of nerves since the miners' and engineering workers' strikes of 1972, wringing panicked pledges of further powers from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal leaders. By any measure, the Yes camp's 45 per cent vote on a record-breaking turnout in the Scottish independence referendum was a significant achievement. How did we arrive at this point—and where does the 18 September vote leave UK and Scottish politics?

The institutional origins of the 2014 Scottish referendum can be traced to 1976, when Callaghan's minority Labour government was struggling to cement a parliamentary majority while implementing draconian IMF cuts—the onset of neoliberal restructuring in Britain. The support of the minority nationalist parties—the Scottish National Party had won 11 Westminster seats in the October 1974 election, its best result ever, while Plaid Cymru had 3 MPs—was bought with the promise of referendums about devolving limited powers to new Scottish and Welsh assemblies. In the event, though the Yes vote won the 1979 Scottish referendum by 52 to 48 per cent, turnout didn't reach the high bar set


SCOTLAND
0 ——— 50 miles
1 INVERCLYDE
2 RENFREWSHIRE
3 EAST RENFREWSHIRE
4 CITY OF GLASGOW
5 WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE
6 EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE
7 NORTH LANARKSHIRE
8 FALKIRK
9 CLACKMANNANSHIRE
10 WEST LOTHIAN
11 CITY OF EDINBURGH
12 MIDLOTHIAN
13 EAST LOTHIAN
14 CITY OF DUNDEE
15 CITY OF ABERDEEN
SHETLAND ISLANDS
ORKNEY ISLANDS
NA H-EILEANAN AN IAR
(formerly Western Isles)
HIGHLAND
MORAY
ABERDEENSHIRE
ANGUS
PERTH & KINROSS
STIRLING
FIFE
ARGYLL AND BUTE
NORTH AYRSHIRE
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE
EAST AYRSHIRE
SOUTH AYRSHIRE
SCOTTISH BORDERS
DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY
ENGLAND

by Westminster, so devolution fell by the wayside. Under the Thatcher government, Scotland underwent the same drastic social engineering as the rest of the UK: high unemployment, deindustrialization, hospital closures, council-house sell-offs. Tory unionism had traditionally been the largest electoral force in Scottish politics; in 1955 it had won an absolute majority of seats and votes. By 1997, after eighteen years of Conservative rule at Westminster, its vote north of the border had dropped to 18 per cent and it held not a single Scottish seat.

A second chance for devolution came in the 1990s, when Labour's fourth crushing electoral defeat led Blair and Brown to begin a desperate search for Liberal Democrat and SNP support to build an anti-Tory coalition. This short-lived alliance accounted for the only reformist measures—Scottish and Welsh devolution, an appointee-only House of Lords, a referendum on the voting system, a Freedom of Information bill—in New Labour's 1997 manifesto, otherwise devoted to boosting economic competition and cracking down on crime. The aim of devolution, Blair underlined, was a limited delegation of responsibilities through which 'the Union will be strengthened and the threat of separatism removed'. The Scottish Parliament was duly established in 1999 on a modified first-past-the-post voting system, which was intended to deny a majority to any party—especially the SNP—and guarantee a Labour–Liberal coalition, which was indeed the outcome between 1999 and 2007.[1]

Rise of the SNP

Yet, masked by the rotten-borough effect of the first-past-the-post system, the years of war and neoliberalism under the Blair–Brown governments steadily sapped support for New Labour. In the 90s and 00s, Scotland had again followed UK growth patterns, with the expansion of a low-end service sector—one in ten of the Glaswegian labour force works in a call centre—and the growth of household debt. On a smaller scale, Edinburgh played the role of London as a centre for booming, deregulated financial

[1] The Scottish Parliament consists of 73 constituency members, elected through first past the post, and 56 party-list members, elected on a D'Hondt-style 'additional member' system, the most disproportionate of proportional-representation methods, which tops up the constituency results and so further rewards the largest parties, even though it also allows for some smaller-party representation. Thus the Scottish Socialist Party and the Greens won 6 and 7 MSPs respectively in 2003, each getting around 5 per cent of the vote.

services and the media, while inequalities gaped—the run-down housing scheme of Dumbiedykes lies just streets away from Holyrood Palace and the state-of-the-art Scottish Parliament building. After the financial crisis, Labour-led councils avidly implemented the mandated public-spending cuts, closing care homes, squeezing wages and sacking workers. In successive Scottish Parliament elections Labour's share of the popular vote fell from 34 per cent in 1999 to 26 per cent in 2011, with ex-Labour voters passing first to the Greens and the Scottish Socialist Party in 2003, and then, after the SSP's collapse, to the SNP in 2007. In local elections Labour lost overall control almost everywhere except Glasgow and neighbouring North Lanarkshire. Labour Party membership plummeted from 30,000 in 1998 to under 13,000 in 2010. Meanwhile the Liberal Democrat vote in Scotland collapsed after 2010, when the party entered government with the Tories in Westminster, once again to the benefit of the SNP. The result was to give the SNP an overall majority of 69 seats out of 129 in the 2011 Scottish Parliament, with 44 per cent of the popular vote—10 points more than Labour had ever won.

The SNP's manifestos had long included the commitment to hold a referendum on independence if it won a majority in the Scottish Parliament. After its sweeping 2011 victory, the party's leader Alex Salmond duly declared that this plan would go ahead. The SNP's preference was for a triple-option referendum: Scotland's voters would decide between full independence, the status quo or 'maximum devolution', meaning that the Holyrood Parliament would gain full fiscal and legislative powers, but Scotland would remain under the canopy of the UK state—the Crown, Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence and Bank of England—with regard to diplomatic, military and monetary affairs. 'Devo Max' was the option overwhelmingly supported by the Scottish people; with some polls putting this as high as 70 per cent. The SNP leadership recognized that there was not—or at any rate, not yet—a majority for independence, but hoped they could in the short-to-medium term achieve Devo Max. With a triple-option ballot paper, Salmond would have been able to claim victory if the result was either independence (unlikely) or Devo Max (very probable).

Under Labour's 1998 Scotland Act, however, all constitutional issues relating to the 1707 Treaty of Union between England and Scotland were reserved to Westminster. The question therefore was whether the referendum would be duly legitimated and recognized by the British

government, or whether it would be an 'unofficial' one, essentially a propagandistic device, conducted by the Scottish Parliament. On 8 January 2012 the British Prime Minister took the initiative, announcing that his government would legislate for a referendum to be held. But Cameron specified certain conditions: it would be an In–Out referendum, with no third option on the ballot paper. His reasons were simple enough: he wanted to see the decisive defeat of the independence option, if not for all time, then at least for the foreseeable future, while simultaneously denying Salmond the easy victory of Devo Max. The risks involved seemed small—polls consistently showed minority support for independence, generally around 30 per cent. Like Blair, Cameron wanted to see 'the threat of separatism removed'.

The Tories were willing to pay a high price for the In–Out option in the negotiations, however, conceding to the Scottish Parliament the temporary right not only to hold the referendum but to decide on the date, the franchise and the wording of the question. Salmond and his capable deputy Nicola Sturgeon could thus plump for a long campaign, a franchise extended to all voters registered in Scotland—regardless of country of origin—with the voting age lowered to sixteen, and a positive framing of the question. 'Do you agree that Scotland should be an independent country?'—rather than, for example, 'Should Scotland remain part of the UK?'—allowed the SNP to campaign for an upbeat Yes instead of a recalcitrant No. These terms were sealed by the Edinburgh Agreement, signed by Cameron and Salmond for their respective governments at St Andrews House on 15 October 2012.

Why independence?

At this stage it's worth briefly pausing to ask why and how the character of the UK state had become such a live political issue. Compared to the turbulent constitutional history of its European neighbours—France, Spain or Germany, for example—the very durability of the multinational parliamentary monarchy founded by the 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland, might seem a brilliant success. Exploring these questions in earlier numbers of NLR, Tom Nairn sought to explain the lateness of Scottish nationalism as an organized political force—scarcely figuring during the 'age of nationalism' in the nineteenth century and attracting mass support only from the 1960s. Like England and France, he argued, Scotland had constituted itself politically as a nation very

early, in the feudal period—hundreds of years before the late eighteenth-century invention of ideological nationalism as such. In the crucible of the Reformation, its late-feudal absolutism 'collapsed as a vehicle for unity, and became a vehicle for faction'.[2] But while Scotland lost its political state and national assembly in the elite bargain of 1707, henceforth sending its MPs to the Parliament of Great Britain at Westminster, it retained the legal, religious, cultural and institutional forms of its civil society, as well as a distinctive 'social ethos', all of which would go to make up a resilient 'sub-national' identity.

For Nairn, the key to the 1707 Union's longevity lay in the English revolutions that preceded it. The magnates' 'crown-in-parliament' settlement of 1688 had created a state in the image of the most dynamic section of the English ruling class—its precociously capitalist landed aristocracy. Rather than having to struggle against an *ancien régime*, the Lowland gentry could exploit an open political system and a fast-growing economy, then embarking on two centuries of overseas expansion. Sheltered by the British state, the Scottish industrial revolution seeded the Central Belt with its iron towns and engineering works, producing a vast new Scottish working class; gigantic shipyards spread along the Clyde. Nationalism for Nairn, as for Ernest Gellner, was closely associated with the unevenness of capitalist expansion and with latecomers' struggle to master industrial development, experienced as a powerful outside force. But the Scottish bourgeoisie had already achieved industrialization, without any need to mobilize its working class on the basis of a national project. Far from sharing the dynamism of its economic base, Scotland's political superstructure, as Nairn put it, simply collapsed, leaving the sub-nation merely a province.[3]

With the end of empire and the deepening economic crisis of the 1960s and 70s, the problems of Britain's archaic multi-national state—'William and Mary's quaint palimpsest of cod-feudal shards, early-modern scratchings and re-invented "traditions"'—began to surface.[4] In these conditions, Nairn argued, Scotland's 'sub-national' cultural identity, combined with

[2] Tom Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe', NLR 1/83, p. 71, citing T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People, 1560–1830*, London 1969, p. 33. The essay is reprinted in Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, London 1981, 2nd ed., pp. 92–125.
[3] Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe', p. 73.
[4] Tom Nairn, 'Ukania under Blair', NLR 1, Jan–Feb 2000, p. 76.

the promise of far-north energy reserves, provided raw material that could be politicized by the SNP; he dated the rise of organized political nationalism to the party's 1974 election success, on the slogan, 'It's Scotland's oil!'. Nairn speculated that late-emerging separatist tendencies ('neo-nationalisms') in economically advanced sub-nations like Catalonia, the Basque Country or Scotland might be read as another type of response to uneven capitalist dynamics—in this instance, relative regional *over*-development. The context for their emergence was the declining status of their own 'great state', under US hegemony and the internationalization of capital, and the absence of any viable socialist alternative. Ever optimistic, Nairn suggested that this neo-nationalism was becoming 'the gravedigger of the old state in Britain' and as such, 'the principal factor making for a political revolution of some sort in England as well as the small countries'.[5]

Nairn's historical account can be challenged on three main grounds. Rather than emerging during the medieval period, a unified Scottish nation only became possible *after* the Union of 1707, with the irrevocable defeat of Jacobite feudal-absolutist reaction at Culloden in 1746 and the overcoming of the 400-year old Highland–Lowland divide, which had previously acted as a block to it. 'Scottishness' certainly contributed to the formation of 'Britishness', but the opposite is also true: a modern Scottish national consciousness, extending across the territorial extent of the country, was formed in a British context and, for the working class in particular, in the tension between participation in and support for British imperialism on the one hand, and the British labour movement on the other. As a result, fundamental political loyalties, for both major classes, lay until relatively recently at the British rather than the Scottish level: Scottish national *consciousness* was strong, but Scottish national*ism* was weak for the simple reason that it met no political need.[6]

Second, it was not 'over-development' that led to the rise of the SNP and the posing of the question of independence, but the determined push for

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[5] Nairn, *Break-Up of Britain*, pp. 178–9; Nairn, 'The Twilight of the British State', NLR 1/101–2, Feb–April 1977, pp. 59–60, reprinted in *Break-Up of Britain*, pp. 11–91, of which the references here are to pp. 89–90.

[6] See Neil Davidson, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood*, London 2000. For a more general critique, see 'Tom Nairn and the Inevitability of Nationalism', in *Holding Fast to an Image of the Past: Explorations in the Marxist Tradition*, Chicago 2014.

neoliberal restructuring by successive Westminster governments—Tory, Labour or coalition. Though the SNP is the palest of pink, it doesn't take much to be positioned to the left of New Labour. In contrast to the Blair–Brown governments, the SNP has safeguarded free care for the elderly, free prescriptions and fee-less university education; it has resisted water privatization and the fragmentation—read: covert marketization—of the NHS. While the SNP leadership basically accepts the neoliberal agenda—happy to cut corporation tax or cosy up to Donald Trump—it has also managed to position itself as the inheritor of the Scottish social-democratic tradition.

A telling stand-off came when the SNP introduced a bill to tax supermarket profits, over a certain level, with the money hypothecated for social spending. Scottish Labour allied with the Tories to block the bill on the grounds that this would be 'detrimental to business', 'threaten jobs', etc. In addition, Salmond is one of the few UK politicians capable of defying the Atlantic consensus—standing out against the Anglo-American imperialist wars, for example. The arena of the Scottish Parliament has also highlighted the fact that the SNP is a more effective political machine than Scottish Labour, with substantial figures like Nicola Sturgeon, Fiona Hyslop, Kenny MacAskill, Mike Russell, John Swinney and Sandra White. This contrasts starkly with Labour, where the focus remains Westminster—its Holyrood representation, with very few exceptions, involves a cohort of shifty election agents, superannuated full-time trade union officials and clapped-out local councillors.

'Yes' as a social movement

The third reason for dissenting from Nairn's view, however—and this is the point that needs to be stressed—is that for the majority of Yes campaigners, the movement was not primarily about supporting the SNP, nor even about Scottish nationalism in a wider sense. As a political ideology, nationalism—*any* nationalism, relatively progressive or absolutely reactionary—involves two inescapable principles: that the national group should have its own state, regardless of the social consequences; and that what unites the national group is more significant than what divides it, above all class. By contrast, the main impetus for the Yes campaign was not nationalism, but a desire for social change expressed through the demand for self-determination. It was on this basis that independence was taken up by a broad range of socialists,

environmentalists and feminists.[7] In an era of weak and declining trade unionism, popular resistance to austerity will find other means of expression. As the late Daniel Bensaïd wrote: 'If one of the outlets is blocked with particular care, then the contagion will find another, sometimes the most unexpected.'[8] The Scottish referendum campaign was one of those outlets. Yes campaigners saw establishing a Scottish state not as an eternal goal to be pursued in all circumstances, but as one which might offer better opportunities for equality and social justice in the current conditions of neoliberal austerity.

The official 'Yes Scotland' campaign was launched on 25 May 2012. Even though Devo Max was absent from the ballot paper, the version of independence promoted by the SNP closely resembled it: the new Scottish state would retain the monarchy, NATO membership and sterling, through a currency union with the rump UK.[9] The intention was to make the prospect of independence as palatable as possible to the unconvinced by proposing a form which would involve the fewest possible changes to the established order, compatible with actual secession. However, as became clear during the campaign, most Scots voting for Yes *wanted* their country to be different from the contemporary UK. Campaigning alongside tens of thousands of SNP members, many of them former Labour activists, was the Radical Independence Campaign, several thousand strong, which included the left groups, the Greens and the SNP left, and played a key role in organizing voter-registration drives in working-class communities:

> Because we recognized that the poorest, most densely populated communities must bear the most votes and the most ready support for a decisive political and social change, we canvassed these areas the hardest . . . We recognized early that those voters who would buck the polling trend would

[7] For examples of each, see James Foley and Pete Ramand, *Yes: the Radical Case for Scottish Independence*, London 2014; Peter McColl, 'The Green Activist', *Scottish Left Review* 73, November/December 2012; Cat Boyd and Jenny Morrison, *Scottish Independence: a Feminist Response*, Edinburgh 2014; .

[8] Daniel Bensaïd, 'Leaps! Leaps! Leaps!', in Sebastian Budgen, Stathis Kouvelakis and Slavoj Žižek, eds, *Lenin Re-Loaded: Towards a Politics of Truth*, Durham, NC 2007, p. 153.

[9] At a 2012 conference, the SNP leadership had reversed the party's long-standing policy of quitting NATO, telling the membership it was 'necessary' to win the referendum. Salmond and Sturgeon insisted—despite the obvious contradiction—that they would however also retain the existing policy of evicting Britain's nuclear-armed Trident submarines from their deep-water base on the Clyde.

> be those voters who don't talk to pollsters and hate politicians; those voters who have told our activists: 'You are the only people to ever ask me what I think about politics.'[10]

A *Sunday Herald* report described 'two campaigns': one traditional and led by the suits, arguing in conventional media set-piece debates, the other a 'ground war', 'one-to-one, door-to-door, intentionally bypassing the media'.[11] It was this 'other' campaign which drew in previously marginalized working-class communities—and which suddenly flowered, over the course of the summer, into an extraordinary process of self-organization. Over 300 local community groups sprang up, alongside dozens of other spontaneous initiatives—Yes cafés, drop-in centres, a National Collective of musicians, artists and writers, Women for Independence, Generation Yes. They were complemented by activist websites like Bella Caledonia, loosely connected to the anti-neoliberal CommonWeal think-tank.[12] As the *Sunday Herald* report put it: 'Yes staffers knew the grass-roots campaign was working when they learned of large community debates they had not organized, run by local groups they did not know existed.' Even Unionist opinion-makers in the London press felt obliged to report the packed public meetings, the debates in pubs and on street corners, the animation of civic life.[13] Glasgow's George Square became the site of daily mass gatherings of Yes supporters, meeting to discuss, sing or simply make visible the size and diversity of the movement. It was as if people who were canvassing, leafleting or flyposting—activities which tend to be carried out in small groups—had to return to the Square to refresh themselves in a public space over which they had taken collective control. In the summer of 2014, Glasgow came to resemble the Greek and Spanish cities during the Movement of the Squares—to a far greater extent than in the relatively small-scale Scottish manifestations of Occupy.

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[10] Suki Sangha and David Jamieson, 'The Radical Independence Campaign', *RS21* 2, autumn 2014, p. 29.

[11] Paul Hutcheon, 'The Growth of the Yes Movement', *Sunday Herald*, 21 September 2014.

[12] The CommonWeal project was set up by Robin McAlpine, founding editor of the *Scottish Left Review* (no relation), with the aim of developing broadly social-democratic policies which it hoped might be adopted by either Labour or the SNP. Under McAlpine, the SLR took a similarly agnostic approach to independence. The new SLR editor, Gregor Gall, an SSP member, is pro-independence, as his editorial in SLR 83, October 2014, declares.

[13] See for example Jonathan Freedland, 'If Britain loses Scotland it will feel like an amputation', *Guardian*, 5 September 2014.

George Kerevan noted: 'By the end, the Yes campaign had morphed into the beginnings of a genuine populist, anti-austerity movement.'[14]

Project Fear

The No campaign, Better Together, with its focus-group tested slogan, 'No Thanks', was essentially run by the Labour Party—chaired by Alistair Darling, the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer responsible with Brown for the deregulation of UK banks, and directed by Blair McDougall, who had organized David Miliband's failed Labour leadership bid—though its platform included local Tories and Liberal Democrats, to the embarrassment of many Labour functionaries, who preferred to claim that the whole referendum campaign was a waste of time.[15] The core concern of the UK's governing class was summed up by the *Economist*: 'The rump of Britain would be diminished in every international forum: why should anyone heed a country whose own people shun it? Since Britain broadly stands for free trade and the maintenance of international order, this would be bad for the world.' The point was amplified for a Washington audience by George Robertson, Blair's Minister for Defence during the war on Yugoslavia, then NATO Secretary General: Scottish independence would leave 'a much diminished country whose global position would be open to question'; it would be 'cataclysmic in geopolitical terms'.[16]

The UK elite's sense of world entitlement was not, of course, foregrounded by Better Together, whose managers dubbed their strategy

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[14] George Kerevan, 'Vote's Biggest Loser is Scottish Labour', *The Scotsman*, 20 September 2014.

[15] See the Red Paper Collective, 'The Question Isn't Yes or No', *Scottish Left Review* 73, Nov–Dec 2012. The RPC is a pro-Union think-tank of CP and Labour trade-union officials and academics; John Foster, the CP's International Secretary, is a leading light. The No campaign also had the support of George Galloway, the ex-Glasgow Labour MP who broke with the party over Iraq to become the one-man vanguard of Respect. Galloway set out on a speaking tour to save the Union, repeating Darling's nostrums of economic doom at greater volume: 'Do you honestly think that a UK company is going to situate in a more socialist Scotland when the Tory government had created the perfect low-tax, low-regulation, low-wage capitalist environment?' The logic of this argument is that the left should just crawl away and die, or (same difference) schmooze its way into the New Labour hierarchy, as Galloway would clearly like to do.

[16] 'UK RIP?', *The Economist*, 13 September 2014; Fred Dews, 'Lord George Robertson: "Forces of Darkness Would Love Scottish Split from United Kingdom"', *Brookings Now*, 7 April 2014.

Project Fear.[17] Though the No campaign got off to an underwhelming start—Darling was a wooden performer, Brown was sulking and refused to participate—this did not matter much, since its real cadre was provided by the media, above all the BBC. An analysis of media coverage halfway through the campaign found that STV's *News at Six* and the BBC's *Reporting Scotland* typically presented the No campaign's scaremongering press releases as if they were news reports, with headlines such as: 'Scottish savers and financial institutions might be at risk if Scotland votes for independence', 'Row over independence could lead to higher electricity bills'. In terms of running order, *Reporting Scotland* typically led with 'bad news' about independence, then asked a Yes supporter to respond. Presenters put hard questions to Yes supporters, passive soft-balls to Noes. Yes campaigners were consistently referred to as 'the separatists' or 'the nationalists' even when, like the Scottish Green Party's Patrick Harvie, they explicitly denied the label. 'Expert opinion' from the UK government side—the Office for Budget Responsibility, Institute for Fiscal Studies, Westminster committees—was treated as politically neutral, while Holyrood equivalents were always signalled as pro-SNP. The Yes campaign was repeatedly associated with the personal desires of Alex Salmond—'Salmond wants'—while no such equation was made for No figures. The air-time for the No campaign was bumped up by responses from all three Unionist parties to any statement from Salmond.

Television news reports often ended with particularly wild and unsubstantiated statements—that GPs and patients were planning to move to England (*Reporting Scotland*); that the SNP's anti-nuclear policy would bring 'economic disaster' (STV); that insurance companies were looking at 'billions in losses' and 'potential closures' (*Reporting Scotland*).[18] The result was to radicalize Yes campaigners' understanding of the media, since the experience of their own eyes and ears was so fundamentally at odds with what they saw on TV. One example out of hundreds is the way the BBC ignored a 13 September Yes demonstration of 10,000 people at the top of Glasgow's Buchanan Street, yet filmed Labour No supporters

[17] Tom Gordon, 'One Year on: Will Better Together Change Their Tactics?', *Sunday Herald*, 23 June 2013.

[18] John Robertson, 'Fairness in the First Year? BBC and ITV Coverage of the Scottish Independence Campaign from September 2012 to September 2013', Creative Futures, the University of the West of Scotland.

Jim Murphy and John Reid with perhaps thirty supporters at the bottom of the same street.

The print media was less homogeneous. In addition to Scottish editions of the London press—*Guardian*, *Independent*, *Telegraph*, *Mail*, *Express* and the Murdoch stable—the 'native' Scottish press consists of *The Scotsman*, the *Herald*, the *Daily Record* and their separately edited Sunday editions. Only the *Sunday Herald* called for a Yes vote, and that quite late in the day, although the *Herald* itself and, to a lesser extent, the *Daily Record* were relatively balanced; both Darling and Salmond edited special editions of the latter, for example. But even so, No campaign themes were given overwhelming prominence. Foremost among these were the currency, job losses from companies flocking south, budget deficits leading to cuts in the NHS (a *Record* favourite), anxiety about pensions (particularly for the *Express*, whose readership is mostly over 65), increased taxes (*Scottish Daily Mail*) and rising prices in supermarkets. A sub-theme was security: would NATO still want us? Would Russia invade? Would ISIS blow up the oil platforms? Finally, there was the 'proud Scot' theme—you can be patriotic and still vote No.

While the Scottish press kept up the relentless drumbeat of Project Fear, London's left-liberal unionists painted the Yes campaign as semi-Nazis, bringing 'darkness' upon the land. For Will Hutton, Scottish independence meant 'the death of the liberal enlightenment before the atavistic forces of nationalism and ethnicity—a dark omen for the 21st century. Britain will cease as an idea. We will all be diminished.' For the editor of the *New Statesman*, 'the portents for the 21st century are dark indeed'. For Martin Kettle, the 'dark side' of the Yes campaign—'disturbing', 'divisive'—must not be ignored. For Philip Stephens, Salmond had 'reawakened the allegiance of the tribe'.[19] *Guardian* readers were treated to Labourist unionism in a variety of modes, from an upbeat Polly Toynbee—'It's no time to give up on a British social-democratic future'—to a doom-struck Seumas Milne: 'The left and labour movement

[19] Will Hutton, 'We have 10 days to find a settlement to save the union', *Observer*, 7 September 2014; Jason Cowley, 'A shattered union', *New Statesman*, 13 September 2014; Martin Kettle, 'Don't let Alex Salmond blind you to the Yes campaign's dark side', *Guardian*, 17 September 2014; Philip Stephens, 'The world is saying No to Scottish separation', FT, 12 September 2014. For a definitive refutation of the 'ethnic campaign' myth, see Foley and Ramand, *Yes*, pp. 38–40.

in Scotland, decimated by decades of deindustrialization and defeats, are currently too weak to shape a new Scottish state.' This was the argument parodied decades ago by Nairn: 'The essential unity of the UK must be maintained till the working classes of all Britain are ready.'[20]

Darling and McDougall had early on identified the SNP's position on sterling as a weak point. Chancellor George Osborne came to Edinburgh in February 2014—a rare visit by a Tory government minister, since they themselves agreed their presence would be unhelpful—to announce that all three Unionist parties had agreed to refuse to allow Scotland to join a currency union with sterling.[21] The SNP's unspoken preference for Devo Max was a major handicap here: a really determined new-state project would have developed and costed plans for an autonomous currency. The No campaign seized on Salmond's unwillingness, in the first televised debate with Darling on 5 August, to say what his Plan B would involve if London refused to agree to a currency union. His only argument was that this would be irrational and self-defeating for the rest of the UK. As he pointed out subsequently, and as Sturgeon might have said straight away, there were at least three other options: using the pound as a floating currency, adopting the Euro or establishing a Scottish currency. The problem with Salmond's position was precisely the danger that London would have agreed to a currency union: a nominally independent Scotland would have remained under the tutelage of the Bank of England and the Treasury, which would have imposed an ECB-style fiscal compact—a recipe for permanent subjection to the neoliberal regime.

The panic

By the end of August, the groundswell for independence was starting to make itself felt in the polls. On 7 September a YouGov poll in the *Sunday Times* put Yes in the lead for the first time with 51 per cent. Two days later a TNS poll put it just 1 point behind. The reaction was nicely captured by a *Financial Times* headline: 'Ruling elite aghast as union

[20] Polly Toynbee, 'Scottish referendum: shared values matter more than where the border lies', *Guardian*, 19 August 2014; Seumas Milne, 'Salmond's Scotland won't be an escape from Tory Britain', *Guardian*, 11 September 2014; Nairn, 'Twilight of the British State', NLR I/101–2, February–April 1977, reprinted in *Break-Up of Britain*, pp. 89–90.

[21] The President of the European Commission was also wheeled out to say that an independent Scotland would have to re-apply for EU membership, though there is no legal basis for this.

wobbles'.[22] Darling's leadership of the Scottish No campaign came in for scathing comment. Project Fear was ramped up from headquarters in Downing Street.[23] The press let it be known that the Queen was anxious. Big companies started warning their Scottish employees that independence would put their jobs at risk: Shell and BP suggested there could be redundancies in Aberdeen and Shetland; Royal Bank of Scotland, Lloyds, Standard Life and Tesco Bank announced that they might shift jobs from Edinburgh to London; Asda, John Lewis, and Marks & Spencer warned of rising prices. Some firms wrote to individual staff members, stressing the threat to their employment—a none-too-subtle hint about how they were expected to behave in the polling booth.

Ever eager to do its bit, the BBC broadcast the news of RBS's decision to relocate its registered office to London on the evening of September 10, on the basis of an email from Osborne's flunkeys at the Treasury, though RBS itself didn't make the announcement until the following morning.[24] Scotland's trade-union bureaucrats also put their shoulders to the wheel. Most full-time officials were hostile to independence, though few unions could openly align themselves with the No campaign without consulting their members, many of whom had voted SNP in 2011.[25] At branch level, things were different. In the case of Unite (transport and general workers), union officials in aerospace and

[22] Sarah Neville and Clive Cookson, 'Ruling elite aghast as union wobbles', FT, 12 September 2014.

[23] Kiran Stacey, George Parker, Mure Dickie and Beth Rigby, 'Scottish Referendum: How Complacency Nearly Lost a United Kingdom', FT, 19 September 2014.

[24] Judith Duffy, 'An Explosive Breach of the Rules: Salmond Blasts Treasury as its BBC Email is Exposed', *Sunday Herald,* 14 September 2014. Shortly after this, BBC political editor Nick Robinson asked Salmond at an Edinburgh press conference about possible loss of tax revenues if RBS moved to London: 'Why should a Scottish voter believe you, a politician, against men who are responsible for billions of pounds of profits?'—terms he would never have used addressing Cameron. That evening on BBC News, Robinson claimed that Salmond had not answered. Footage from the press conference which soon went viral on the internet showed Salmond giving a 6-minute answer to that and other points raised by Robinson in the subsequent exchange. This was the reason for the Yes campaign protest outside BBC headquarters, reported in the Unionist media as an alarming attack on press freedom.

[25] Among the major unions ASLEF (railway workers), national CWU (postal workers), USDAW (shopworkers) and the sad remnants of the NUM (miners), all notoriously right-wing, came out for No. Only the Scottish RMT (transport workers), the Prison Officers' Association and the habitually rebellious Edinburgh, Stirling, Fife and Falkirk branch of the CWU supported a Yes vote.

shipbuilding actively courted Tory ministers and Labour No MPs for meetings to 'defend the defence industry'. In some workplaces CEOs and managers organized 'employee briefings', in effect mass meetings to agitate for a No vote, with the union representatives backing up the employers.

With great fanfare, Gordon Brown also lumbered into the campaign, giving a verbose and barely coherent speech at a rally in the Glasgow district of Maryhill, intended to staunch the flow of Labour voters to Yes. Having backed five wars, pioneered PPI hand-outs and presided over a steep increase in inequality during his thirteen years in office, he now maundered about 'solidarity and sharing' as defining features of the UK state.[26] Brown has a tendency to think that only he can save the world, as he revealed in October 2008 when he pledged the entirety of British GDP, if needed, to bail out his friends in the City. With no mandate—he is a backbench opposition MP—he announced a fast-track timetable towards greater devolution to reward a No vote. In fact, this was merely consolidating the promises made by all three Unionist party leaders after the September 7 poll had showed Yes in the lead.

Two days before the vote, Cameron, Clegg and Miliband appeared on the front of Labour's loyal Scottish tabloid, the *Daily Record*, their signatures adorning a mock-vellum parchment headed 'The Vow', affirming that the Scottish parliament would be granted further powers if only the Scots would consent to stay within the Union.[27] Cameron had been so determined to exclude the Devo Max option from the ballot paper that he gave way to the SNP on everything else. Now the UK leaders had unilaterally changed the nature of the question: from being a choice between the status quo and independence, it had effectively become a choice between independence and some unspecified form of Devo Max. Exit polls would suggest that 'The Vow' had a relatively limited effect:

[26] George Monbiot noted the addition of 'another weasel word' to Labour's lexicon, along with 'reform', meaning privatization, and 'partnership', meaning selling out to big business: 'once solidarity meant making common cause with the exploited', now it meant 'keeping faith with the banks, the corporate press, cuts, a tollbooth economy and market fundamentalism': see 'A Yes Vote in Scotland would unleash the most dangerous thing of all—hope', *Guardian*, 9 September 2014.

[27] The parties made different if overlapping offers: Labour the ability to set and control income tax by up to 15p in the pound, the Conservatives and Lib Dems to set and control all Scottish income tax; Labour and the Conservatives offered control of housing benefit; the Lib Dems control of capital-gains tax and inheritance tax.

according to Ashcroft, only 9 per cent of No voters made up their minds during the last week of the campaign, compared to 21 per cent of Yes voters. The undecideds were still breaking 2:1 for yes in the last days of the campaign, although this couldn't overcome the massive initial advantage of the Unionists.[28] As for Brown's intervention: on the best estimates, around 40 per cent of Labour voters just ignored him.

The vote

By the time the electoral rolls closed on 2 September 2014, some 97 per cent of the Scottish population had registered to vote: 4,285,323 people, including 109,000 of the 16- and 17-year-olds specially enfranchised for the occasion. This was the highest level of voter registration in Scottish or British history since the introduction of universal suffrage. By the time the ballot closed at 10pm on 18 September, 3,619,915 had actually voted, an 85 per cent turnout, compared with 65 per cent in the 2010 British general election. The popular vote was 2,001,926 for No, 1,617,989 for Yes, or 55 to 45 per cent against Scotland becoming an independent country. The demographics were telling. The No vote was heavily weighted towards the elderly: a clear majority of over-55s voted no, including nearly three-quarters of over-65s, many giving pensions or fears about savings and the currency as the main reason. Women were slightly more inclined to vote No than men, though that may partly reflect female predominance in the older age groups. Among under-40s there was a clear majority for Yes, with the strongest showing among 25–34 year olds, 59 per cent of whom voted for independence.[29] Based on pre-referendum polling, a significant majority of Scots of Asian origin voted Yes. In general, the No vote was correlated with higher income and class status; in the poorest neighbourhoods and peripheral housing schemes, the Yes vote was 65 per cent; it was from this group that most of the new voters emerged. One striking feature was the clash between the referendum results and regional party loyalties. The working-class Yes vote was concentrated in what were formerly the great heartlands of Labour support, above all in Dundee (57 per cent Yes) and Glasgow (54 per cent Yes), with similar results in North Lanarkshire and West Dumbartonshire; Inverclyde came within 88 votes of a Yes majority. On the other hand, Aberdeenshire, 'Scotland's Texas' and an SNP stronghold which includes Salmond's Holyrood constituency, voted against independence.

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[28] Lord Ashcroft Polls, Post Referendum Scotland Poll, 18–19 September 2014.
[29] Ashcroft and YouGov polls, accessed through Curtice.

In some respects the closest comparator would be the Greek election of June 2012, in which New Democracy, Pasok and Dimar won by 2 points over Syriza by mobilizing the financial anxieties of pensioners, housewives and rural voters, while the young and the cities voted to resist the predations of the Troika.[30] One difference lies in the Scottish legacy of a larger 'formal' working class, now ageing and mortgage-paying, with understandable fears for their jobs and pensions in conditions of crisis and austerity. For the vote of the working class—still the majority of the Scottish population—was deeply divided. Personal testimony from a Yes campaigner in Edinburgh on the day of the referendum gives a vivid sense of this:

> I visited two areas to get the Yes vote out. The first one was Dryden Gardens [in Leith] which was made up of mainly well-paid workers and pensioners living in terraced houses. On the knocker, half of them had changed their vote or were not prepared to share their intentions with me . . . Following this, I walked round the corner to Dryden Gate, a housing scheme of predominantly rented flats that were more blue-collar, with a large number of migrant families. Every Yes voter I spoke to had held firm and had already voted or were waiting on family to go and vote together.[31]

The social geography of the vote bears this out. The No heartlands lay in the rural districts—Dumfries and Galloway (66 per cent No), Aberdeenshire (60 per cent No)—and in traditionally conservative Edinburgh (61 per cent No). The only town of any size in Dumfries and Galloway is Dumfries itself, with a population of just over 30,000. The economy is dominated by agriculture, with forestry following and—some way behind—tourism. Two relationships are crucial: one with the EU through the Common Agricultural Policy, so the threat of exclusion, even for a limited time, had obvious implications for farmers and their employees; the other with England—Carlisle is closer than any Scottish city and many family and business links are closer with Cumbria than with other areas in Scotland. Aberdeenshire, too, is a conservative rural area with relatively small towns, in which the Tories were the main political force before the rise of the SNP (the Conservatives are still the second-biggest party in the council). The main source of employment is the public sector—the local council, education and health—but the second biggest is energy, with the majority in jobs related to North Sea

[30] For an analysis, see Yiannis Mavris, 'Greece's Austerity Election', NLR 76, July–Aug 2012.
[31] Personal communication, 9 October 2014.

oil; the gas terminal at St Fergus, near Peterhead, handles around 15 per cent of the UK's natural gas requirements. Understandably, the threat of the oil companies relocating was a major issue here, as it was in Aberdeen itself. The third biggest sector by employment, agriculture and fishing, has a complex relationship with the EU but, as in the case of Dumfries and Galloway, for farmers receiving subsidies the uncertainties over continued membership would have had an effect. Finally, Aberdeenshire has the highest growth rate of any local council area and the fastest growing population in Scotland, which might have been seen as vindicating current constitutional arrangements.

Edinburgh, the historic capital of Scotland, has a long history of Toryism and elected a Labour-majority city council for the first time only in 1984 (it is currently run by an SNP–Labour coalition). Outside London, it has the highest average gross annual earnings per resident of any city in the UK, and the lowest percentage of those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (the typically New Labour term for unemployment benefit). It has both a disproportionately large middle class and a significant section of the working class employed in sectors supposedly threatened by independence, including higher education—the University of Edinburgh is the city's third biggest employer—and finance: RBS, Lloyds and Standard Life are respectively its fourth, fifth and sixth. The only parliamentary constituency here which came close to voting for independence was Edinburgh East (47 per cent Yes), which contains some of the city's poorest schemes, such as Dumbiedykes.

The strongest Yes vote, meanwhile, came in Dundee (57 per cent Yes). Scotland's fourth largest city after Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, it has the lowest level of average earnings of them all and one of the highest levels of unemployment. The staple industries of shipbuilding, carpet manufacture and jute export were all shut down in the 1980s; the city saw one of the most important British struggles against deindustrialization in the ultimately unsuccessful 6-month strike to prevent the closure of the Timex plant in 1993. The biggest employers—as in most Scottish cities—are the city council and the NHS, although publisher (and anti-trade union stalwart) D. C. Thompson, and the Universities of Dundee and Abertay are also important. (The latter has carved a niche in the video-games sector: Rockstar North, which developed Grand Theft Auto, was originally founded in Dundee as DMA Design by David Jones, an Abertay graduate.) Although manufacturing

has slumped, companies like National Cash Register and Michelin are still notable employers. Formerly a Labour stronghold, Dundee has sent an SNP MP to Westminster since 2005. In the aftermath of the referendum there was a particularly angry demonstration outside the Caird Hall there, ostensibly to call for a re-vote, but which turned, via an open mic, into an all-purpose expression of rage at the conditions which had led a majority of Dundonians into voting Yes in the first place.

The Strathclyde Yes vote in the heart of the former Red Clydeside—straddling Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire—was the biggest catastrophe for Labour. As noted, the first signs of its eroding support came after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, when a left protest vote sent 7 Green, 6 Scottish Socialist Party and 4 radical independent MSPs, including Dennis Canavan and Margo MacDonald, to Holyrood. The SNP began to make real inroads into the Labour vote in Glasgow only in 2011, after the local council set about cuts and closures in the wake of Brown's pro-City handling of the financial crisis. It is not hard to see why. Though Liverpool and Manchester have similar levels of deprivation, premature deaths in Glasgow are over 30 per cent higher; mortality rates are among the worst in Europe. Life expectancy at birth for men is nearly 7 years below the national average; in the Shettleston area it is 14 years, and in Calton 24 years, lower than the averages in Iraq and Bangladesh. What was once one of the most heavily industrialized areas in Europe is now essentially a services-based economy, dominated—the usual story—by the city council and NHS, but with significant low-paid employment in retail and 'business services', i.e. call centres. The city is growing again, but on a strikingly uneven basis—demonstrated by the heritage-makeover of the Clyde Walkway area and the Merchant City.

A mottled dawn for Labour

Though it is too early to take the full measure of this watershed vote, one paradox stands out. Scottish Labour has been drastically undermined by its victory, while the SNP and the radical independence movement have been strengthened in defeat. This is immediately clear at the party level. Within ten days of the referendum, the membership of the SNP had leapt from 25,642 to 68,200, while the Greens had more than tripled, from 1,720 to 6,235. When the Radical Independence Campaign announced it would be holding a 'Where Now?' conference in Glasgow on 22 November, 7,000 people signed up for it on Facebook and the venue had

to be shifted to the Clyde Auditorium. A rally in George Square called by Tommy Sheridan's Hope Not Fear operation in support of independence pulled an estimated 7,000 on 12 October. Post-referendum polls indicated the possibility of a swing to the SNP that could make serious inroads into Labour's tally of seats at the 2015 Westminster election.

Meanwhile Scottish Labour has collapsed into fratricidal strife after the resignation of its leader Johann Lamont, who accused Miliband and his claque of being 'dinosaurs', out of touch with how the Scottish political landscape had changed, and of treating the party north of the border as a 'branch office'. Lamont's long list of grievances included being elbowed aside during Miliband's Beria-style takeover of the Falkirk selection process in 2013,[32] having her general secretary sacked by London, and being told she must not open her mouth about the Coalition's deeply unpopular Bedroom Tax until Miliband had made up his mind about it—a notoriously lengthy process. The many resignations from Scottish Labour include Allan Grogan, a convenor of the Labour for Independence group, widely derided by the leadership, who described the party as being 'in deep decline, and I fear it may be permanent'.[33]

The SNP has submitted a 42-page document demanding that the Scottish Parliament have the right to set all Scottish taxes and retain the revenues, to determine all domestic spending, employment and welfare policy, including the minimum wage, and to define Scotland's internal constitutional framework—in short, Devo Max. The Unionist parties' proposals are set to fall well short of this. There is an obvious danger here into which Yes campaigners may be led by an understandable wish to see the Unionist parties keep their promises: the danger is Devo Max itself. Under neoliberal regimes, the more politics is emptied of content, the more opportunities for pseudo-democracy are multiplied: citizen-consumers may take part in elections for local councillors,

[32] The process of selecting a new Labour parliamentary candidate for Falkirk began after sitting MP Eric Joyce launched a drunken assault (headbuttings, etc.) on fellow members of the House of Commons and rapidly descended into a turf war, with skullduggery on both sides, between the Mandelson faction and local union officials, culminating with Miliband's decision to call in the police to deal with his party comrades, only to be told there was insignificant evidence to launch a criminal investigation.

[33] Allan Brogan, 'Out with the Old: in with the New?', *Scottish Left Review* 83, October 2014, p. 7.

mayors, police commissioners, and so on, spreading responsibility to bodies whose policy options are severely restricted both by statute and by reliance on the central state for most of their funding. The upshot at local-council level has seen atomized citizens given a vote on which services they want to close. If this is to be the basis of 'further devolution' in Scotland, it should be rejected. Devo Max will be of value only insofar as it involves the greater democratization of Scottish society, rather than tightly circumscribed 'powers' for the Scottish sub-state.

Labour and the Conservatives are also at loggerheads over Cameron's dawn pledge—at 7am on the morning after the referendum—of 'English votes for English laws' if further powers are devolved to Holyrood. Since 41 of Labour's 257 MPs are from Scottish constituencies, this would slash its voting weight in the House of Commons. The obvious solution to the 'West Lothian' question—the constitutional asymmetry introduced by devolution, whereby English MPs can no longer vote on aspects of Scottish policy, whereas Scottish MPs at Westminster still vote on legislation that will apply to England and Wales alone—is a fully democratic, therefore written, constitution. But this is just what both parties want to avoid at all costs, so increasingly baroque proposals for serial committee stages for 'English laws' are being put forward by the Tories, desperate to keep UKIP at bay, while Labour refuses to discuss the matter.

Rather than securing a stable future for the UK state, the Scottish independence referendum has ensured the issue will be kept on the table. In 2013, a Westminster Coalition spokesman said that a 'crushing defeat' was needed: if 40 per cent or more of the population backed calls for independence, 'pressure could build'.[34] In the absence of that crushing defeat the Labour leadership, seeing housing schemes like Northfield in Aberdeen, Fintry in Dundee, Craigmillar in Edinburgh or Drumchapel in Glasgow awaken to political life, must be recalling the words of that arch-Unionist Sir Walter Scott to Robert Southey, shortly before the Scottish General Strike of 1820: 'The country is mined beneath our feet.'[35] Indeed it is.

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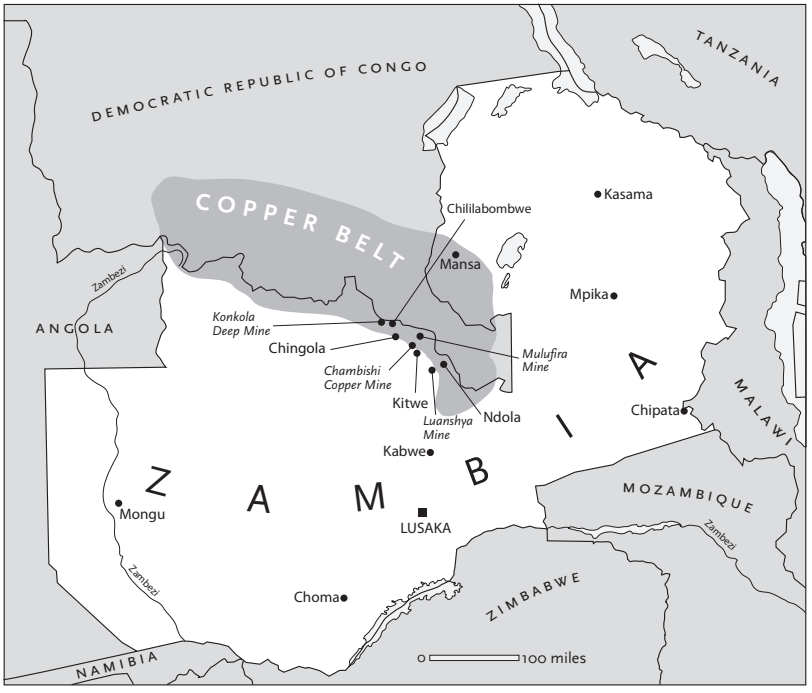
[34] Kate Devlin, 'Darling says No campaign needs to win well to avoid "neverendum"', *The Herald*, 14 May 2013.

[35] Scott to Southey, 4 June 1812, *The Letters Of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson, London, 1932, vol. 3, *1811–1814*, pp. 125–126.

Zambia and the Central African Copperbelt



CHING KWAN LEE

THE SPECTRE OF GLOBAL CHINA

After three decades of sustained growth China, an economic powerhouse of continental proportions, is becoming choked by bottlenecks: overcapacity, falling profits, surplus capital, shrinking demand in traditional export markets and scarcity of raw materials. These imbalances have driven Chinese firms and citizens overseas in search of new opportunities, encouraged by Beijing's 'going out' policy. Their presence in Africa has drawn a vast amount of attention, despite the fact that the PRC only accounts for a tiny fraction of foreign direct investment there—4 per cent for 2000–10, compared to 84 per cent for the Atlantic powers.[1] In the ensuing rhetorical battle, the Western media has created the spectre of a 'global China' launching a new scramble for Africa, while Beijing for its part claims simply to be encouraging South–South cooperation, free of hegemonic aspirations or World Bank-style conditions. These seemingly opposed positions, however, share the implicit assumption that Chinese investment is qualitatively different from conventional foreign investment. What, if any, is the peculiarity of Chinese capital in Africa? What are the consequences of China's presence, and what prospects does it offer for African development?

In exploring the story of 'China in Zambia', this text will foreground two issues which are often lost in the debate about 'global China'. First, outbound Chinese investors have had to climb a steep learning curve in dealing with types of politics not found in their own country. From resource nationalism and adversarial trade unions to the moral condemnation of their work culture, struggles driven by African state and working-class interests have compelled compromises and adjustments

on the part of the incoming Chinese. In other words, China's interests and intentions in Africa have to be distinguished from its capacity to realize them. Second, these contestations have taken place on a terrain already deeply carved by neoliberal reforms imposed by Western financial institutions and donor countries, *before* the arrival of Chinese investment at the turn of the millennium. Chinese capital, like other foreign capital, has taken advantage of the liberalized labour laws and investor-friendly policies, but has also been challenged by some of the political backlash neoliberalism has generated.

The arguments presented here are drawn from a comparative ethnographic study of Chinese and non-Chinese corporations in two industries, copper and construction. In addition to interviews conducted in Zambian mining townships, government and union offices, I have spent a total of six months over the past five years in copper mines owned by multinationals registered in China, India and Switzerland. The field work included shadowing mine managers, both underground and on the surface, observing production meetings, living among expatriates in company housing and attending collective-bargaining negotiations. With the assistance of the Zambian government, I gained access to the management of the major foreign corporations in mining and construction, as well as trade unions, miners and construction workers. To investigate construction practices, I visited twenty sites run by Chinese, South African and Indian contractors, interviewed over 200 managers and workers, and implemented a questionnaire survey. I also worked with, observed and interviewed government technocrats and politicians on how they handled China–Zambia relations.

The two sectors offer a useful contrast in operational conditions: copper mining is a capital-intensive, place-bound, unionized strategic sector, whereas construction is labour-intensive, foot-loose, non-unionized and non-strategic. And while no single country could be representative of Africa, whose wide range of political-economic conditions and natural

[1] A 2013 UNCTAD report ranks China as the sixth largest source of investment in Africa by accumulated stock—behind France, the US, UK, Malaysia and South Africa—and fourth by flow, behind France, the US and Malaysia, at the end of 2011. Analyzing central bank data from 40 African countries, African Economic Outlooks confirms that the EU and the US contributed about 85 per cent of FDI to Africa from 2000–05, and 83 per cent from 2006–10. The author would like to acknowledge the funding for this research provided by the National Science Foundation of the United States.

endowments defy continent-wide generalizations, Zambia is a critical case for several reasons. Though it undertook one of the fastest privatization programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa, its submission to IMF–World Bank neoliberal orthodoxy in the 1990s was entirely typical: newly elected African governments of every ideological colouration were obliged to accept structural adjustment programmes in this period, becoming 'choiceless democracies, unable to deliver on their electoral promises'.[2] Zambia is also Africa's top copper producer. On the basis of long-standing good diplomatic relations, it has become a leading destination for Chinese state-backed investment and the site of the first Chinese-run Special Economic Zones. As elsewhere in Africa, Chinese contractors have established an unrivalled dominance in construction here.

Zambia after 'dual liberalization'

Lying on the southern edge of the Central African copper belt, Zambia has a population of 13 million, concentrated around the capital, Lusaka, and the towns of the copper region. Despite the country's resource wealth, per capita GDP is only $1,540, and subsistence agriculture is the biggest single employer. Inhabited since the earliest times, the country is home to a range of different Bantu-language groups. The region was subdued—not without a fight—by Rhodes's British South Africa Company in the 1880s, then ceded to London, which ruled it as Northern Rhodesia. By the 1920s, rich copper deposits were attracting mining financiers from the US, Britain and South Africa; by 1945, its copper exports amounted to 13 per cent of the world total. At independence in 1964 Zambia, led by Kenneth Kaunda's United National Independence Party, was reckoned a middle-income country with good prospects for full industrialization. Michael Burawoy's *The Colour of Class on the Copper Mines* (1972) provides a benchmark reference for the Zambian mining industry in this period, and helps to establish the specificity of the African context that is so often obliterated in current analyses of 'China in Africa'. Forty years apart, we conducted fieldwork in the same mining

[2] See Adebayo Olukoshi, ed., *The Politics of Opposition in Contemporary Africa*, Stockholm 1998, p. 25; Thandika Mkandawire, 'Disempowering New Democracies and the Persistence of Poverty', UNRISD Paper 21, Geneva 2006. Key studies of neoliberalization in Zambia include Lise Rakner, *Political and Economic Liberalization in Zambia 1991–2001*, Stockholm 2003; Miles Larmer, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, London and New York 2007; Alastair Fraser and Miles Larmer, eds, *Zambia, Mining and Neoliberalism*, London 2010.

towns, both of us examining the inter-relations between foreign investment, the Zambian working class and the state; in the interim, however, the world economy had gone through a sea change. Writing in the tradition of Frantz Fanon, Burawoy was investigating the realignment of class interests in the transition from colonial rule: despite 'Zambianization', with the state acquiring a 51 per cent stake in the mines, two Western companies maintained oligopolistic control. Burawoy found that political independence in the context of economic dependence produced a flawed black ruling class, whose interests converged with, rather than challenged, those of foreign capital.

By the mid-70s, the global slump in copper prices had plunged the country into heavy debt and dependency on IMF bail-outs, just as the Kaunda government assumed full ownership and management of the mines and instituted an emergency period of one-party rule. The IMF's 1983–87 structural adjustment programme imposed wage freezes in conditions of high inflation, with sharp cuts in food and fertilizer subsidies and government spending. Growing popular and trade-union resistance to austerity culminated in the 1991 election victory of the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) led by Frederick Chiluba, head of the construction workers' trade union. Once in office, Chiluba reversed his position to drive through a ferocious programme of IMF-backed privatizations—mining, land, transport, energy—and roll back labour rights. While tax revenue from copper had accounted for 59 per cent of government income in the 1960s, by the early 2000s it brought in an astonishingly anaemic 5 per cent, due to the extraordinarily investor-friendly development agreements signed with foreign companies after the mines were privatized.

Yet under conditions of 'dual liberalization'—the political shift to formal multi-party democracy occurring in conjunction with the economic shift to privatization and foreign investment—these IMF–World Bank measures were confronted by the rise of a new oppositional politics of 'resource nationalism', in Africa as in Latin America, demanding that the people receive a greater share of the country's foreign-owned natural wealth.[3] As neoliberal programmes decimated the bargaining power of organized labour, elections became the main channel for popular

[3] Investors deem 'resource nationalism' to be the leading risk factor for the mining industry: see, for example, 'Business risks facing mining and metals, 2011–2012', Ernst & Young, August 2011.

discontents about labour exploitation, lack of social development and corrupt government sell-offs of national resources to foreign investors. The veteran Zambian politician Michael Sata—governor of Lusaka in the 1980s, a minister in Chiluba's MMD government in the 90s, and founder of his own party, the Patriotic Front, in the early 2000s—ran on a pro-poor 'Zambia for Zambians', resource-nationalism platform, attacking the MMD government for selling out to foreign interests and accusing China of imposing slavery from Cape Town to Cairo. Chinese state-owned enterprises were a particular target, for they were seen as representing a foreign sovereign state, not just private investors.

Sata toned down the rhetoric after his electoral victory in 2011, offering a series of gestures to reassure foreign investors, especially the Chinese. In office he has moved cautiously, compared to Latin American leaders such as Chávez, Morales or Correa, raising mineral royalties from 3 to 6 per cent (calculated on the basis of sales revenue, not profit) and lifting the minimum wage from K350,000 ($70) to K500,000 ($100). Nevertheless, these moves have gone some way towards fulfilling pent-up expectations for social change and economic improvement, while burnishing Sata's image as a Zambian leader willing to stand up against foreign investors. In November 2013, when the mining giant Konkola Copper Mines (KCM) announced a plan to dismiss 1,500 workers, Sata revoked its chief executive's work permit and threatened to cancel KCM's mining license. The Patriotic Front government has also initiated an industry-wide forensic audit to obtain full tax payments from these companies.

These major developments have redefined the politico-economic conditions shaping the entry of foreign capital into Zambia in the twenty-first century. In addition, largely thanks to coercive structural adjustment programmes imposed by the IMF, World Bank and Western donors, privatization of the mines in the 1990s served to internationalize the Copperbelt. By the time I arrived in 2008, there were not two but ten large-scale foreign mining companies, hailing not just from the Global North but also from the Global South, including India, Brazil and China, thus giving the Zambian government more leverage. The changed configuration of global capital impinges on Zambian development in ways irreducible to the classic metropolis–periphery formulation. Fifty years after independence, for all its weaknesses in a developmental capacity, Zambia today does not conform to stereotypes of a 'predatory' or 'failed' African state. The rise of the Patriotic Front shows that, while

competitive elections may fail to bring about good government, they can provide a platform for mass pressure on an incumbent administration to be more assertive towards outside investors—and that the potential for an African government to pursue national-popular interests against foreign capital does exist.

Varieties of capital

The wave of foreign investment arriving in Zambia from the late 1990s thus entered a country characterized by the presence of competitive global capital interests, multi-party elections and palpable popular discontent expressed as resource nationalism. Yet the category 'foreign investment' also needs to be broken down. In Zambia, government and popular discussions typically identify and criticize foreign mining houses by their country of origin, with the result that race and nationality often become the all-too-convenient frames for stereotyping corporate wrong doings. The three mining companies examined in this study are conventionally designated as Chinese, Indian and Swiss, following the national origin of the parent company, its founder or majority shareholders. But national labels may conceal more than they reveal when it comes to the interests of capital. For instance, KCM in Chingola is generally referred to as Indian, because its parent company Vedanta was established in India and has major mines and manufacturing facilities there; but Vedanta is a publicly traded multinational, listed on the London Stock Exchange, and its founder and chairman is usually resident in the UK. KCM's profit-maximization goal is no different from the 'Swiss' Mopani Copper Mines (MCM) in Kitwe, whose parent company is Glencore, a London-listed multinational headquartered in Switzerland, whose operations span the globe.

The generic term 'Chinese investment' also masks a hierarchy of capitals of varying status, resourcefulness and connection to the Beijing government. At the top of this pecking order are the central state-owned enterprises and policy banks.[4] Below these are provincial-level

[4] The central SOEs—some 117 conglomerates—are under the direct control of the State Council's State-owned Asset Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC). The policy banks include the Export-Import Bank of China (China EXIM Bank), which disburses vast amounts of concessional loans for infrastructure construction, and the China Development Bank which, in addition to commercial loans, also makes equity investment through the China Africa Development Fund.

state-owned enterprises, private companies of varying sizes and, at the bottom of the heap, entrepreneurial or family firms. This research focuses on the top tier, 'Chinese state capital', which accounts for roughly half of total Chinese investment in Africa, through around a hundred large-scale, state-owned or state-controlled shareholding companies, concentrated in mining and construction. But even 'ownership' categories—for example, private versus state-owned—can be poor guides to corporate objectives. For instance in the construction sector in Africa, Chinese central and provincial SOEs can be every bit as profit-driven as Chinese private companies.

Instead of the appearance of nationality or ownership, it is the interests of capital that are of the essence, politically and sociologically. Asking the question: 'What and whose interests does a company serve?' leads me to differentiate two broad varieties of capital in Zambia: Chinese state capital, as defined above, serving national interests identified by Beijing; and global private capital, serving the profit-maximization interests of shareholders. These two ideal types—varieties of *capital*, it should be stressed, not of 'capitalisms'—necessarily entail simplifications of the empirical cases, and are by no means exhaustive of all varieties of capital everywhere. Rather, they are construed from the pool of actually existing investors in Zambia's copper and construction sectors, and are deployed here only as heuristic devices to reveal their respective dynamics. In what follows, then, I compare 'Chinese state capital' and 'global private capital' by examining Chinese and non-Chinese corporations along three dimensions of capital: logic of accumulation, labour regimes and management ethos.[5] I focus on copper mining, with supplementary observations from the construction sector. The final section turns to the precarious livelihoods and social fragmentation of the Zambian working class as it confronts these two varieties of capital.

1. LOGICS OF ACCUMULATION

All the major mines in Zambia are owned and run by subsidiaries of multinationals. Among these, only the Chinese NFCA is state-owned; its parent company is the China Nonferrous-metal Mining Company—hereafter CNMC—the PRC's leading corporation in the nonferrous metal

[5] These themes acknowledge the seminal influence of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Karl Polanyi.

mining industry, with operations in twenty countries.[6] As noted above, the parent-companies of the other mining firms studied here—KCM, owned by Vedanta, and MCM, a subsidiary of Glencore—are publicly traded on the London stock exchange. All three mining houses began production in Zambia in the early 2000s, as the privatizations were finalized. MCM snapped up Mufulira, which produces particularly pure copper, and the huge Nkana mine in 2000. Vedanta acquired KCM in 2004—it was initially offered to Anglo-American, the original owners—driven by the profit potential of the Konkola Deep Mining Project, the jewel in the crown of the Zambian copper industry. Their imperatives were clear: maximization of shareholder value.

It is important to underscore that Chinese state investment must also return a profit. A senior NFCA executive cautioned: 'We don't need to maximize profit, but we need to make *some* profit. The state won't support us if we make losses year after year. The Chinese government gave CNMC the initial capital but the company has to survive and expand by reinvesting its profit into production.' Yet between profit optimization and profit maximization lies the space for achieving other types of return—political influence and access to raw materials. I will call this state-capital logic of accumulation 'encompassing', in contrast to the profit-maximizing logic of private capital. Encompassing accumulation gives CNMC an important role in China's economic diplomacy, currently focused on Asia and Africa, with emphasis on the resource commodities that are in short supply in the PRC: oil, copper, aluminium and iron. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a key government think-tank, has identified resource security as the top priority for China–Africa economic strategy over the next ten years. NFCA proudly announces itself as 'frontline troops for China's overseas resource development' in its promotional literature. The significance of copper lies both in its exchange value—i.e., making profits—and its use value, as a material input needed for Chinese industry. Today, Chinese state-owned mining companies sell copper in the international market for profit. But as a senior NFCA manager foresaw, 'One day, if there was an embargo, then Chinese companies would of course sell only to China.'

[6] In 2011, a provincial SOE owned by the Gansu Government, Jinchuan Group Company, became the majority shareholder (85 per cent) of the Chibuluma mines on the Copperbelt after it bought the South Africa-based Metorex. Following the take-over, the Metorex management continues to run the mines.

The circumstances in which the Chinese acquired the Chambishi mine, one of the least profitable, were illustrative of this distinct logic. Fifteen years ago, as senior Chinese managers recalled, a white 'old boy's club'—Anglo-American, Glencore, First Quantum Minerals—dominated the copper industry in southern Africa, operating the largest mines with the highest-grade ores. The Zambian privatization team was reluctant to hand over a mine to a Chinese state company with little international experience. It was only allowed to purchase Chambishi after a preferred investor had withdrawn. A top CNMC official recalled:

> We bought the mine for $20 million, which is peanuts to the Chinese government today, but back then it required the signatures of all nine members of the Standing Committee of the Politburo. We got Chambishi, which even the Zambians did not want. It had been closed for almost thirteen years. When we arrived, the underground tunnels had collapsed and all the machines had been moved to other mines, except the de-watering devices. But we still found it attractive because what is considered low grade [2.1 per cent] internationally is already higher than what we have in China [1 per cent], so we thought there should be room for some profit.

As he went on to comment, there was also the Taiwan factor: 'During the Kaunda era, China–Zambia relations were great. Under Chiluba, they were initially good, but then he began to engage with Taiwan. The MMD even invited Taiwan to participate in the bidding. Our participation in the privatization process was influenced by this factor of competition with Taiwan.' A related concern was to secure African diplomatic support in the United Nations. The pivotal African votes in the 1971 UN decision to unseat Taiwan in favour of the PRC continued to impress upon the Beijing leadership Africa's importance to China in world affairs.

Coping with crisis

Of the three mines studied, KCM and MCM are by far the largest, producing 200,000 tons and 117,804 tons of copper per annum, compared to 26,178 tons for NFCA. Their workforces, both formal and informal, are over six times bigger than the Chinese firm's (see Table 1, overleaf). Scale apart, however, all the mines including the Chinese share a profit-making objective, so some aspects of everyday working life are similar. The production indicators used by the parent companies to assess senior management teams put similar emphasis on economic performance, and production targets—in terms of ore tonnage, ore grades, recovery

Table 1: *Basic conditions of three foreign-owned mines in Zambia's Copperbelt, 2012*

	MCM	*KCM*	*NFCA*
Workforce			
Direct	8776	8689	1209
Sub-contract	9800	13,217	1883
Copper production (tons)	117,804	200,000	26,178
Ore grade	2 %	3.5 %	1.73 %

rates and volume of copper cathodes—are prominently displayed on electronic bulletin boards in the mines. Cutting cost and production targets are subjects of intense and emotional verbal exchange in meetings.

Nevertheless, their different imperatives—'encompassing accumulation' for Chinese state capital, and 'profit maximization' for global private capital—have led to strikingly different corporate strategies at moments of crisis. When the global financial crisis hit Zambia in autumn 2008, copper prices plummeted from a historic high of $9,000 per ton to $3,000 per ton in the first quarter of 2009. Panic spread across the Copperbelt as KCM, MCM and other major mines announced massive layoffs. In all, some 19,000 workers lost their jobs—30 per cent of the total mining work force.[7] The Luanshya mine shut down when its Israeli-British owner pulled out, and MCM planned to suspend production in Mufulira. Collective bargaining was cancelled and wages frozen.

In the midst of this turmoil, the Chinese NFCA announced a 'Three Noes' policy: no layoffs, no production reduction, no salary cuts. Operating with a long-term interest in the stable production of ores, as opposed to reacting to market fluctuation in ore prices and shareholders' short-term financial interests, NFCA's response reflected its political and business objectives in Zambia. Invoking the official rhetoric of maintaining Sino–Zambian all-weather friendship, NFCA turned the crisis into a chance to burnish the image of the Chinese government for its stabilizing impact on the Zambian economy. CNMC also bought the Luanshya mine,

[7] Chrispin Radoka Matenga, *The Impact of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis on Job Losses and Conditions of Work in the Mining Sector in Zambia*, Lusaka, ILO, 2010.

thereby extending a lifeline to a mining town of 100,000 residents. The calculation was both political and economic: while emphasizing to Zambian officials their willingness to help solve the problem of unemployment in mining townships, Chinese senior management saw the crisis as a good investment opportunity. A top CNMC representative in Zambia explained:

> My business judgment was that copper prices would only experience a temporary setback because China was still restructuring, and would still need resources. Also, I wanted to refurbish Luanshya with new machinery to increase productivity and lower costs. Their technology was very dilapidated and old. But its open pit at Muliashi has the potential to be profitable.

Another contrast came just before the crash, when the Zambian government tried to impose a windfall-profit tax in early 2008, as world copper prices were reaching their (speculation-driven) peak. The major mines, including KCM and MCM, were adamant in opposing this legislation, which specified a 75 per cent tax rate when copper prices soared beyond a certain level. An executive at MCM recalled that he had several emergency meetings with the Lusaka government in July 2008, with statistics in hand to show that MCM had gone from profit-making to loss-making, a month after the law came into effect. MCM threatened to shut down its operation in Mufulira, while the MMD government upped the ante by claiming it could find other buyers if necessary. Records showed that only NFCA and one other mining company complied with the new tax law before the government rescinded it in the wake of the financial crisis. Similarly, when the Patriotic Front government doubled mineral royalty taxes from 3 to 6 per cent soon after the 2011 election, NFCA voiced no objection, whereas the other mining companies attacked its supposedly detrimental effect on production.

China's SEZs

Perhaps the most revealing difference to date between these accumulation strategies has been CNMC's decision to establish a Special Economic Zone—called the Zambia China Cooperation Zone (ZCCZ)—occupying nearly a third of the 41 sq km Chambishi mining concession area. A CNMC subsidiary is responsible for building the infrastructure, attracting investors and creating up to 6,000 local jobs. The zone is central to the Zambian government's 'value addition' development strategy, which has received little support from global private investors. The

senior management of both KCM and MCM considered value-addition manufacturing to be 'economically unviable' and outside their 'core business' interests. A World Bank–UKAID report similarly questioned the economic rationale of developing copper manufacturing in Zambia, citing the landlocked country's distance from major markets, its poor infrastructure and high transportation costs.[8] Against this backdrop of international cynicism, a senior Chinese executive at CNMC admitted that it may or may not be a profitable proposition to build a SEZ, but his strategy is to lock in large-scale, long-term projects, to ensure his company becomes 'influential':

> Only when you build up a large presence will you become significant in the eyes of the Zambian Government. They cannot ignore you . . . We have NFCA, CCS, Sinometal and other Chinese companies here, and we are in Zambia for the long haul, not short-term profit-making. Therefore we must consider local development and invest in local goodwill. Recently [May 2013] KCM threatened to fire 2,000 workers, and the Zambian government was very upset. We don't want to create such tensions. KCM has to distribute profit to its stockholders, rather than invest in local society. [For us,] reward comes in local recognition and acceptance.

Another manager added: 'The big boss of our company is the Chinese state. In this day and age, diplomacy and investment, politics and economics are all intertwined. In the eyes of the state, our meagre corporate profits don't count as much as its interest in diplomacy and foreign relations. It cares more about whether we invest locally to facilitate China–Zambia relations.'

The process by which the Chambishi Special Economic Zone was established is also revealing of the ways in which China has had to adapt to Zambian realities and pressure from the governing elite—as opposed to imposing its 'going out' strategy on African states. When it initially purchased the Chambishi mine, the Chinese company had no plan to create a value-addition zone. It was the Zambian government that had been trying to copy the Asian SEZ model—after several abortive attempts, the strategy remained on the drawing board—and which had identified manufacturing as a key development objective since the 1990s.[9] When

[8] World Bank and UKAID, *What is the Potential for More Copper Fabrication in Zambia?*, June 2011.

[9] Stuart John Barton, 'A Special Place for China? How Zambia Has Used Economic Zones to Attract Foreign Investment', MPhil Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2011.

Beijing decided to explore the possibility of building SEZs in Africa and asked the governments to submit applications, Zambia was ready with detailed plans and policies. In addition to the zone in Chambishi, it has asked for a further sub-zone in Lusaka, focusing on logistics, light industries and services. A Zambian Ministry of Commerce official explained that the idea was to turn the landlocked country into a 'landlinked' hub for the region. Here, it seems, Chinese state capital can be leveraged to facilitate Zambian development, taking on commitments that global private capital would not accept. But the essential preconditions for this are existing African development strategies and political will.

Credit-fuelled construction

In the absence of these conditions, as the Zambian construction sector reveals, Chinese state capital can show another face. Since 2000, construction projects in Africa have received some $35bn in concessional loans from China, disbursed through the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Of this, Zambia has received $1.2bn, far exceeding its loans from the World Bank and African Development Bank. Often touted by Beijing as a form of assistance, Chinese concessional loans actually charge higher interest rates than the World Bank (2 per cent vs 1.7 per cent), have a smaller grant element (23 per cent vs 35 per cent), shorter repayment periods (10–15 years vs 20–50 years) and are conditional upon non-competitive single sourcing from China. The reason these loans are eagerly snapped up, according to Zambian Finance Ministry officials, is because the priorities of Western lenders have shifted to capacity building—social services, education, health and poverty alleviation—rather than physical infrastructure, which is still sorely needed in many developing economies. Politicians intent on securing votes in the next election are eager to sign up for Chinese loans that will deliver infrastructural projects to their constituencies in record time. They also preferred the fact that the main criterion used by Chinese officials in assessing a loan was whether the project was a Zambian government priority, whereas the World Bank would make its own decision on the project's benefits.

Despite Chinese rhetoric about non-conditionality, in practice these loans carry the implicit condition that the Chinese side decides what gets constructed, with decisions announced at FOCAC meetings. In the absence of open bidding, the price is determined by Chinese contractors with

good connections to the China EXIM Bank. A senior Zambian Finance Ministry official drew an illuminating parallel between the mechanisms of Chinese loans and those of IMF structural adjustment programmes:

> Loans from China are supply driven. There is a well-oiled Chinese development machinery that loops in and out of the Beijing government, connecting many Chinese players. Typically, a concessional-loan infrastructure project is started by a Chinese vendor [contractor] on the ground in Zambia who wants to build a road, for example. He would go to the Road Development Agency and say, 'I saw some roads I could do, if you gave me the contract'. He would then go to the China EXIM Bank and tell them this would cost $200m, before any feasibility studies were done. On paper it looks as though the Zambian government has initiated the projects, but you have to do reverse engineering in order to track the process. It's like any IMF structural adjustment reform: the IMF says you need this and that macro and micro reforms, and they identify 'distortions'. But on paper, you would see a letter from the Zambian government saying that we have identified problems, and we need help. From the outside, it looks as though Zambia asked the IMF to impose the conditions, but it is the other way around.[10]

Zambian officials are well aware of the risks of Chinese loans, with their hidden conditionalities, and of the political agenda that drives them. They complain about the lack of open bidding, leading to inflated prices.[11] In the long run, Chinese loans pose the threat of recreating Zambia's debt burden, only recently relieved by the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. But politicians find them all too tempting, partly to bolster their own political careers but also to maintain good relations with an emerging superpower. A senior Zambian Finance Ministry official explained:

> In most African states, the demand for concessional loans is incentivized by Chinese rent-seeking. Heads of state and ministers are given favours, and then decide to take the Chinese on board . . . There is a race to the bottom. Each one of us [African countries] wants to have an economic relationship

[10] This account was corroborated by interviews with other technocrats handling concessional loans, an advisor to two former Zambian presidents, and Chinese contractors in Zambia who have successfully secured concessional-loan projects from China EXIM Bank.

[11] In 2014, Zambian officials asked the Chinese Government to reform the single source requirement, i.e. to institutionalize bidding among Chinese contractors. The Chinese side has reportedly given a positive response to this recommendation.

> with the Chinese. They are a major source of financing, so we don't want to be left out in engaging them . . . When we look at the future, when we'll be in need, the Chinese may be an option. So we cannot destroy the present relationship with the Chinese.

Concessional loans therefore represent a multi-purpose tool for Beijing: a means to cultivate political influence, through the selection of recipients (countries and politicians; an investment outlet for China's foreign reserves); and a way to open up new overseas markets for its state-owned construction companies (by all accounts, only central SOEs and their subsidiaries have the necessary political connections to win these lucrative contracts).[12] As well as undertaking concessional-loan projects, these central SOEs compete with provincial SOEs from Jiangxi, Henan, Gansu, Anhui and Shanghai for World Bank and Zambian government projects. Many of these provincial SOEs were originally sent by the Chinese government to Zambia in the 1990s to build foreign-aid projects—government complexes, football stadiums, hospitals and roads. Having established a foothold in Zambia, they stayed on to exploit the newly liberalized construction market. All of them compete fiercely with private Chinese contractors for roads and building projects.[13] In contrast to the strategy of 'encompassing accumulation' in the mining and financial sectors, the motivation of Chinese construction companies, both state-owned and private, is purely commercial, just like their counterparts from South Africa, India or Zambia itself. Most companies said that the profit margin in construction in China averages 7 per cent, but in Zambia it can be as high as 30 per cent, depending on the type of project.

But state support is also a double-edged sword for Chinese SOEs, making them disproportionately vulnerable to host-country politics and resource nationalism. Beijing's interventions on the local political scene—financial support for the ruling party during election campaigns, for instance—

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[12] In Zambia, major Chinese players include Aviation Industry Corporation of China, China Geo-Engineering Corporation International, the Overseas Company of China Railway Seventh Group Corporation, and the China 15th Metallurgical Construction Group Company.

[13] Out of a total of 68 contractors with a licence to undertake large-scale projects—Grade 1 and Grade 2 contractors registered with the National Council for Construction in Zambia in 2013—36 of them originate from China.

can become a liability for Chinese companies. Opposition candidates trying to attack the government for selling out Zambian resources to overseas interests may target Chinese companies as representatives of a foreign sovereign state. This was a big issue when Michael Sata was campaigning as the leader of the opposition Patriotic Front, winning strong support on the Copperbelt. Reiterating the analogy between Western colonialism and Chinese exploitation, Sata argued:

> Zambia's failure to curb violations of industrial and labour laws can be attributed to the overbearing influence of the Chinese government on its Zambian counterpart, through provision of generous gifts to the ruling MMD and the powers that be . . . European colonial exploitation in comparison to Chinese exploitation appears more benign, because even though the commercial exploitation was just as bad, colonial agents also invested in social and economic infrastructure and services . . . Just as the Africans rejected European exploitation, oppression and dehumanization, there is no doubt that Chinese exploitation and domination will be rejected too.[14]

As noted, Sata toned down his anti-Chinese rhetoric once in office. But the twists and turns in this relationship show how uniquely and easily Chinese state capital can be politicized in comparison to global private capital.

2. REGIMES OF PRODUCTION

Labour conditions in Chinese companies in Africa have attracted much critical attention in the international media. However, most of these reports lack any comparative or historical perspective—accusing the PRC of practices that are prevalent across the entire industry, backed up by global political forces that preceded China's arrival in Africa. The current debate also tends to ignore the role played by investors in determining the organization of production. This section will examine both the similarities—Zambian labour law and standardized technologies form a common backdrop—and the significant differences in production regimes between Chinese SOEs and global private capital, in mining and construction.

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[14] Michael Sata, 'Chinese Investment in Africa: the Case of Zambia', paper presented at Harvard University Committee on Human Rights Studies, 24 October 2007.

General conditions

With the late-90s privatization of the copper mines, both varieties of capital entered a landscape in which the organized power of the Zambian working class had already been decimated by the imposition of IMF structural adjustment and the policies of successive Lusaka governments. Organized labour had been a significant force in the struggle for national liberation, but in the post-independence era it succumbed to the ruling United National Independence Party's corporatist control. In the name of national interest, Kaunda declared strikes illegal; but miners were offered paternalism in the form of a cradle-to-grave welfare system, with subsidized diapers, burials, food and housing. With the collapse of copper prices from the mid-70s, and IMF-mandated austerity in the 80s, workers' already meagre living standards were squeezed. By the late 80s, the trade unions had become increasingly alienated from the Kaunda government and led a widespread resistance that brought Chiluba to power in the 1991 elections. As we have seen, Chiluba did a U-turn once in office, famously asking Zambian workers to 'die a little' for the sake of the economy.

On IMF instructions, the Chiluba government pushed through the labour legislation that laid the framework for today's production regime. The new Zambian labour code declared sympathy strikes illegal, splintered the trade-union movement, limited industry-wide collective bargaining and deregulated the labour market by extending the duration of short-term contracts. Together these measures subjected labour and assets to an intensified logic of capitalist profit-making before the arrival of overseas investors when the mines were privatized at the end of the 90s. Despite the victory of Sata on a platform of pro-poor policies, the past decade has brought no reversal in the declining fortunes of organized labour.

Changing technology has also undermined workers' bargaining power across the industry. Privatization and new investment brought about the mechanization of the mines. In contrast to the extensive use of manual labour underground observed by Burawoy in the late 60s, all the mines I visited—NFCA, KCM, MCM—used the same types of heavy-duty vehicles and machinery, from the same American or Swedish suppliers (Caterpillar, Sandvik, Atlas Copco). The Chinese technical manager at NFCA visited the other mines from time to time to see the equipment

in operation. The labour process is the same across the mines and typically involves drilling and blasting to access the ore, extracting the ore through stope-drilling and blasting, 'lashing' or moving the ore to a tip, crushing and transporting it to the concentrator for processing, where copper is extracted from the ore. The worldwide trend has been to use subcontractors for this work, who in turn offer minimal training to short-term contract workers.[15]

Another striking similarity across all the foreign-owned workplaces is the 'colour glass ceiling'. Expatriates dominate senior management in all foreign companies in mining and construction, accounting for 5–10 per cent of a company's workforce. There is a widespread rumour that Chinese companies import their own manual labour force instead of hiring Africans, but no empirical evidence has been put forward to substantiate this claim. A four-country survey by researchers at Stellenbosch University corroborates my own findings in Zambia that Chinese contractors, like their South African counterparts, employ a minority of skilled supervisors from their home country, but hire the majority of the workforce—some 85–95 per cent—locally.[16] Even in concessional-loan projects, where companies are permitted larger quotas of Chinese employees, survey data indicate a maximum of 43 per cent.

Strictly speaking, the 'colour bar' principle, prevalent during the colonial period—that no white man should be subordinate to an African—is no longer practiced in Zambia. But glass ceilings do operate, to varying degrees, so that Zambians are rarely found among the 'chiefs'—Chief Executive Officer, Chief Production Officer, Chief Financial Officer, etc. By law the Human Resources Manager has to be a Zambian, and this is often the highest corporate position that Zambians can reach. Racial discrimination at managerial level has become a muted issue today; lacking collective representation, these employees often resort to individualist strategies to climb the corporate ladder and are distrusted by many Zambian rank-and-file mining and construction workers. On

[15] In construction, the use of casual and contract workers is ubiquitous. In this sector Chinese and South African contractors may import heavy equipment from their respective countries, but the types of machinery and the labour process of mixing cement, laying bricks and asphalt are similar across work sites.

[16] See 'China's Interest and Activity in Africa's Construction and Infrastructure Sectors', Centre for Chinese Studies, Stellenbosch University, November 2006.

the other hand, Zambian trade-union leaders and workers alike agree that interpersonal racism, in the form of expatriates' racist remarks and other misdemeanours, is aggressively disciplined by the companies and is therefore not a salient problem.

Diverging priorities

Beneath these similarities in the political, technological and racial apparatuses of production, the three mines differ significantly in how they operate. The interest of Chinese state capital in stable, long-term copper production is manifest in the ways in which NFCA invests in exploration, drills for mineable reserves and makes everyday production decisions. These Chinese peculiarities stand out in contrast to the *modus operandi* of MCM and KCM, both of which are driven by what Zambian mining experts call the 'trader mentality'—the trading of copper for short-term profit, benefiting from price fluctuations—as opposed to the 'producer mentality' that characterizes NFCA. Glencore, MCM's parent company, is the world's leading commodity trader, while KCM sees processing—smelting and refining—rather than mining as its most important profit stream. This fundamental difference in mining philosophy explains the investors' different approaches to exploration, drilling and working practices.

Exploration—surface drilling to discover and measure new mining resources—is expensive, costing an average of $200 per metre, and its commercial payoff is uncertain. A 2010 survey has noted that, whereas NFCA has consistently invested in greenfield drilling, resulting in the discovery of a large, verifiable orebody within its licensed area, KCM and MCM had done only 'cosmetic drilling'; according to a leading mining expert, this means 'drilling not to generate the quantum to produce, but only to give an impression that you are exploring'. A 2014 report commissioned by the Zambian government noted that, while KCM had spent over $2.8 billion on the Konkola Deep Mining Project, there had been 'no significant improvement in production in the last five years', while management had 'diverted funds from operations to finance capital projects, resulting in a failure to invest in exploration activities'. Mine managers at KCM and MCM also confirmed that drilling for development—accessing the ore, in preparation for the actual extraction—came to a halt during the 2008 financial crisis, leading to a 'hand-to-mouth

situation' in which the mines had, at most, only three months' of mineable reserves. By contrast NFCA did not stop development during the crisis, due to its concern about maintaining stable production. The production manager was adamant about this, stressing that even a short-term interruption would involve higher costs and more catch-up time at a later stage.

Thirdly, while all three companies subcontract mining to cut costs, KCM and MCM are under financial pressure to maintain a much larger pool of subcontractors than NFCA. KCM in particular is notoriously ruthless about making its several dozen subcontractors involved in underground drilling compete against each other to drive down unit costs. Its own mine managers complained about the tyranny of the Commercial Department over Operations when it comes to decisions such as purchasing machinery or choosing subcontractors; management practice and safety standards are compromised in order to cut costs. By contrast, NFCA uses relational rather than competitive subcontracting to ensure greater stability; it has had only one mining subcontractor, also from China, since production at Chambishi started in 2003. Since 2010, MCM is said to have shifted from a trader to a producer mentality, following the recent merger between its parent company, Glencore, and Xstrata, a global mining major.

Exploitation or exclusion?

Another striking difference is that labour struggles at NFCA have persistently revolved around low wages, whereas at KCM and MCM, the greatest threat to labour is retrenchment. Since its inception, NFCA's salary level for the general workforce has been about 30 per cent lower than KCM, the highest on the Copperbelt and 15 per cent lower than MCM, the second highest. This low-wage regime is one empirical basis for the widespread criticism that the Chinese mine is particularly exploitative. (Another has been safety; in 2005, 52 Zambian workers were killed in an accident at the BGRIMM explosives factory at Chambishi, partly owned by NFCA.) Yet lower pay is compensated for by relative employment security. As a Zambian mining expert observed, 'NFCA has never laid people off, which is very important for this country'. Mass retrenchment, as in 2008, is the typical first response by global private companies to copper-price fluctuation or production-cost pressures. In 2013 KCM

twice threatened to retrench a total of 3,500 workers due to low copper prices and a purported 'mechanization' plan.

Both Chinese state capital and global private capital are exploiters of labour, but they offer different bargains: stable exploitation—secure employment at low wages—versus flexible exclusion: precarious employment at higher wages. The explanation is in part historical: on privatization, the new investors inherited varied labour regimes in the different mines; but it is also partly due to the respective interests of these two varieties of capital. NFCA's interest in copper as a physical, rather than a financial, resource allows it to plan for expanded production, which requires labour stability. According to Zambian officials, NFCA is the only company that has always met its production targets. Paradoxically, NFCA's low-wage policy can also be traced to its logic of encompassing accumulation. The decision to acquire Chambishi was not taken purely on grounds of profitability, as we have seen, and NFCA had to adopt a low-wage regime if it was to turn a profit with the mine's low-grade ore. The company also had few legacy obligations, because the mine had been closed for thirteen years: only fifty maintenance workers were taken over with pre-privatization conditions of service—that is, permanent-employment status and union membership. The rest of the workforce was newly hired on fixed-term contracts and much lower wages. The Chinese had no domestic experience of autonomous unions or collective bargaining, and the management tried to stall union recruitment for several years. These practices gave NFCA the reputation of being the worst employer on the Copperbelt. Over the years, persistent pressure by the unions on NFCA to match the industry norm in terms of medical coverage for miners' dependents, classification of job grades, and basic salaries played a big role in bringing about gradual improvement. In most years, the rate of salary increment reached through collective bargaining is on par with other mines. Yet due to the low base level at Chambishi, its wages remain the lowest on the Copperbelt.

At KCM and MCM, global investors took over large, functioning mines and were compelled to offer their workforce the same salary levels and conditions of service as under state ownership. Workers at KCM and MCM were better organized and their union leaders were more forceful negotiators at the bargaining table. But if wages are higher, these

firms are also liable to downsize and lay workers off altogether. These privately owned mines are under constant pressure to 'show' shareholders that they are responding to copper-price fluctuation by cutting costs. As one industry expert explained: 'The surest and most immediate way to bring production costs down is to cut labour.' Retrenchment, and its variant, the casualization of labour through subcontracting, therefore becomes the crucible of labour-management conflicts at KCM, and to a lesser extent MCM. The latter's shift towards a producer mentality does not entail the 'encompassing accumulation' factors that drive NFCA to accommodate to Zambian priorities.

Labour's strength and weakness

Chinese state capital is thus every bit as adversarial as global private capital when it comes to labour's demands, yielding only under extraordinary pressure—wildcat strikes backed by entire mining communities or, most critically, state intervention. Three miners' unions organize about 90 per cent of the direct employees at the three mines. The law ensures union representatives get a seat at the negotiating table, but collective-bargaining sessions are dominated by management, which has a monopoly of financial data; the unions don't have the research capacity to challenge management statistics on production, profits, assets and liabilities, etc. Deadlocked negotiations often produce wildcat strikes and work stoppages over which the unions have little control. Informal and laid-off workers can become the source of violent radicalization during such strikes, as angry and unemployed locals seize the moment to paralyze the mines. Such militancy has at times been a bargaining chip for the unions, who can threaten recalcitrant management with community agitation, even though the unions themselves are hard pressed to control the crowds. All three mines have experienced strikes that were joined and escalated by laid-off casual workers in the townships, who have nothing to lose and everything to gain from a strong show of force against the mines. A miner who witnessed a 2012 strike at KCM explained:

> Even the bar tender or the street kids would like to see a bigger pay rise for the miners. When miners have more money, they spend more in the local community. But some of them are thugs who wanted to steal and vandalize company property during the riot. They threw stones at workers whom they suspected were going back to work. They terrorized and assaulted union leaders, saying they've accepted bribes from the mines.

Government intervention can tip the class balance in labour's favour, but this is rare and happens only in mining, not construction. After Sata's victory in 2011, workers in both sectors staged protests in major cities, demanding pay hikes of up to 100 per cent on the strength of Sata's campaign slogan, 'More Money in Your Pocket'. The Patriotic Front Labour Minister Fackson Shamenda gave strong backing to the miners' demands, sending officials to the Copperbelt companies to demand a $400 rise across the board. Though the management protested, the combined agitation by workers and the state did result in significant concessions in that year's collective bargaining. After workers pulled off a rare 20-day strike, NFCA agreed a 22 per cent pay raise, the largest increment among the mines. The CEO of NFCA explained: 'Because it was a new government, we thought a higher increment would be a good gesture from us.'

Down the road, MCM workers also protested, and the Minister of Labour pushed management to raise its offer from 12 to 17 per cent, against the unions' demand for 30 per cent. In 2013, the government successfully blocked KCM's plans to retrench first 2,000 and then 1,529 workers. In 2014, a video clip featuring Anil Agarwal, majority owner of Vedanta, went viral on the internet. It featured Agarwal bragging about making an easy profit of $500m each year since his purchase of KCM from the Zambian government for a mere $25m, though the company has declared losses every year since its inception. At this the Patriotic Front government mustered the political will to launch a forensic audit at KCM, and announced that this would soon be expanded to all the mines.

The situation is starkly different in the construction sector. It is hard to imagine now how strong the Zambian construction workers' union was in the days when the state dominated development. (The union famously provided the launch-pad for the political career of multi-millionaire ex-president Frederick Chiluba.) These days, the construction of large-scale civil engineering projects, roads and buildings is dominated by foreign contractors, above all from China and South Africa. Casualization is rampant: most are day labourers, or casual workers with a 6-month contract; workers with a one-year contract are called 'permanent'. In our survey of twenty construction sites, only two had seen any signs of unionization, although workers on all sites reported work stoppages, sabotage or theft of tools when wages were paid late or, in some cases,

not at all. Though construction workers protested along with the miners in 2011, they did not receive nearly as much help from the Sata government. Unlike copper, construction is not seen as a strategic sector and the Zambian government has not formulated a strategic vision for the industry, beyond the generic 'citizen empowerment'. By law, all projects tendered by foreign contractors should have at least 20 per cent subcontracted locally, but the policy is poorly enforced and is easily short-circuited by 'briefcase contractors', Zambian nationals who sign up as partners on paper only.

Working conditions on Chinese-run construction sites, private and state-owned, are not significantly different from their South African and Zambian counterparts. Though Chinese contractors have been criticized for abnormal exploitation, our comparative data show that all contractors run sites with abysmal working conditions and pay poverty wage rates, in line with the abysmal government-sanctioned minimum wage. Workers on all twenty sites surveyed reported accidents, inadequate safety procedures, disputes with management and late payment of wages. Privately owned Chinese construction companies and some Zambian firms were responsible for the worst conditions, whereas state-owned Chinese companies, both provincial and central, had similar labour standards to South African ones. Many construction workers pointed to the lack of government regulatory oversight as the main culprit for their predicament. Fearful of losing their jobs, hampered by the casual and mobile nature of construction projects, they have not been able to wring many concessions from employers of any sort.

3. MANAGERIAL ETHOS

All foreign companies in Zambia face widespread popular criticism of their corporate ethos. Interestingly, though, the flashpoints of cultural contestation are construed differently for these two varieties of capital. Chinese work culture is assailed as over-intensive and inhumane; it has fuelled the damaging rumour that Chinese employees in Africa are 'prison labour' sent by Beijing.[17] Serious industrial incidents—such as the 2005 explosion at Chambishi and a 2012 workers' protest at the

[17] Yan Hairong and Barry Sautman, 'Chasing Ghosts: rumours and representations of the export of Chinese convict labour to developing countries', *China Quarterly*, vol. 210, June 2012.

Collum coal mine, owned by a private Chinese company in the south of the country, which ended with the killing of a Chinese manager—have seared the image of exploitative Chinese investors in the national consciousness. At the same time, the reputations of multinationals such as KCM and MCM have been marred by reports of financial fraud and tax evasion. There was public outrage over a leaked 2010 report by an international auditing firm showing that MCM had engaged in extensive transfer pricing with its parent company Glencore. The intense public anger over the 2014 Vedanta video, noted above, has prompted politicians to talk of nationalizing KCM.[18]

Eating bitterness

Ultimately more important for understanding these distinct varieties of capital is the contrast of managerial ethos inside the companies. International capital depends on expatriate foot soldiers to realize its interests, and their way of life offers a unique window into its peculiarity. The most striking aspect of management culture in Chinese state mines and construction sites is what they call 'eating bitterness'. This combination of individual moral compulsion with corporate control imperatives echoes Max Weber's memorable depiction of an 'inner-worldly asceticism'.[19] The difference is that the Chinese ethos is collective rather than individualistic, patrolled from a distance by the Chinese state and the CCP. In contrast, the managerial ethos in global private companies is much more individualistic and entrepreneurial, with a clearer boundary between corporate and personal domains.

Who are these Chinese managers? Many senior and middle Chinese managers working in Zambia today have come from impoverished backgrounds in interior provinces—for example Shanxi, Jiangxi, Anhui, Henan and Yunnan. There are roughly two generations of expatriates. The senior managers are mostly men in their 40s and 50s, who have spent most of their careers climbing up through the ranks of state-owned mines or construction companies. The younger generation consists of college graduates, with degrees in engineering, mining or management, who speak better English but have no prior experience of working in SOEs. Women account for about 5 per cent of the Chinese employees,

[18] The Sata government nationalized the Collum coal mine in 2013.

[19] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Los Angeles [1930] 1996, p. 63.

mostly working as interpreters, human resource officers or accountants. The vast majority are on two-year contracts, a reflection of China's own labour-market informalization. To Zambians they are expatriate managers, but in the Chinese social structure, they confront employment conditions like those of migrant workers struggling in Chinese cities. No wonder some of them half-jokingly described themselves as 'higher class migrant workers'.

As poverty is visible everywhere in Zambia, everyday conversations are often peppered with memories of abject poverty in China, and how it was overcome through the unique capacity to eat bitterness. For instance, on the way to the annual collective-bargaining meeting, as we drove along a bumpy, pot-holed road, the NFCA HR manager lamented: 'Zambia will never develop because of the laziness of the people, their inability to eat bitterness.' Angered by union demands for a double-digit pay rise, he lectured his HR staff about the Chinese merit of frugality during breaks in the negotiations:

> If you work hard, you'll get what you want. This is what we Chinese believe in. In our five thousand years of history, we never wanted to beg for money or borrow. We'd rather tighten our belt than shamelessly ask others for money. We are so different from our Zambian workers. They cannot earn but want to consume. They are lazy but want an increment every year.

The Chinese use the phrase 'eating bitterness' to convey their willingness to endure hardship, postpone gratification, submit to company discipline, save and reinvest for personal and corporate development. Invoking this narrative usually involves strong moral censure and a sharp nationalistic division between themselves and the Zambians. Indian, South African and Peruvian expatriates also contrast their hard-working culture with African indolence, but without the moral, nationalistic subtext of the Chinese. An Indian engineer who had been working in Zambia for 35 years attributed Indians' diligence to their childhood experience in a poor and populous country, not to their Indian-ness:

> I still remember growing up in my home village, I fought every day with many other kids to get on an overloaded cow-drawn cart to go to school. If you didn't get out of bed earlier than others, you wouldn't be able to get on the cart. If you were not strong and competitive enough, you would fall off the cart. We learned at an early age that to survive, you have to compete and work hard.

For their part, Zambian workers do not contest that absenteeism and lack of commitment exist, but argue that the cause is precarious employment rather than African culture or national character. A Zambian trade unionist at NFCA explained:

> For the Chinese, who have no families here—they are here only to work—the sooner they finish their project, the sooner they get to go home. For Zambians, as soon as they finish their work, they think they will be out of a job. The other reason is that Zambians are not well paid. With a minimum income, you are not able to take good care of your family. You have to worry every day whether there is food on the table for your kids and wife, so you clock off early, or you take leave to look after them, or take on extra jobs. It's not that Zambians are lazy by nature.[20]

Inside the China House

The 'China House', the generic name given by locals to the residential compound housing Chinese employees of a particular company, resembles an informal total institution. A collective timetable is built into the organizational design of the China House, producing a uniform collective rhythm of everyday life and bodily discipline that is rare among other expatriate communities. With striking uniformity across many Chinese firms, the canteen serves breakfast at 6am, lunch at noon and dinner at 6 pm. Employees wait in line with their personal chopsticks and enamel bowls, which they also wash after each meal. Apart from senior managers, who have cars allocated to them, the company buses are the only means of transport for Chinese expatriates and are used not just for work but also for weekend supermarket trips. On Saturday mornings, the bus takes employees to and from the local Shoprite. On many remote construction sites there are no official holidays for Chinese employees. NFCA is the only Chinese company that has a two-day weekend; its smelter and subcontractor run a six-day working week for Chinese employees, leaving Sunday the only rest day for staff to catch up on sleep, do laundry and talk to family and friends via the internet.

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[20] Interview in Kitwe, 7 July 2009. Discourses about African indolence were an integral part of colonial ideology, but were also used in the post-independence era by the Zambian political elite, from Kaunda to Chiluba, to exalt citizens to contribute to national development. Michael Burawoy found that Zambian workers actually worked harder than many of their counterparts in the world, using rates of absenteeism and strikes as indicators: Burawoy, 'Another Look at the Mineworker', *African Social Research* 14, December 1972.

There are usually basic recreational facilities—a basketball court, facilities for table tennis and badminton; joggers run in circles inside the compound as they do not feel safe running in the neighbourhood. Some companies have a formal curfew at 8pm, and most have an informal rule that employees should notify their superiors if they plan on staying out beyond that time.

The aspect of China House culture that seems most suspicious to Africans is the absence of family life. Only a tiny minority of Chinese expatriates bring their spouses and children to Zambia, whereas most Indians, South Africans and Peruvians come with their families. People wonder how the Chinese can endure the prolonged absence of emotional support and intimate companionship. Initially, many Chinese companies had a policy forbidding long-term stays by employees' family members. When the negative impact on emotional stability and work performance became obvious, companies either relaxed the restrictions for senior managers or provided subsidies to encourage short-term visits. From the employees' point of view, eating bitterness demands sacrifices, and separation from those they love is just one of these. They also point to the competitive education system in the PRC and the exigencies of the job market as reasons not to uproot the whole family. The main compensation for these sacrifices is their salary, which is on average twice or thrice what they would get in China. To Africans and non-Chinese expatriates, prolonged separation from one's family represents yet another example of the extreme asceticism of the Chinese, suggesting a curious streak of inhumanity.

Nor do Chinese employees complain openly about what outsiders would consider to be abnormal conditions of confinement in the China House compound. They have come to accept it as a necessary price for safety in Africa, and see it as an overseas version of *danwei*, the socialist work-unit model. They relish the convenience of company-managed systems of collective consumption, and the time and money they save. In some China Houses, the company continues the tradition of distributing special rations of fruit, juice, milk, shampoo and toothpaste on what employees jokingly call 'Socialism Day'. The Communist Party maintains an inconspicuous presence in state-owned companies in Zambia, with party cell meetings for members to learn about major policy documents and leadership directives. Party discipline is also enforced by regular visits from Beijing. For instance, in the summer of 2013 the CCP Secretary

of CNMC led a delegation to implement a campaign on 'frugality and the mass line' proposed by the new Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping. Senior managers were interviewed one by one, and middle managers in small groups; they were expected to talk in these meetings about how their work style would dovetail with the current Party line.[21]

The younger cohorts have the most difficulty in adjusting to the loneliness and the tight control. Describing the morning commute to work as 'going from a small prison to a large prison', an auditing clerk in her thirties told me how much she missed her toddler and her husband in China. A young graduate technician working in the chemical laboratory of the smelter told me she cried a lot when she could not handle the claustrophobic, monotonous and 'meaningless' work-only life in Zambia. 'Life after work is still work', she said, deploring the lack of contact with the outside world. A common refuge from the erasure of personal life takes the form of 'illegal' cooking inside the dormitory, to which companies usually turn a blind eye. With a rice cooker and an electric stove, preparing their own food at weekends is a popular pastime and a rare opportunity to savour some personal space, style and taste in an otherwise controlled environment. Senior management knows it is only human to allow employees a modicum of freedom and a break from month after month—for many, year after year—of canteen food. Spices and dried goods brought from China and cooked according to home-town recipes bring disproportionate comfort. Making dumplings from scratch, for instance, is a treat the

[21] There is no official or institutional representative for Chinese investors, state or private, in Zambia. The two top Chinese officials posted in Lusaka by Beijing are the Chinese Ambassador, sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Economic and Commercial Counsellor, sent by the Ministry of Commerce. Neither has any legal authority or organizational command over Chinese citizens and corporations in Zambia. By all accounts, the liaison between these two government organizations and the Chinese population is voluntary and random, especially among private investors, taking the form of Chinese New Year banquets, periodic informational sessions, informal counselling about corporate practices, etc. In recent years, these two ministries have been locked in competition in Beijing to be the dominant driver of China–Africa relations, with the Ministry of Commerce reportedly gaining the upper hand over the Foreign Ministry. In Lusaka, the growing power of the former was on public display when it opened an imposing, state-of-the-art office and residential complex for the Economic and Commercial Counsellor and his staff in 2013, several kilometres away from the Chinese Embassy. On the rivalry between the two ministries, see Lucy Corkin, 'Redefining Foreign Policy Impulses toward Africa: the Roles of the MFA, the MOFCOM and China EXIM Bank', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2011.

Chinese offer friends who visit on Sundays, even though it is logistically laborious and messy in the absence of a real kitchen.

In the construction sector, central SOEs practice the same kind of control over their Chinese employees. Unlike South African expatriates, who live in apartments in town, complete with maid service and a four-wheel-drive personal vehicle, Chinese building-site workers live in spartan, make-shift housing, sometimes converted from cargo containers. They cook their own meals and, in the most remote sites, even raise chickens and goats as a source of meat. Their salaries are usually paid quarterly or bi-annually, often deposited directly into the employee's account in China in the name of security, convenience and forced saving. The result is that Chinese construction-site management and workers have little local currency to spend, while the remoteness of many projects reinforces the proclivity to minimize local interactions. Based on an analysis of the cost structures in bids submitted by Chinese and non-Chinese contractors, it seems that on average Chinese site managers cost 30 per cent less than other expatriate managers, due to their inferior living and employment conditions, listed under the rubric of 'preliminary and general expenses' in bid documents. Zambian officials and Chinese managers alike maintain that this 30 per cent difference is the reason their bids always outcompete other contractors in terms of price.

Other lives

In copper mining, too, the monastic and reclusive Chinese lifestyle contrasts with that of other expatriates. Until 2009, Indian expatriates working for KCM in Chingola secured their own private housing to rent, but the company found the local market too unregulated to provide stability for their employees and eventually built a residential compound for Indian middle managers, which locals nicknamed 'Bombay Village'. In 2013 it housed around seventy families in three-bedroom apartments with a proper kitchen and living room. Unlike the Chinese, most Indians bring their families to Zambia. Expatriate housewives form their own ladies' club to do charity work for local communities; the children go to local schools and find playmates among their neighbours in the compound. Indian women have often had to give up their own professional careers, as teachers or nurses, for instance, so that the family can stay together, despite the loss of income. Each household has its own car and daily routine, and eats its own family meals. When their children reach

the critical secondary-school stage, the whole family will move back to India or to another country where they can find quality education.

At MCM, expatriates find their own accommodation in different parts of Kitwe. There is no collective or company housing district. The need to maintain individual family life—for example, by hiring Zambian maids or getting to know Zambian teachers through their children's school—compels more interaction with local Zambians than the Chinese, whose personal lives are organized collectively by the company. Scattered in different residential neighbourhoods in town, expatriate managers at KCM and MCM are also more involved in local communities through their religious affiliations. A Peruvian manager at MCM who had worked in Zambia for ten years explained:

> The [Peruvian] wives who came with their husbands volunteer for orphanages. Just last week, they held a *braai* and donated the proceeds to help local kids. I sit on the board of a Catholic congregation that runs classes for girls, teaching them sewing, French, computer skills. Some younger Peruvian guys even meet their local girlfriends there.

Another contrast in managerial ethos lies in the greater entrepreneurial ambition of expatriates from global private firms. An MCM manager head-hunted by KCM for a senior post had turned down the offer after learning about the tyranny of the Commerce Department over production staff at the 'Indian' firm. But he is open to other international or local opportunities, whereas his Chinese counterparts find it hard to compete in a truly international labour market. 'KCM tried recruiting me in 2008, and Glencore was enticing me to go to Congo with an irresistible salary', he said with a smile. 'I could retire after a few years with that salary. But because of my family, and because I like it here in Zambia, I declined.' Having obtained his residency status, he talked to me excitedly about his plan to invest in a $120,000, four-bedroom home on a large lot in Kitwe.

Underlying Chinese expatriates' reclusiveness is a palpable sense of fear and insecurity. In face of the myth about Chinese firms using convict labour—which, despite Beijing's denial and a total lack of evidence, has gone viral in Africa, disseminated by think-tanks, government reports and election campaign speeches, as well as popular websites—and other negative publicity, including a critical 2011 Human Rights Watch report, Chinese managers have tended to retreat into helpless silence. Such

cultural assaults are seen as confirmation of China's victimization by the West, a view of history long nurtured by the CCP government. The Party Secretary at the Chambishi Copper Smelter put forward a common view:

> China has missed out on all previous historical opportunities to develop as quickly as the West since the Qing Dynasty, when the West had their chance to go get resources from the rest of the world . . . Then we had socialism and the planned economy, which built a good base for today's economic growth. Look at India: I see headaches—so poor, so little education, bad roads . . . China is better because of state investment under the planned economy era. But the copper in China is of low quality, so we need to go overseas. The media in the West then speaks of exploitation. That's a terrible word . . . Because our mine had been abandoned for a long time, we had to invest more than the others, and we cannot pay wages as high as MCM and KCM. But they call this exploitation.

Uniquely among expatriates in Zambia, Chinese SOE managers, who bear the brunt of popular criticisms about the PRC's 'going out' as a nation, resort to the state-sanctioned, subaltern doxa that casts China as the victim, and embrace the 'eating bitterness' ethos as the essence of Chinese identity. The ideology brings cultural empowerment and solace in a hostile and foreign world, even though the cultural boundaries it draws obfuscate the exploitative relationship between Chinese state capital and themselves as its employees.

4. China and the Zambian Working Class

In assessing the impact of China, the interests of governing elites have to be considered separately from those of African labour. Similarly, aggregate growth figures are poor indicators of the living conditions of ordinary Africans. Thanks to a spike in global copper prices, driven by the 'super-cycle' of commodity demand from China and India, Zambia's annual growth rate averaged 7 per cent for 2006–13. Foreign direct investment has revived output and job creation in the copper-mining and construction sectors. From 2011, the Patriotic Front government's increase in the minimum wage benefited the many Zambians working in low-paid casual jobs, while the hike in mineral royalty taxes and rural infrastructural projects raised hopes for a new era of national prosperity. Popular euphoria in the mining communities soon subsided, however, when it became clear that the tax revenues would benefit Lusaka, not the

Copperbelt. In mining townships such as Kitwe, Chambishi, Chingola, and Chililabombwe, people complain daily about the deterioration of roads filled with potholes, strike-prone public schools where teachers go unpaid, and hospitals which lack medicine. In many densely populated compounds, miners still live without electricity or plumbing. Strikes are virtually illegal and the mining companies have installed surveillance cameras to identify the 'instigators' of industrial action.

For Zambian workers, the distinction between Chinese state capital and global private capital does not amount to much. A labour regime predicated on low-wage exploitation is no better than one driven by casualization and retrenchment. Both entail permanent precariousness, a reality that is restructuring the life-world of the Zambian working class. Hanging onto their current jobs as best they can, many copper miners—often the only wage earner in a household with six or more dependents—find their familial financial responsibilities far outweigh their earning capacity. One of the main functions of the trade unions since the privatization of the mines, and the cuts in subsidies and in-kind benefits, has been organizing micro-loans for their members. Barclays, Bayport and Finance Bank have found an eager market among the minority of Zambians with formal employment contracts. The loans come with interest rates of around 20 per cent and a repayment period tied to the length of the worker's contract. The mining companies operate an automatic deduction system to repay the banks from workers' pay cheques.

According to the unions and Human Resource managers, over 90 per cent of the workforce has applied for at least one loan. Quite a few get zero take-home pay after all the deductions, leaving them little motivation to even show up for work. When company-mediated loans are not sufficient, many resort to 'shylocks'—loan sharks charging 50 per cent interest with a one-month repayment period—and find themselves mired in debt traps. Unions and management alike complain about miners squandering their money on drinking, womanizing and second-hand cars, resulting in marital disputes, absenteeism and low productivity. Others use the loans to invest in sideline businesses such as a chicken run, a market stall or a taxi. But most of these ventures cannot survive any slight vagaries in the economy, and end up as financial losses that require more loans.

Ex-proletarians?

Visiting miners in the compound by the KCM mine, I was greeted by an incongruous sight: private cars parked outside makeshift mud houses, their flimsy roofs precariously held down only by rocks or bags of sand. On a Saturday afternoon, with the whole township congregated at the football stadium to watch a local soccer match, the roads looked like a jam-packed second-hand car show. I was with a trade-union shop steward nicknamed CNN, who has worked underground at Nchanga for twenty years. He had seen it all, having worked under the Zambian state company ZCCM, Anglo-American and now Vedanta. But his major source of income over the past thirteen years was not his job at the mine but his television repair shop (hence the nickname). In a small space rented from the privatized racket club, old VHS machines were piled up on the shelves and television sets dropped off by his customers were stacked on all sides. His take-home salary was about K1m, around $200, but the repair business brought in a monthly K3m, or $600. He complained that the mindset of the miners today was very different from the past; there was no commitment to mining and no illusion about depending on the mines for security—or the government.

Another KCM miner, Chilando, summed up the changing worldview: 'We are moving from a culture of employment to a culture of entrepreneurship. We are on our own. There is no security in jobs.' As a second-generation miner, his experience is emblematic of the radical change in the conditions and mentality of Zambian labour. His father worked as an underground miner at Luanshya and returned to his village to farm after he retired in 1979—a typical trajectory for that time. Born in the township, Chilando has no village to retreat to. He joined ZCCM in 1996 at the age of 24 as an underground worker. Articulate and thoughtful, he recalled,

> I was walking through town one day when I stumbled upon Chiluba's visit to Nchanga to announce the privatization of the mines and the sale of housing to sitting tenants. He was politicking and people were clapping. People had never expected to own their own homes. Being a Grade 8 worker and single, I was at the end of the long waiting list. After they sold all the houses, I realized I was left with no house . . . Chiluba promised a rosy future which was never realized. But today we do not see any future . . . I am using my K800,000 loan to build a house. Once you can settle your family and don't have to pay rent, you can be self-employed. I will venture to set up my business after I build my house. The loans we have now are good for moving

> forward because they help us build our own homes, buy cars and invest in business opportunities for ourselves or our wives.

The generational divide demarcated by privatization operates as a major fault line between Zambian miners. In Chambishi there is a sharp cleavage between veteran miners, who started their careers under state ownership and who benefited from the sales of ZCCM housing stock, and their younger counterparts who missed the boat. The division shows up in residential patterns and unequal financial capacity for entrepreneurship. Older and nicer homes built in the ZCCM era, with electricity and plumbing, are found in the township section in Chambishi. Some of these veteran miners have the financial wherewithal to run small businesses, selling groceries and cellphone recharge cards, or supplying parts or services to the mines. Ex-trade unionists now run a small business association from their homes. Others have moved elsewhere, renting their homes to generate an income. Glaringly adjacent to the township is the compound, where younger miners and casual workers live. Shoddy mud houses cram together amidst open sewage, and the whole area is strewn with white mealie bags that residents piece together as fences to create some privacy. There is no electricity or indoor plumbing. Abject poverty is in plain view—children too poor to go to school, young men and women who drink their days away in rowdy neighbourhood bars serving strong, dirt-cheap local brews. These divides—based on generation, employment status, and financial well-being—fragment even the most organized segment of the working class from within.

The influx of foreign investment and growth figures that inspire the rhetoric of a 'rising' Africa coexist incongruously with increasing precariousness in employment and livelihood. Despite the rise in global copper prices, most mining communities witness pervasive poverty. More taxation does not necessarily translate into more social spending, just as aggregate economic growth does not always bring about better livelihoods for the people.

5. CONSTRAINTS AND CONTRASTS

'Global China' is neither the imperialist hegemon feared and condemned by the West, nor the egalitarian partner of win-win development trumpeted by Beijing. Opening the Pandora's box of 'varieties of capital',

this essay has argued that Chinese state capital has a peculiar logic, practices and ethos of its own, distinct from those of global private capital. The experience of Zambia over the past fifteen years suggests that Chinese state capital can be both more accommodating *and* more dangerous to African development than profit-maximizing global private capital, depending on the political will of the local governing elite and the bargaining power of organized labour; the comparison between copper and construction throws into sharp relief the centrality of sector-differentiated politics, on both sides. It is also clear that Chinese state investors have no capacity to undermine the prevailing neoliberal order, nor any interest in replacing it.

Several recent studies concur with the argument made here that the outcomes of Chinese investment in Africa are determined by improvisation and negotiation in specific political-economic locales. Even in the developing world, there is no guarantee that Chinese domination can be purchased with massive investment by Beijing. Debunking what the Western media has touted as the 'Angola model'—China extending 'oil-backed loans' to Angola, exchanging resources for infrastructure—Lucy Corkin has brought to light the formidable negotiating capacity of the Angolan elite in dealing with China.[22] From the pricing of its oil shipment to the PRC, to thwarting Chinese companies' access to equity in Angolan oil fields, negotiating for higher local content in concessional loans and diversifying its international credit lines, the Angolan political elite are far from helpless. Autocratic, corrupt, but seasoned by decades of involvement in a proxy Cold War, its agency has to be foregrounded in any discussion about China in Angola.

In Sudan, as Luke Patey has shown, Chinese oil companies have had to navigate a much more treacherous political terrain, negotiating with and sometimes submitting to local leaders. It was Khartoum that drove out US oil interests and imposed a joint-venture agreement on Chinese, Malaysian, Canadian and Indian investors to develop the Sudanese oilfield. Like the CNMC in Zambia, the China National Petroleum Corporation ventured overseas in the mid-90s with little international experience and relatively backward technology. Its managers were 'babes in the wood', in the eyes of Western oil executives, and were using Sudan

[22] Lucy Corkin, *Uncovering African Agency: Angola's Management of China's Credit Lines*, Farnham, Surrey 2013.

as training ground for further global expansion. The steep learning curve they had to ascend involved civil war, armed attacks by local communities and negotiations with the newly formed and precarious South Sudanese regime.[23] In Latin America, too, recent comparative studies of Chinese state investment in mining and oil underscore how Beijing's economic statecraft is constrained by the institutional structures of these different industries and resource markets, and the regulatory capacity of the respective host countries.[24]

Analyses of the fragmented and competitive interests among Chinese state players—for example, corporate interests of the China Development Bank and national oil companies against Beijing's policy interests—also caution against the facile assumption that 'global China' is a grand strategy, seamlessly and effectively deployed by an autocratic party-state in Beijing.[25] Back in Zambia in summer 2014, when the Chinese director in charge of the Chambishi Special Economic Zone looked out of the windows of his palatial office, he saw many empty factory premises waiting for investors to take up residence. Time will tell if the zone will flourish or falter, but at present it seems that the Chinese state has been in no position to command its capital to fulfil Zambians' development dreams.

[23] Luke Patey, *The New Kings of Crude: China, India, and the Global Struggle for Oil in Sudan and South Sudan*. London 2014.

[24] Ana Cristina Alves, 'Chinese Economic Statecraft: A Comparative Study of China's Oil-backed Loans in Angola and Brazil', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2013; Amos Irwin and Kevin Gallagher, 'Chinese Mining in Latin America: A Comparative Perspective', *Journal of Environment Development*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2013; Elizabeth Economy and Michael Levi, *By All Means Necessary: How China's Resource Quest is Changing the World*, Oxford 2014.

[25] Erica Downs, 'China Development Bank's Oil Loans: Pursuing Policy—and Profit', *China Economic Quarterly*, December 2011.

TIMOTHY BRENNAN

SUBALTERN STAKES

With dialectics, the mob comes to the top.[1]
—Friedrich Nietzsche

Frantz fanon, or at least his American translators, famously wrote of a dying colonialism.* If today we hear of a dying postcolonialism, it is because no amount of parsing can rid the term of its many ironies. Alongside the 'post' of a supposed aftermath lies the metallic reality of a penetrating, if at times indirect, imperialism—still deepening in Puerto Rico and Palestine, and recently expanding into significant new territory in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Ukraine, replete with their pro-Western juntas and complicit local satrapies. Colonialism, it seems, is not altogether dead. The immiseration wrought by capital continues to express itself in broadly cultural, not only military or financial, ways, displaying all the hallmarks of that older system of resettlement and re-education. Quite apart from the Western dominance of global news, entertainment and trends in higher education, a massive diaspora of semi-permanent legions of Western tourists, expatriate fun-seekers, missionaries, mercenaries, academic theorists, real estate speculators, and diplomatic ensembles, all make the late-nineteenth-century era of the Berlin Treaty look comparatively underdeveloped.

The term 'postcolonial' is constitutively troubled, then, since it carries with it the strategic temporizing of its inception—the incongruity of its discursive tones and themes, in contrast with a rather blunter reality of imperial propaganda, foreign torture chambers and the stealing of others' lands. Against this stark backdrop, the debates prompted by Vivek Chibber's magisterial *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* seem a little narrow.[2] To lay bare the inner workings of the influential academic field known as 'postcolonial theory', as he sets

out to do, would first require clarity about this catachresis at the core of its idea—some account of how the earlier traditions of anti-colonial thought suddenly, and violently, became *post*colonial in a hostile takeover in the metropolitan academy of the mid-1980s.

Postcolonial studies emerged uncertainly, without even a settled name, primarily within academic departments of literature. In retrospect, certain signature events appear now to have helped call it into life: the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, the conference on 'Europe and its Others' at Essex University in 1984, and the special issue on 'Race, Writing, and Difference' from *Critical Inquiry* (1985), the most prestigious American journal in the humanities. As the postcolonial began to coalesce around a number of related themes, its brief acquired consistency: to expand university curricula in order to include non-Western sources, to uncover and promote historical acts of native resistance, and to challenge the misrepresentations of imperial history, forging a new vocabulary to contest Eurocentrism. On all of these grounds, the initiative proved very successful and its effects—not only in scholarship but in mainstream publishing and the arts—have, over the years, been largely positive.

Othering Europe

Although the creation of English departments, postcolonial inquiry was far from only literary. Already by the early 1970s, disciplinary revolutions prompted by the unsettlings of Franco-German 'theory' had yielded mixed kinds of writing in the literary field itself—works of philosophy, really, that combined the techniques of ethnography and history in a language speckled with Marxist and anarchist terms and attitudes. To most in the humanities at the time, postcolonial studies simply *was* cultural theory in one of its specialized institutional forms—that is, predominantly continental, and largely psychoanalytic, semiotic, and phenomenological. These particular strands of the philosophical past were now wedded, as though they possessed a genetic compatibility, to a critique of Eurocentrism. 'Postcolonial theory', then, was the name

* I would like to thank Keya Ganguly for her help with this essay.

[1] *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche,* vol. 16, ed. Oscar Levy, London 1909–13, p. 12. Nietzsche loathed subalterns, denouncing Socratic dialectics for placing the lower classes at centre stage.

[2] London and New York 2013.

that came to be affixed to an unlikely marriage—an othering of Europe articulating itself in the concepts of a specialized group of European philosophers and their various late twentieth-century disciples in an ambiguous rejection of 'Western Man'. The content of this theoretical amalgam in all of its variants—drawn primarily from Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger by way of postwar interpreters such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault—stitched together a number of plausible, but not obviously related, themes: scepticism towards the emancipatory potential of the Enlightenment, the idea of 'otherness' as an ontological fact (in the form of being or alterity), and the death of the historical subject as a willed or active self. With unfeigned militancy, theory set about codifying forms of resistance that explicitly precluded Marxist contributions to anti-colonial independence, not simply as the by-product of its search for fresh paradigms, but as a central and self-defining *telos*.

Postcolonial studies gained momentum in an environment marked by the end of the postwar economic boom (1972), the media rhetoric of what Fred Halliday at the time called the 'Second Cold War' (1983), and the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989). Under these pressures, the thematic emphasis tended to shift away from wars of manoeuvre to the mutual complicity of colonizer and colonized, from class antagonisms to migrancy and 'sly civility', from a struggle over political sovereignty to a rejection of the so-called oppressiveness of modernity, on the one hand, and the 'productivist' bias of political economy, on the other. This volatile ensemble, militant in tone but resonating with more conventional attitudes in the general culture, swept victoriously through the humanities and into the arts, anthropology, history, geography, and political science. As the laboratories of theory, literature departments found themselves in the vanguard. No field was left untouched by their initiatives under the sign of 'the subject', 'difference', and the 'interstices'. The irrepressible élan of the larger movement made proclamations of a 'Copernican break' seem reasonable. New journals came into being to give the new agenda a voice—*Interventions, Postcolonial Studies, Transition, Public Culture*—and older venerated journals were retooled to fit the new dispensation. A pantheon was born, whose principal figures are now widely known—Edward Said, whose *Orientalism* was supposed to be the field's founding document, but with elaborations later provided—in a very different vein—by scholars like Gayatri Spivak, Peter Hulme, Abdul JanMohamed, Homi Bhabha, and many others.

The emergence of subalternism

Subaltern studies, by contrast, had a very different aetiology. It was developed by mostly Indian social historians rather than cultural critics, and before 1988 remained influential, but only relatively so, and within a small orbit. Launched in 1982 by Ranajit Guha in a three-volume series on colonial India—it would later grow to more than ten volumes—this was above all a rebellion against the elite historiography of the Indian freedom movement. By reading between the lines of official documents, or extrapolating from new archival discoveries, they sought to provide a portrait of the intelligence and improvisational skill of peasant insurgents. If their Marxism was somewhat unorthodox, they nevertheless drew their inspiration from Antonio Gramsci's supple theories of hegemony, the state, 'common sense', and, of course, the 'subaltern' itself, one of his major coinages in the *Prison Notebooks*.[3] Guha's teacher had been instrumental in bringing Gramsci to the attention of intellectuals in West Bengal, where his writings had been enthusiastically discussed since the 1950s—in the translations of the US edition of 1957. The movement also took some of its impetus from important precedents in the antinomian histories from below produced by veterans of the Communist Party Historians Group in Britain, especially perhaps Eric Hobsbawm's *Primitive Rebels,* Rodney Hilton's *The English Rising of 1381* and Edward Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*.

By 1986, the focus of the subaltern group was beginning to shift away from the spontaneous consciousness of peasant rebellion. In place of anecdotal accounts of local struggles, one was more likely to find a sweeping interrogation of 'modernity'. As one of the original members Sumit Sarkar himself lamented, the presence of subalterns in their work waned, replaced by a stress on historical ruptures, the dangers of universalism, and the 'fragment'—an open-ended, ahistorical datum offering itself up to hermeneutical improvisation while resisting incorporation into a theory of the social whole. Truth came to be defined more as *need*—that is, as what one could make out of the record for one's purposes. History, the suspect progressivism of a narrowly empiricist historical materialism, was held to be inferior to subaltern *memory* and

[3] For a sense of how 'theory' affected the reading of Gramsci in India, see the proceedings of a workshop on Gramsci and South Asia at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta 1987, repr. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 30 January 1988.

the felt realities of indigenous 'culture'. Subaltern studies, in short, had discovered postcolonial theory.

In time the relationship came to be formalized. The official enlistment of subaltern studies into postcolonial theory took place when Spivak, along with Guha, edited a collection of the group's essays from the 1980s, with a foreword by Said. *Selected Subaltern Studies* (1988) essentially inducted them into the larger field, although this required a good deal of conceptual translation. In order to welcome subaltern studies into the emergent camp of postcolonial theory, Spivak had to get around the problem that its historians were focused on individual and collective subjects whom they had described as sentient, feeling, struggling actors in history, as opposed to representational 'traces'. Spivak's delicate operation was to allow 'subjects' to be both there and not there at the same time, permitting tactical allusions to the (illusory) subject in pursuit of a larger project, which she called the 'critical force of anti-humanism'. It was by entering this discursive milieu that subaltern studies acquired the theoretical credentials that gave it international prominence, in turn rendering it a conduit for postcolonial notions in the social sciences.

Chibber's intervention

Vivek Chibber's study took shape in the force fields of this history, if not always in full awareness of its details. A professor of sociology at New York University, Chibber had already written a favourably received book, *Locked in Place: State-Building and Late Industrialization in India*.[4] This finely textured study of the post-colonial Indian state explored the dynamic relative power of bourgeois interests in the demobilization of labour. The long chapter on the 'myth of the developmental bourgeoisie', in particular, anticipates some of his arguments in the new book, proposing, for example, that the new India—unlike China and Russia—had set out along a capitalist path as though to show that 'planning need not presuppose the abolition of property, but could, in fact, be harnessed to the engine of capitalist accumulation'.[5] Its development was blocked, however, by 'the widespread and organized resistance of the business class'.[6]

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[4] Princeton 2003.
[5] *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*, p. 3.
[6] *Postcolonial Theory*, p. 85.

Still, little in this earlier study would prepare anyone for the event that *Postcolonial Theory* became, not least because Chibber had never travelled in postcolonial circles and was entirely unknown there. Accused by some of caricaturing the subaltern project, of being inauthentically postcolonial, too Europe-focused, or hyperbolic, the book has risen above much of this criticism to be respectfully discussed in specialist sociology journals, highbrow French Maoist reviews, Indonesian newspapers, American crossover magazines, and the blogosphere.[7] Featured at *Historical Materialism* conferences in New Delhi, New York, and London in 2013, and debated in academic conferences and round tables, it triggered revealing exchanges between Chibber and his detractors. His ripostes have been vigorous, enlightening, and for the most part, persuasive.

The arguments laid out in the book, after all, are nothing if not well-supported, at least on the grounds that he chooses. Chibber's procedure is to restate the claims of subaltern studies—his paradigm case for postcolonial theory generally—letting it speak for itself in lengthy quotations, and then submitting these claims to a series of tests. This is very thoroughly done, and it is among the most distinctive features of the book. His conclusion is that the subaltern studies understanding of capitalism is flawed, its portrait of Marxism distorted and tendentious, and its insistence on the cultural difference of subaltern consciousness uncomfortably essentialist. In fact, it is a new, if concealed and self-alienating, return to the orientalist claim that rationalism, secularism, and realism are disqualified from being of the 'East', that only the absolutely peripheral has found a space outside the hold of the ideologically polluted West, and then only so long as it is fixed in its otherness, impervious to any other otherness.

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[7] Among the most balanced and informative discussions of the book is Pranav Jani's 'Marxism and the Future of Postcolonial Theory', *International Socialist Review* 92, Spring 2014. For a highly informed scholarly treatment, see the Ho-fung Hung roundtable, featuring George Steinmetz, Bruce Cumings and other social scientists, in 'Review Symposium on Vivek Chibber's *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*', *American Sociological Association*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2014. For critiques of Chibber from the left that demonstrate real familiarity with postcolonial theory—many reviews do not—see, for example, Julian Murphet, 'No Alternative', *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 2014, and Axel Andersson, 'Obscuring Capitalism: Vivek Chibber's Critique of Postcolonial Theory', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 6 November 2013. For a defence of subaltern studies against Chibber, see Partha Chatterjee, 'Subaltern Studies and *Capital*', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14 September 2013, and Gayatri Spivak (cited below).

Building his case on a close reading of three of the principals affiliated with the subaltern studies collective—Guha, Partha Chatterjee, and Dipesh Chakrabarty—Chibber fixes his attention on what he considers the cornerstones of their supposed revision. These involve postulating the failure of capital to universalize itself in India; and the consequent inability of the Indian elites, in contrast with their European predecessors, to achieve hegemony by way of democratic institutions: the Indian bourgeoisie was not heroic but timid, and Indian subalterns were marked by an obdurate cultural difference resistant to Western norms—religious modes of thought primarily, but also practices of kinship and loyalty that made Western modernity a closed book.

Chibber refutes these assertions effectively, with a great deal of evidence and counter-argument, amplifying contentions found in others before him.[8] He explains, reasonably, that the subalternists confuse universality with homogeneity; that, contrary to their flattened portrait of capital's logic, its own history even in Europe was as uneven, non-linear and complex as in the global periphery. Moreover, it is undeniable that the material needs of life—food, housing, and shelter—motivate subaltern classes everywhere. Struggle over them is, in fact, the *universal* condition of conflict between elites and the poor. For its part, the bourgeoisie of Europe displayed the same timidity and treachery as its Eastern counterparts, and, like the latter, had to be pushed from below in order to make possible the establishment of basic democratic institutions.

A history misperceived

Here, however, despite the argument's firm ground, we begin to see *Postcolonial Theory*'s lack of contact with the ideological universe it set out to diagnose. To claim, as Chibber does, that subaltern studies is postcolonial theory's 'most illustrious representative' is not only to reverse the order of influence, but to fail to see that internalizing the already entrenched positions of postcoloniality allowed the subalternists to acquire a more general reach.[9] So it is not that postcolonial theory 'became influential'—as he writes—when it allied itself with subaltern studies, but the other way around.

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[8] For instance, Tom Brass and Sumit Sarkar in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, London and New York 2000, pp. 127–62, 300–23.

[9] *Postcolonial Theory*, p. 5.

The book's reception has to this degree been frustrating. It is as though on one side we find in boldface a renewed emphasis on class, revolution and capital; on the other, 'subaltern thought'; but in neither, any attention to how structural adjustment, World Bank austerity measures, or Natopolis are mediated by living agents, repudiating the claim that capital's imposed limitations are natural laws impervious to the rebels' logic. Between Chibber and his detractors, thought and structure have been kept safely distant from one another. On one side of the agon, materialism appears as a bulwark against the vagaries of the contradictory; on the other, the contingent is home to a sacred principle, a barrier against all determinations. Since the politics of subaltern studies took shape in the elevation of signifying or discursive regimes, we might say that the problem of the *literary* reverberates throughout the debates around Chibber's book: in part, as he would have it, in the form of an idealizing, culturalist contamination, but also—in a move he neglects—as the concern of one of the most vital currents of twentieth-century Marxism itself. To this degree, the literary remains the blind spot of an otherwise admirable polemic.

What would it take to challenge fully the claims of postcolonial theory? It would, at the very least, involve questioning the field's self-conception as a Copernican break; and it would take submitting its purportedly anti-Eurocentric theoretical basis to greater scrutiny, in a more intellectual-historical investigation going beyond Chibber's comparative study of capital transition and bourgeois revolution. Both lines of questioning take us, somewhat unexpectedly, back to the interwar era.

Seeing itself as an inaugural leap, postcolonial theory makes an extreme claim: that all scholarship in the west before it should be considered nothing less than 'an embarrassment'—as one set of commentators put it—marked by shameful neglect of third-world emergence and non-Western ways of being.[10] But such a charge elides the insurgent sociologies, oral histories, and black and ethnic studies of the preceding generation; it moves one to write, as postcolonial critics frequently have, as though there had been no early twentieth-century scholarship on the impact of global capitalist expansion, no economic theorizations of the system known—for the first time—as imperialism itself; no critical

[10] Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman, 'Introduction: The Globalization of Fiction/the Fiction of Globalization', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 100, no. 3, 2001.

explorations of the political aesthetics of the Latin American 'boom' in the 1970s; and, for that matter, no dependency or world systems theory.

Anti-colonialism in Europe

Key precursors were left out of the conversation, even as their ideas were often quietly borrowed: Jean-Paul Sartre and *Les Temps modernes*; the Chilean media critique led by Armand Mattelart in the early 1970s; the writings of Oliver Cromwell Cox on race and class; Basil Davidson on African state-formation; Leo Wiener on the role of Africa in the pre-Columbian New World; the acute imperial histories of James Morris, V. G. Kiernan, and Eric Wolf; C. L. R. James on Lenin and black liberation. All at once these rich contributions—really part of a substantial, interlocking system of writing in the broadly Marxist environs of critical theory, left philology and the solidarity movements—were abruptly severed from the present.

Postcolonial theory thus implausibly presented itself as a kind of 'year zero' of anti-colonial thought; the prevailing assumption has been that the early twentieth century, prior to postwar decolonization, was 'a period of largely uncontested imperialist enthusiasm'.[11] But this is to overlook the years between the two world wars, when European consciousness of the colonies abruptly changed. A new culture of anti-colonialism grew up and thrived in the art columns of left newspapers, cabarets of the political underground, and the cultural groups of the Popular Front. Shock waves from the Russian revolution on Europe's eastern periphery were dramatically and immediately felt throughout Asia and the Middle East. International organizations sprang up, bringing emissaries from throughout the colonies, meeting European intellectuals on a formally equal footing in a single front with a shared anti-imperial agenda.[12] Intellectual ferment on this scale was a rarety in European history. The sponsorship of anti-colonial rhetoric and practice created a massive

[11] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York 1993, p. xix.

[12] M. N. Roy, in a familiar kind of criticism, rightly excoriated the Third International for its 'defective understanding of the situation in other countries', and for 'projecting Russian problems' onto their realities (*The Communist International*, Bombay 1943, pp. 42–3). But like others, he recognized that the International created networks, devised rhetorical weapons, and gave material assistance that became models for postwar decolonization.

repertoire of images, tropes, and vocabularies that hovered over everyone's thinking—from right to left—throughout the period.

Sensitive engagement with non-western cultures and thinkers—in the work, among others, of Ilya Ehrenburg, M. N. Roy, Larissa Reissner, Nancy Cunard, and Sergei Tretiakov—a deeply ethical resistance to empire—in Willi Münzenberg, Rosa Luxemburg, César Vallejo, George Padmore, and Ho Chi Minh, all active in Europe during these years—an examination of the aesthetic and epistemological rubrics of colonial rule—in Carl Einstein, Paul Nizan, Diego Rivera, and Alejo Carpentier—these were initiated not by the postcolonial turn of the 1980s and after, but much earlier, between the world wars, and by intellectuals white and black, European and non-European, in the broad ambit of the international communist movement. Chibber mentions in passing Karl Kautsky, Leon Trotsky, and others who explored the dynamics of agrarian economy and uneven development, but the sense of this broader politico-cultural history is missing, and its vexing relationship to theory and method goes undiagnosed.

Racism in philosophy

As for postcolonial theory, we need a better sense of its own prehistory, above all, with respect to the neo-racialisms of the interwar philosophical *demi-monde* upon which it drew. For what needs to be acknowledged are the ways in which postwar French thought wove together the threads of a German philosophy least compatible with it. The main strands in this fabric were, firstly, the key interwar reception of Nietzsche's earlier *Grosse Politik,* the 'great politics' of a new cosmopolitan elite that would beckon resentful proletarians to go to the colonies where they might escape socialist enslavement and rediscover their manhood by bringing colonial subjects into line;[13] secondly, the *Kriegsideologie* of Martin Heidegger and others who sought to save German civilization with a new imperium enriched by German metaphysical depth, fighting the shallow shopkeeper mentality of the twin behemoths, Washington and Moscow; and, finally, Edmund Husserl's phenomenological paeans to the European mind as against the intellectual poverty of its global minions.[14] Leading

[13] *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche,* vol. 9, pp. 215–17; vol. 10, p. 78; vol. 12, p. 196; vol. 13, p. 224.

[14] Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* [1935], New York 1965, pp. 149–92.

the postwar enthusiasms—and creating a paradigm for so much of what theory later became—were Georges Bataille, who playfully subverted the ideals of anticolonial liberation in *The Accursed Share* (1949), and Alexandre Kojève, whose profound influence on postwar French thought is commonly recognized.[15]

Europe, which Kojève called 'the vanguard of humanity', faced the spectre of its own end, he argued, in the postwar 'Sino-Soviet actualization of Robespierrian Bonapartism'. Sneering at the 'accession of Togoland to independence' and 'the self-determination of the Papuans', Kojève considered such movements little more than a communist bid to eliminate 'the numerous more or less anachronistic sequels to its pre-revolutionary past'.[16] If such pronouncements were idiosyncratic, they are nonetheless signposts along the route that postcolonial theory travelled—in its own mind 'subversively'—from the murkier side of that same Europe it wanted to provincialize.

The more immediate theoretical models for postcolonial theory were, of course, Foucault and Derrida, though very little of the disturbing implications of their affiliations with these interwar ideas have been mooted. This has to do in part with the ways in which a theoretical eclecticism confounds the past, generating insights but also blocking, or at least muddying others. To take one example, although *Orientalism* is generally considered Foucauldian, Said explicitly distanced himself from those aspects of Foucault's thought deriving from Heideggerian sources. While known for his study of orientalist 'discourse', Said understood by that term a concept derived ultimately from a Marxist theory of ideology.[17] His argument might be said to bear on ideology in a more

[15] Published during the first surge of postwar decolonization, Bataille's *The Accursed Share* (vol. 1, [1949], New York 1988; vols. 2 and 3 [1976], New York 1993), seized upon the watchwords of the independence movements—freedom, political representation, development—in order to explode them from within. Alluding to the new 'world situation' of decolonization—and his own fear of its Sovietization (vol. 1, pp. 147–68)—his study took as its central term 'sovereignty', which he wrestled away from its associations with the independence movements so that it came to mean rather the cruelty of sexual freedom.

[16] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, Ithaca 1969, pp. 160–1.

[17] I make this argument more fully in 'Humanism, Philology, and Imperialism' (in *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right*, New York 2006); and in 'Edward Said as a Lukácsian Critic: Modernism and Empire', *College Literature*, vol. 40, no. 4, Fall 2013.

traditional sense—in that his conception of discourse, unlike Foucault's, does not preclude the idea of guilty agents of power, people with agendas and privileged interests, constituencies of active belief and policy, or the basic *injustice* of the orientalist worldview. It was more than contradictory that these multiple interrogations of the human as agent, as historical subject—deconstruction's insistence on the written over the oral and the vernacular, say, taken to be examples of a suspect 'metaphysics of presence'—would be so widely attacked and undermined by the very forces that were seeking, apparently, to promote the emergence of peripheral peoples.[18]

Philological traditions

These half-understood collisions of various traditions attain a greater salience when we begin to give a name to the cultural and literary theories of Marxism against which the interwar philosophical right devised its counter-attack. Our current renderings of intellectual history downplay severely the extent to which Marxism could be seen as belonging to 'philology' in the expanded sense in which Erich Auerbach used the term in his 1924 German translation of Giambattista Vico's *The New Science*. There he defined it as 'anything that we now call the humanities: the whole story in the strict sense, sociology, national economy, the history of religion, language, law and art.'[19] Both Marxism and philology adhered to historical forms of knowing at a time when they were under intense attack from Saussure's followers—'neo-lalists' in Gramsci's terms—logical positivism, and the emergent formalism of Prague linguistics. Interwar Marxism found a common cause with philology in that both looked to the sedimentary traces of a past, to the creativity of the unnamed, unheralded, subaltern elements of society. Both were sceptical of the philosophical move to evacuate the historical subject and to insert, in its stead, a fetishized subject of writing—what Gramsci sardonically dubbed 'calligraphism'.

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[18] Chibber's argument would have benefited from exploring the bases of subaltern essentialism in the broader circles of 'theory' itself. See Ian Almond's provocative study *The New Orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard*, London and New York 2007.

[19] Erich Auerbach, 'Einleitung', in Giambattista Vico, *Die neue Wissenschaft*, Munich 1924, p. 23 (my translation).

Gramsci himself marks the linkage explicitly: 'The experience upon which the philosophy of praxis is based cannot be schematized; it is history in its infinite variety and multiplicity, the study of which can give birth to philology as a method of scholarship for ascertaining particular facts and to the birth of philosophy understood as a general methodology of history.'[20] From the rather different tradition of the circles around the Frankfurt School, Walter Benjamin makes this connection even more strongly in *The Arcades Project,* when he expresses his intention as being in part 'to prove by example that only Marxism can practice great philology, where the literature of the previous century is concerned'.[21] Even in passing, these examples show that a true accounting of Marxism's contributions to reflexive knowledge cannot bypass its humanistic and interpretive dimensions or sources, and much of what subaltern studies thought it was correcting in Marxism with its focus on the particular, the fragmentary, and the multiple is found here in philological Marxism—expressed much earlier and without theory's anti-historicist prejudices.

Limits of plain speaking

Such matters are, for all his book's merits, unaddressed—even unimagined—by Chibber, even though they direct us to the central and silent question at the heart of the conflict of traditions into which he inserts himself: what does it mean *to read*? The problem of evidence and truth brings us face-to-face with the substantive issues raised by *Postcolonial Theory* regarding the transition debates in post-Independence India. Otherwise supportive readers begin to question the book at the point where he announces that he will confront subaltern 'theory'—its historiographical practice—but not theory as postcolonial studies has always understood the term. Avoidance of this particular institutional encounter makes it impossible for him to meet his audience where it lives, limiting his ability to grasp the discursive and epistemological art of his interlocutors.

It is reasonable to say that the integrity with which Chibber pursues his object sometimes gets in the way; it is the positive side of a negative trait, a plain-speaking rationalism that treats each argument innocently, as

[20] Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, vol. 2, ed. Valentino Gerratana, Turin 1975, Q11, §25, p. 1429 (my translation).
[21] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Cambridge, MA 1999, p. 476.

though its pragmatic unpacking might lead to its undoing. For example, he poses a much-needed corrective to the subalternists' misreadings of Marx, but loses the opportunity to reinforce the accuracy of his sociological arguments by demonstrating Marx's reliance on the truth-contents of his own suasive literary style. Anyone who has closely read Hegel will know that truth has a form, and that form is a substantive aspect of both his arguments and those of Marx. The literary element in subaltern studies attends to this dimension, however tendentiously, and for this reason it cannot simply be evaded. Effective resistance to its lures, in fact, demands that it be met head on.

The way in which something is expressed has, for Marxism as well as for postcolonial theory, a great deal to do with its truth in the Hegelian sense that truth is an active exchange, the 'making' of a concept adequate to its object. Marx's polemical manner is not only a rhetorical strategy but a particular kind of intelligence that allows for insights not possible only in a dispassionate, social-scientistic dwelling on materialities. The famous use of the image of the 'fetish', for instance, or the description of the commodity as a 'hieroglyph', are much more than Hegelian residues in Marx's writing. Despite his repeated mockery of Hegelian abstraction in favour of the sensuously material, such figural language enables the philosophical point that the material basis of society is brought into view by the conceptual, in a process of intellectual synthesis that is the work of the writing itself. As Keston Sutherland usefully puts it: 'Marx's thinking in *Capital* is philological as well as satirical just as the risks of style in his satire are themselves the work of thinking and not a mere decoration of it.'[22]

Two styles of argument

Chibber dismantles the pretences of subaltern historiography with admirable precision. Even when it appears he has gone too far, overstating his case—some readers have taken his charge of 'orientalism' to be such an instance—a comparison with his sources reveals he has been judicious, often in the face of intemperate reactions from certain quarters. On the other hand, the weaknesses he probes are few in number and of similar type, and his arguments for this reason tend to drag. Even more, the structural categories of his argument—class, revolution,

[22] Keston Sutherland, 'Marx in Jargon', *World Picture* 1, Spring 2008.

liberalism, labour—have a settled definitional character lacking the supple attention to reversals and incongruities that characterize more interpretive approaches. The bad infinity of subalternist claims to an abiding otherness cannot be displaced by the invocation of capital and class if the terms come off as dead universals. The syllogistic ordering of his argument is too reliant on a logic of rebuttal—mere negation—and thus fails to capture dialectically the reliance of his opponents on the very Marxism they appropriate, if only to distort.

Chibber's intervention is likely to strike those involved in postcolonial theory as borrowing from their realm but without having the hang of it. There are also some fundamental mistakes. He takes the 'cultural turn', for instance, to refer only to post-structuralism's unwelcome influence on disciplines outside literature, whereas left-Hegelian critique from very early on opened the door to a particular investigation into culture as a site of political and economic training, evaluation, and understanding—in the work, among others, of Engels, Alexandra Kollontai, Georg Simmel in his poetic, non-Marxist sociology, or Trotsky on everyday life. One could argue, thinking of Raymond Williams, Henri Lefebvre and Georg Lukács, that materialist theories of culture are among the core insights of twentieth-century Marxism.

To be fair, Chibber never claims to be comprehensive, and there is throughout his performance an ingenious clarity and calm that is *pedagogically* superior to most before him. And yet, to justify excluding an engagement with cultural theory, he avows that, 'what matters is not whether [the subaltern historians] are true to this or that theoretical tradition but whether they have produced sound arguments'. The problem is that what is or is not 'sound' or 'true', or indeed an 'argument', has a great deal to do with one's 'theoretical tradition'. As Nietzsche presents 'genealogy' in *On the Genealogy of Morals,* for example, it is not, as it is sometimes taken to be, an aleatory, multi-causal, subaltern history, but a theory of reading. Nietzsche counsels us first to enlist the 'perverse' in order to stimulate agreement with the seductions of the antinomian; next, to replace the subject who wills with a textual 'will to truth'; and finally, to avoid refutation, never denying the truth of one's antagonists—since critique only empowers rivals by honouring them with engagement. This taste for outmanoeuvring rather than arguing with opponents is powerfully connected to the methodological coups represented by a number of the central figures of postwar theory—

Althusser's 'symptomatic reading', Deleuze's productivity of truth, and Derrida's confidence in semantic plenitude—the illusion of any definitive interpretation. Each of these strategies courses through the postcolonial corpus. Together, they definitively express its outlooks and procedures.

So, to demolish the pretensions of the subalternists' 'infelicitous terminology', in Chibber's words, is at least in part to miss the point. He says he finds the formulations of Chatterjee and Chakrabarty elusive, vague, obscure, and difficult to understand. But this is a little like finding geometry abstract or obituaries brief. The manner is intrinsic to the project. The methods of this kind of cultural theory—and we can by now agree that subaltern studies falls within their orbit—are based not on historical accuracy, context or intention, but on the production of political outcomes by way of a textual occasion. Earnest criticism of opponents, in Chibber's vein, effectively leaves unexposed what Alain Badiou aptly calls 'the power of the false'.[23] And this is what has to be addressed, among other things, in any fully effective critique of postcolonial theory.

Two strains in Marxism

Reviewers have seen *Postcolonial Theory* as a showdown between Marxism and postcolonial theory, though I would suggest that it also illustrates a more interesting conflict within Marxism itself. Implicit in the exchange is a culture/science divide that neither Chibber nor his reviewers—critical or otherwise—seem to recognize: the internal bifurcation of humanist and social-scientific interpretations of Marxism found in the debates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These are still very much with us.

Confrontation was liveliest, perhaps, in the resistance of Georges Sorel and Paul Lafargue to what both took to be the mechanistic Marxism of Rudolf Hilferding and Georgi Plekhanov—indeed, Sorel explicitly enlisted Vico in his book-length study of 1896 in order to re-inject into the idea of social transformation the 'poetry' of his forbear's sociological imagination.[24] Traces of that confrontation are legible also in Gramsci's

[23] Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, Minneapolis 2000, p. 55.
[24] Lafargue, *Le déterminisme économique de Karl Marx: Recherches sur l'origine des idées de justice, du bien, de l'âme et de Dieu*, Paris 1911; Sorel, *Études sur Vico et autres textes*, ed. Anne-Sophie Menasseyre, Paris 2007.

embrace of the Russian 'revolution against *Capital*' and his frequently testy dismissals throughout the *Notebooks* of the positivism of Achille Loria and what he called 'Lorianism' in favour of the 'active'—cultural—element in social strata always struggling over their own political status with uncertain outcomes. A more recent pairing of this sort might be found in Edward Thompson's challenge to Louis Althusser.[25]

Such pairings point to a larger divide over the theoretical regeneration of Marxism in the postwar period: on the one side, the well-known models derived from Spinoza by Althusser and Antonio Negri—Karl Korsch was complaining about Plekhanov's creation of a Spinozist Marx as early as the 1930s; on the other, philological, side, the less well-known, but earlier and arguably more far-reaching presence of Vico in the work of Marx, Lukács, Horkheimer and others, including, of course, Said.[26] Vico's attractions for Marx and later Marxists are, by this light, not hard to explain. In the early eighteenth century, his defence of historical writing against the scientific Enlightenment's claims that it was pointless and arbitrary—a prejudice articulated most unguardedly by Descartes—rested in *The New Science* on class struggle and the centrality of labour to civilization. Vico, the materialist, was the first to write history combining its objective material conditions and its qualitative, felt textures. The first sociologist, he is also the first to argue that specific ideas, linguistic innovations, and forms of art correspond to a period's conditions of social organization—a view that many have seen as the genesis of Marx's historical materialism.[27] Vichian configurations of Marxism have received

[25] Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, New York 1978.

[26] Marx refers to Vico at least three times in his writings, although what is Vichian about his thought—as later commentators observed—has more to do with its systematic parallels to Vico borne out in common sources (Varro on Roman Law, for instance [*Grundrisse*, London 1973, p. 834]), and by way of Hegel, whose Vichian influences have been well marked. See *Capital*, vol. I (London 1990, p. 493), and the letter to Ferdinand Lassalle (*Collected Works*, vol. 41, Moscow 1985, p. 355), where Marx praises Vico and observes that he was at 'the foundation of comparative philology'. For more on this tradition, see Timothy Brennan, *Borrowed Light: Vico, Hegel and the Colonies*, Stanford 2014.

[27] For example, Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin in their brilliant introduction to *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico* (Ithaca and London 1944), where they point out that the attribution is as old as Georges Sorel's *Études sur Vico*; a more contemporary example, one of many, can be found in Lawrence H. Simon, 'Vico and Marx: Perspectives on Historical Development', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 42, no. 2, 1981.

very little attention, and yet they are centrally relevant to the debate generated by *l'affaire Chibber,* not least because in them its apparent antinomies—which are partly exacerbated by the framing of Chibber's argument as a rejection of 'culturalism'—are in principle superseded.[28]

Marxism in postcolonial theory

Given these considerations, one can appreciate the otherwise puzzling fact that *Postcolonial Theory* has received so much attention in a milieu where so many critics of postcolonial theory before him were ignored. Conspicuously endorsed by leading figures on the left as a breakthrough, the book was actually written very much in the wake of Marxist critics within postcolonial theory who had been skewering the postcolonial 'pseudo-radical establishment'—Slavoj Žižek's words—for more than two decades. The 'spectre of capital' has haunted postcolonial theory for quite some time. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Marxist critics of the postcolonial turn chipped away at the edifice of the problematic idea of the 'west' itself, disempowering its hold on a field predicated on civilizational oppositions, mapping a vital Marxist counter-trend within the field, a force that now found itself in a visible constellation that the postcolonial establishment could not ignore.[29] Benita Parry's early broadside in the *Oxford Literary Review* (1987) against the 'exorbitation' of colonial discourse set a new tone, reclaiming Fanon from his latter-day postcolonial interpreters, such as Bhabha; Fernando Coronil, already in 1992, was urging nothing less than the decolonization of postcolonial theory; and Neil Lazarus's work distilled the Marxist critique of postcolonial theory in a series of influential essays, finally bringing a number of heterodox ideas and thinkers into institutional centrality with his *Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* (2004). The scope of the work, much of it prominently published and discussed, was by no means limited to the 'literary and cultural front', to which Chibber somewhat dismissively refers in an early footnote, even if no one before

[28] The Vichian lineages of Marxism have been enthusiastically discussed, at least, outside the Anglo-American academy. See, for example, David Roldán, 'La recepción filosófica de Vico y sus aporías filológicas: El caso del marxismo occidental', *Pensamiento*, vol. 68, no. 253, 2012; Alberto Mario Damiani, *La dimensión política de la Scienza Nuova y otros estudios sobre Giambattista Vico*, Buenos Aires 1998.

[29] Respectively, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, London and New York 2004, p. 36; 'Can Postcoloniality Be Decolonized? Imperial Banality and Postcolonial Power', *Public Culture*, Fall 1992, vol. 5, no. 1.

him had previously examined in so systematic a manner the component elements of bourgeois revolution in a comparative mode.[30]

This neglect of precursors extends also to Chibber's antagonists. It bears noting that subaltern studies encompasses more than three scholars (or three books). Setting aside the narratological focus of subaltern studies, its deployment of a Foucauldian *récit de crime*, its moving dramas of the *adivasis* and village widows who speak in 'sobs and whispers', Chibber in some ways neglects its best work: Gyanendra Pandey on the construction of communalism; David Arnold on the Indian body, disease, and medicine; Bernard Cohn on language and colonial command; and Shahid Amin on the silences of elite texts.[31] Much of this oeuvre is empathetic, gritty, and intelligent—a world apart from the extreme cases of Chatterjee and Chakrabarty (perhaps especially the latter)—where the caricatures not only of Marxism but of history and the human are no longer incidental but programmatic. Even when Chibber praises Guha's work, he does not convey any sense of the passion of the writing—extending from his influential reading of the *Grundrisse,* and his keen analysis of colonial dominance, to his spirited asides on some of the more outrageous moments of colonialist historiography, a literature Guha describes as 'still incarnadine with the glow of imperial "achievements", a language that permits racist insults to pass in everyday use as harmless jokes'.[32]

Chakrabarty partakes much less of Chibber's focus—labour and the state—than he does of the art of conversation, the 'textures' of language, and untranslatability. He quotes Derrida, proclaims Heidegger his

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[30] *Postcolonial Theory*, p. 4. The work of Vasant Kaiwar is very interesting in this context. From 2004 onwards he anticipated many of Chibber's later lines of attack, demonstrating peculiar strengths missing in the latter's efforts: for example, wider reference to previous scholarship, exhibiting a feel for the textures and flavours of everything from Bengali *adda* to the holistic blend of sociology and literature that animates the best postcolonial work. He too attributes to Guha an 'orientalist enthusiasm', criticizes him for sidestepping the Muslim question and for expressing views that at times come uncomfortably close to the 'organicist fantasies of the contemporary Hindu right about "tradition"': *The Postcolonial Orient: The Politics of Difference and the Project of Provincializing Europe*, Leiden, forthcoming.

[31] See Priya Gopal's 'Reading Subaltern History' (*The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, pp. 139–61), which I follow here. The quotation is from Guha's 'Chandra's Death', in Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies V,* Delhi 1987, p. 141.

[32] Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony,* Cambridge, MA 1997, pp. 14–16.

'icon', and lingers over Benjamin's Kabbalistic moments and his eschatological forebodings. By counterposing memory to history in order to set up a contrast between the subaltern and the intellectual, he replicates the familiar Heideggerian masquerade of the philosopher presenting himself as a lonely warrior battling the speculative chaos of European metaphysics. Although an intellectual—and not a subaltern—in this way he can assume the guise of a village seer, charting his path through the woods of thought, gnomic, intuitive, revelatory. Heidegger's reactionary peasant sublime is in this way replicated in this postmodern avatar.

But none of the tone of this *contretemps* can enter the frame since Chibber's professed interest is only in 'the empirical work'. In Chakrabarty's argument, he complains, 'reasons have to be based on beliefs, wants, values, and so on, all of which are culturally constructed', just as Chatterjee assumes 'the deep significance of culture and consciousness'. But this is to assume that the insistence on 'culture' led inexorably to all their errors and elisions: the foggy treatment of capital or the one-sided assumptions about subaltern consciousness. Even when referring to work as critical of subaltern studies as his own, the same apparent hierarchy of concerns prevails.

Legacies

One might be inclined to overlook Chibber's hostility to culture as an object were it not for the fact that it actually deflects him from his target—for instance, one of Chakrabarty's principal tropes, the affirmation of the present 'against itself' in colonial formations. This idea, we should recall, is taken from Ernst Bloch, whose highly original investigations into the cultural domain of religiosity—as a committed Leninist—throughout the 1920s and 1930s, are totally elided in Chakrabarty's predictable charge that Marxists have nothing productive to say about religion. He thus embraces what in Bloch was actually a lament: 'the plurality that inheres in the "now", the lack of totality, the constant fragmentariness, that constitutes one's present.'[33] If, that is, the entwinements of culture and objective being were integral to Bloch's way of thinking, they are missed by both Chakrabarty and Chibber. A more supple foray into and

[33] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe,* Princeton 2000, p. 243. The appropriation is derived from Homi Bhabha, as Keya Ganguly has pointed out in 'Temporality and Postcolonial Critique', *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies,* p. 174. Quotations from Bloch are from this essay.

against the subaltern project would have dwelt on these often imitated—and somehow also reviled—interwar Marxist precursors who zeroed in on the very intellectual dissonance between city and country, centre and periphery so mulled over in contemporary subaltern work. Bloch wanted to wrest people from the grip of an 'ascetic contemplation of the unresolved myth of dark old being or of nature'—a point that could not be more germane to subaltern studies' identitarian faith in the airtight otherness of the Indian collective subject.

The advantage of having claimed for oneself sole authority both to evoke and to be the subaltern is that one can refer, without self-consciousness, to a 'Western historiography' that supposedly narrates history as a progress of awareness, and do so while being coy about the degree to which one is speaking in and through this so-called west. If Chakrabarty reflects what the historian Vasant Kaiwar aptly calls a 'remarkably narrow' historical curiosity—'with rich descriptions on one side (Calcutta) and rather stark, schematic outlines on the other (Europe)'—such reductionism is also evident in Spivak's recent review of Chibber's book.[34] There she dismisses its publisher, Verso, for its 'little Britain Marxism' as though it were not Verso that, more than anyone, introduced metropolitan readers (east and west) to the writing of intellectuals and activists from Brazil and China to Italy and India, creating by all accounts the most far-reaching international left public sphere anywhere since the second world war.

Clearly, as such reactions indicate, the political differences swirling around the debate over who has the right to speak and in what disciplinary or theoretical language, are very real, even irreconcilable; for that very reason it matters a great deal how one expresses differences—both as a matter of hitting the mark and of demonstrating the strengths of one's own position. My bid would be to give more sway to the vital inheritances of a humanist intellectual *generalism* that has, for so long, animated left-Hegelian thought in the form of a properly philological and interpretive Marxism.

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[34] Kaiwar, *The Postcolonial Orient*; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Review of *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2014.

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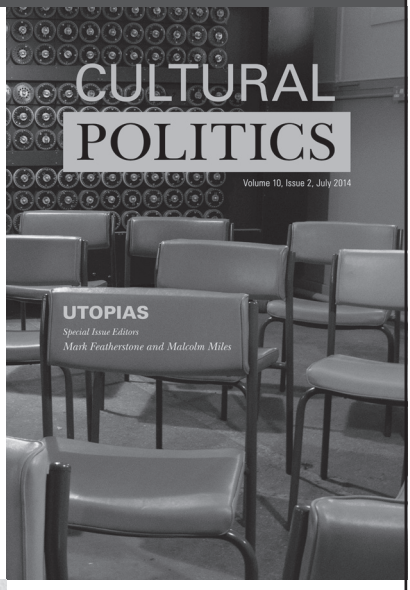

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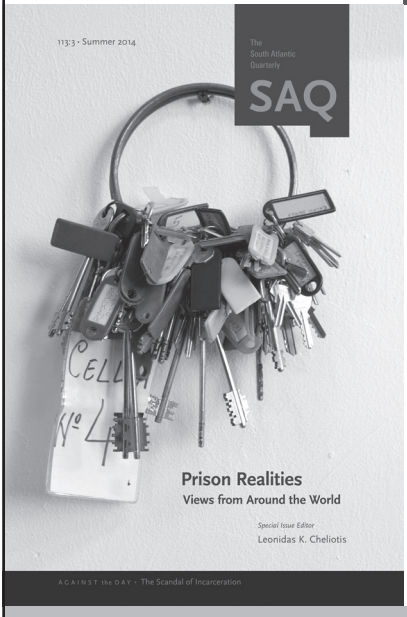

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THE OPENNESS PARADIGM

Who could object to 'open innovation'? The term, which has migrated from software development to become a staple of business-management strategy, seems to conjure the most desirable aspects of contemporary American capitalism: freedom, creativity, democratic accessibility, the possibility of new frontiers. The 'openness' paradigm promises to combine new production systems, made possible by the technologies of Web 2.0 and the shrunken space of globalization, with novel forms of business organization and value extraction; it offers a powerful weapon in inter-firm competition and a new regime of labour. The paradigm has been promoted by a torrent of books and articles from US business schools over the past decade. In 2003 a Google search for 'open innovation' brought up 200 results, according to Henry Chesbrough, one of the gurus of the field and Director of the Centre for Open Innovation at Berkeley's Hass Business School.[1] By 2013, the figure was 672,000,000.

Just as the Fordist organization of production gave way to 'flexible' forms in the 1980s, so—its proponents argue—flexibility is now being superseded by the 'open business model'. Already it is said to have spread from electronics to bio-technology and pharmaceuticals, and is starting to penetrate agribusiness, food processing and the machine-tools sector; a 2013 survey claimed that three quarters of firms in the United States and Europe with sales over $250 million were practicing 'open innovation'.[2] Yet a closer look reveals that, rather than being a strength of American capitalism, the openness paradigm is a symptom of its problems: profit-gouging without sustained investment and squeezing labour to sap already weak, and credit-dependent, demand.

Fordism to flexible production

Classical Fordism entailed vertically integrated firms. These had already started to emerge with the monopolies of the late 19th century. Andrew Carnegie developed the US Steel Corporation by buying up operations at all phases of the value chain: iron-ore fields, coal mines, steel mills, rail roads and barges. John D. Rockefeller built up the Standard Oil Corporation to include not just oil refineries—he owned most of the refining capacity in the United States—but pipelines, oil cars, barrel-making plants, retail stores and factories that produced, among other things, asphalt, fertilizer inputs, lubricating grease, heating oil and gasoline. Similarly, flour milling was dominated by Pillsbury, meat packing by Armor, soap products and household goods by Procter & Gamble. The Fordist principle—Henry Ford paying his auto-plant workers just enough for them to be able to buy a Model T—helped boost domestic demand and provided the rationale for high-volume production, 'just-in-case' of demand, with little concern for unsold inventories. With anti-trust legislation the monopolies restructured themselves into oligopolies, but the corporate imperative was still focused on internalizing as many activities as possible within giant firms. Surviving the Great Depression, the paradigm was given an enormous boost by the war-time boom. US corporations grew to be hegemonic in the global economy.

By the 1970s, US firms were struggling in the face of increasing competition from Germany and Japan—and soon from Taiwan, South Korea, China and Vietnam—that left the world market burdened with manufacturing overcapacity. In the midst of recession, oil crises and waves of labour militancy, these problems of overcapacity were exacerbated by the cost of warehousing the resulting surplus inventories. Corporations had already begun to cut production costs by shifting to cheaper, non-unionized labour markets, both in the US South and overseas. But as profitability rates continued to fall, large shareholders demanded more incisive action. Amid rounds of aggressive acquisitions and mergers, cost-cutting and asset-stripping resulted in the vertical

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[1] Henry Chesbrough, 'Everything You Need to Know about Open Innovation', *Forbes*, 21 March 2011.

[2] Oliver Gassmann, Ellen Enkel and Henry Chesbrough, 'The Future of Open Innovation', *R&D Management*, vol. 30, no. 3, June 2010; Henry Chesbrough and Sabine Brunswicker, *Managing Open Innovation in Large Firms: Survey Report, Executive Survey on Open Innovation*, Berkeley, CA 2013.

*dis*integration of firms' operations from the 1980s: non-core activities and non-profit-making departments were eliminated, or their functions outsourced to smaller companies, which typically had to compete to offer the cheapest bid, undercutting each other's labour and development costs. Large firms could order inputs from these suppliers on demand, and thereby ease the burden of over-stocked inventories amid increasing competition in an unstable market.

This new regime of 'flexible production' also saw the rise of retailers to the apex of the distribution system, with manufacturers coming to occupy a subordinate tier. The process was exemplified by the changing relationship between the long-established household goods corporation, Procter & Gamble, and the aggressive new discount store, Wal-Mart. Along with food giants Heinz and Kellogg, the Cincinnati soap-maker had been a pioneer of the branded product, transforming generic commodities into company-specific consumer goods—Ivory, Tide, Crest, Pampers—backed by expensive advertising campaigns; the soap opera had been virtually invented as a genre to attract audiences for its radio commercials. With its massive sales force and proven consumer loyalty, P&G could dictate terms to retailers on prices, schedules and display. By the mid-80s, Wal-Mart had perfected its system for laser-scanning product barcodes and beaming the data directly from in-store checkouts to its Arkansas HQ via its private satellite; the company's annual income had reached $15bn, the same as P&G's.[3] In 1987 Sam Walton persuaded P&G to install a direct electronic ordering system, so that a Wal-Mart store computer could automatically order Pampers from a

[3] Wal-Mart had risen to market dominance in the late 70s as what would be called 'a platform player', whose innovative use of technology 'can direct the future evolution of their market, making customers and suppliers fit business models to theirs'—the alpha of 'open innovation': Henry Chesbrough, *Open Business Models*, pp. 132–3. Wal-Mart positioned itself as a distributor, rather than a retailer; its core competency was not marketing but logistics. It expanded into new regions by first building a distribution centre, then ringing it with up to 150 stores. A distribution centre could be the size of fifteen football pitches, over a mile long, studded with bays into which trucks and rail cars would disgorge their cargos of barcoded cartons onto conveyor belts, feeding into the 'merge centre', where electronic eyes scanned the barcodes and electronic arms pushed the cartons towards the correct chute, where further conveyor belts would speed them to waiting trucks for delivery to the stores. The distribution-centre model was used by Home Depot, Target, UPS and Fedex, giving them monopoly control over crucial nodes in the global distribution network: Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business*, New York 2009, p. 52.

P&G factory when supplies were running low—rendering the P&G sales force redundant at a stroke. By 2005, Wal-Mart's annual income was five times that of P&G and it could dictate pricing, volume, packaging, delivery schedules and quality to its suppliers.[4] It could thereby reduce its own inventory costs while producers increasingly found it necessary to shift to the 'just-in-time' approaches that had been developed in the 70s by the leading Japanese auto and electronics firms, who could impose seemingly impossible schedules on their dependent subcontractors.[5]

The flexible production model saw the externalization and downgrading of manufacturing across a broad range of sectors. In apparel, for example, having built up their brands, Gap and Nike concentrated on design, marketing and retail outlets; the manufacture of their clothes and shoes was reduced to a subordinate link in the supply chain, contracted out to lower-tier suppliers in East Asia, the Subcontinent or Latin America, while prices, quality and schedule were coordinated from above. Wal-Mart was once again a pioneer, purchasing directly from East Asia: from the early 80s its operatives in Hong Kong and Taipei sought out manufacturers in mainland China to produce goods specified from Arkansas, offering gross profit margins of only 10 per cent, but vast orders by volume. To meet the delivery schedules, the first-tier Chinese firms would immediately subcontract a large proportion of the order to dozens of small producers, creating a 'new universe' of sweatshops for which Wal-Mart and its ilk would bear no legal responsibility.[6]

Blue-chip corporations like General Electric and IBM followed the same route. GE stopped manufacturing TVs, radios and electronic goods, and instead franchised the GE brand to Asian makers, who took over R&D, production, marketing and sales—and assumed all the risks—while GE earned a steady royalty.[7] Financialization offered another source of

[4] Lichtenstein, *Retail Revolution*, pp. 55–63.

[5] The Japanese *keiretsu* model is usually described in terms of long-term, trustful relations, but lower-tier suppliers—their workforces often comprised of women, immigrants or elderly men—received very different treatment; see, for example, Michael Smitka, *Competitive Ties: Subcontracting in the Japanese Automotive Industry*, New York 1991.

[6] Lichtenstein, *Retail Revolution*, pp. 199, 215–7. Wal-Mart then used its mid-80s 'Buy American' campaign to try to force domestic manufacturers to compete with East Asian suppliers: pp. 205–9.

[7] Henry Chesbrough, *Open Business Models: How to Thrive in the New Innovation Landscape*, Boston 2006, p. 100.

income, with higher returns than goods production: by the 90s, GE's financial arm would be responsible for half its earnings. IBM, which had enjoyed a monopoly position in the mainframe-computer market in the 1960s and 70s, plunged into financial crisis by 1992, its profits undercut by Oracle, Intel and Microsoft. CEO Lou Gerstner imposed large-scale lay-offs and the closure of non-profitmaking sections—including the entire R&D department. IBM was refashioned as a service company, licensing its technology to others. Over half its revenue now comes from IBM Global Services, which supports its clients' investments in IT.[8]

Above all, 'flexible production' signalled a downgrading of labour. Wage costs were among the first to be targeted by shareholder agendas; 'functional flexibility' came to mean that a wide range of tasks would be grouped into broad pay categories, thereby eliminating wage rises as employees took on greater responsibilities. 'Numerical flexibility' was another goal, met by the use of short-term and agency labour. Both tended to ensure increased workloads with fewer rewards. Whereas employment was once considered a route out of poverty, the new labour landscape involves people working multiple jobs while still struggling to get by. Wages stagnated—in the US, the real value of the minimum wage fell by 30 per cent in the three decades following 1978—and demand was sustained largely by a huge increase in household debt. Firms targeted the 'haves' and the borrowers of the new global marketplace as potential consumers, ignoring the burgeoning 'have nots'; so-called world cities became, more than ever, sites of both extreme affluence and abject poverty.

'Open innovation'

Yet the profit rates of US firms continued to fall, business cycle by business cycle; the brief high of the late-90s dot.com boom turned out to be a giant bubble that had burst by the summer of 2000. The idea that US firms should respond to intensifying overseas competition by leveraging research and development—'profiting from innovation', in the later coinage of one business school theorist—had surfaced in the 70s, in the face of technological advances by Japanese firms.[9] One political outcome was the strengthening of US patent protection law and the creation of a dedicated Federal court circuit for patent appeals in 1982. But, beyond

[8] Chesbrough, *Open Business Models*, p. 196.
[9] David Teece, 'Profiting from Technological Innovation', *Research Policy* 15, 1986.

decimating R&D departments through staff layoffs, neoliberalism's flexible production regime had not found a solution to the still Fordist character of R&D—indeed, still Taylorist, one might say, given the rigid division that persisted in most big companies between the organization of production and that of 'innovation'. Increasingly fierce global competition and shortened innovation cycles compounded the problem; firms—especially those that still produced goods and services—were under more pressure than ever to increase shareholder value.[10] At the same time, a new demand environment was developing, facilitated by advances in information and communications technologies. Firms lacked the scope of knowledge necessary to cope with increasingly unpredictable customized demand. From the depths of the dot.com recession, however, the idea emerged that the open-source movement, pioneered by the 22-year-old Finnish software developer Linus Torvalds, might provide a model for cheaper—yet perhaps more profitable—R&D.

While working on the code for a new operating system kernel, Linux, in the early 90s, Torvalds had taken to releasing early versions of his work, inviting suggestions from his fellow hackers and constructing the kernel in such a way that it would be simple for others to test, debug and improve. The process, which came to be known as 'open development' or 'open source', proved astoundingly successful. Most strikingly for business theorists, Torvalds estimated that he had only coded 2 per cent of the kernel himself; the rest had been done by online collaborators, for free. The commercial implications were drawn by Eric Raymond in his 1999 best-seller, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*: technical and market forces, he wrote, were converging to draw open source 'out of its niche role'; the key was 'harnessing open development and decentralized peer review *to lower costs* and improve software quality.'[11] With the advent of 'open innovation' as a business strategy, R&D would be deliberately outsourced, just like the manufacturing of sneakers, to improve the bottom line by exploiting new sources of labour power in novel ways.

The definition of 'open innovation' put little emphasis on ideas as such; what counted was not originality or creativity, but value extraction.

[10] Blandine Laperche, Gilliane Lefebvre, and Denis Langlet, 'Innovation Strategies of Industrial Groups in the Global Crisis: Rationalization and New Paths', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, vol. 78, no. 8, October 2011.
[11] Eric Raymond, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar: Musings on Linux and Open Source by an Accidental Revolutionary*, Sebastopol, CA 1999, p. xi; emphasis added.

Echoing a distinction that goes back to Schumpeter, Chesbrough underscored that 'by innovation, I meant something quite different from invention. To me, innovation means invention implemented and taken to market.'[12] The twentieth-century paradigm for business R&D had been the internal research laboratory, pioneered by the German chemical industry and naturalized in the US at Western Electric's Bell Laboratories; the Manhattan Project had operated on the same model. But in an era of intensifying market pressures, firms needed to look outside for innovative concepts, too, while sharpening their tools for profit-extraction. They increasingly found it possible to glean innovative technologies from their suppliers, now furnished with low-cost personal computers and software that facilitated independent innovation. Meanwhile, a new breed of firm emerged to broker the new relations between firms: on the one hand 'seekers' with distinct 'innovation' problems, and on the other their potential 'solvers'. These mediators deal not only with expertise and ideas, but also with intellectual property.

In the language of open innovation, intellectual property should be managed like a financial asset. Most saliently, this has involved fierce battles over intellectual-property rights to already existing technologies. The apparently public domain of human knowledge is hardly a cozy commons. The struggle between Apple and Samsung for the smartphone and tablet market is a case in point. Both firms are calling for bans on each other's products, with claims and counter-claims of patent infringements in US, EU and Asian courts. Samsung argues that its larger screens and cheaper prices are what is attracting market share, not the use of some tiny aspect of touchscreen technology; meanwhile Apple's lawyer warned a California court that American TV manufacturing had died because US companies had failed to protect their intellectual property from foreign companies: 'Our economy will disappear'.[13] When, with Solomonic wisdom, the US International Trade Commission held that each had violated the other's patents, the Obama Administration unsurprisingly vetoed a ban on Apple products while upholding one on Samsung's.

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[12] Henry Chesbrough, *Open Innovation: The New Imperative for Creating and Profiting from Technology*, Boston 2003, p. ix. A product of Yale and Stanford Business School, Chesbrough was a marketing executive for a Fortune 500 disk-drive company in the 80s and ran a business consultancy in Silicon Valley in the 90s, before penning his first work on open innovation during a research stint at Harvard Business School.

[13] Dominic Rushe, 'Samsung Ordered to Pay Apple $290m More for US Patent Infringements', *Guardian*, 22 November 2013.

The landscape of patent protection is increasingly shaping up as a conflict zone. Once regarded as the domain of lawyers, who were rewarded for keeping their firm out of trouble, patent activity is now a matter for strategic management.[14] It is no protection that the vast majority of patents are never commercialized—an astounding 90 per cent in Procter & Gamble's 2002 estimation—though that fact might suggest that patent activity is a dubious measure of innovation. On the contrary, the combination of a large stock of old inventions that were never put to use and the recent development of 'patent thickets' around bundles of complex, interconnected technologies, has spawned a new industry: patent trolling. The fact that patents are often issued for ideas that are not really new provides particularly fertile ground for patent trolls, who make money by buying up old patents that have some connection to new technologies but had never been commercialized, and then suing big companies for infringement. Patent trolling accounts for around $83bn a year in lost wealth, and litigation costs increased by 400 per cent in the eight years following 2005 for Google, Blackberry, Earthlink and Red Hat.[15] Companies have started to pay protection money to patent trolls, in the form of high licensing fees to avoid even more expensive litigation.

Where big companies invest in tangible R&D, this is now more likely to be through advancing increasingly internalized corporate venture capital to external firms, on a short-term basis—the Silicon Valley model—rather than expanding their own research departments. The fact that large goods- and services-producing firms have developed their own venture-capital programmes itself speaks to their degree of financialization—in conditions of global overcapacity, higher returns are most often to be found outside their core competencies. A recent survey of the top fifty *Forbes* Global 2000 companies, across five sectors, suggested that only a quarter of them invested corporate venture capital for the purpose of strengthening their core business.[16] The open innovation literature typically avoids mentioning the central role of the state in R&D, despite the

[14] Henry Chesbrough, *Open Business Models*.

[15] Phil Goldberg, 'Stumping Patent Trolls Is the Path to Innovation', *Real Clear Markets*, 30 October 2013.

[16] See Boris Battistini, Fredrik Hacklin and Pius Baschera, 'The state of corporate venturing: Insights from a Global Study', *Research-Technology Management*, vol. 56, no. 1, Jan–Feb 2013. Over half the firms sampled invested in new companies with similar products or services, and the remainder in 'white space'—completely different products or services.

billions of dollars flung at private firms by the Federal government—not least in the field of big data collection and analysis since 9/11, as Edward Snowden has graphically revealed. But it does foreground the importance of penetrating university research institutions: 'identify academic thought leaders, donate tools and services to assist their research', for later commercialization.[17]

In 2000, Procter & Gamble's newly appointed CEO, A. G. Lafley, set a goal of acquiring 50 per cent of the company's innovations from external sources; some 10,000 ideas for products and technologies had been submitted by 2006; firms from its global supply chain were offered the use of a secure IT platform to share technology briefs to 'co-create' with P&G. The project was called not R&D but C+D, 'connect and develop'. Of course, much of what passes for open innovation is little more than corporate PR guff. That certainly applies to General Electric's glossy *Ecoimagination* brochures, in which the energy giant boasts of the crumbs it has tossed to renewables, calls for new ventures in green fuels and vows to reduce its carbon footprint—eventually—by 1 per cent. The same goes for Procter & Gamble's online crowdsourcing of a method of printing edible images onto Pringle potato chips. A solution was provided by a baker-cum-science professor in Bologna, who had already found a way to print on cookies and cakes.[18] P&G's publicity department made much of this quaint story, but the real point was just to gouge another fraction of a cent out of each additive-saturated bite while bypassing the associated costs.

Of greater consequence is the relation of corporate open innovation to its supposed inspiration, open-source software. Many open-source and free software developers have deliberately subverted the idea of intellectual-property rights and, in the process, created a rich commons to which all could contribute, according to their abilities, and from which all could benefit, according to their needs; where innovations could be shared for free. By contrast, a central goal of open innovation is 'to create a business model to profit from open-source software'.[19] In the 90s, IBM had been losing ground to Windows and Unix on operating systems, a critical technology for determining the new landscape of business computing, its core activity. In 2001 Gerstner announced that the firm would be

[17] Chesbrough, *Open Business Models*, p. 73.
[18] Larry Huston and Nabil Sakkab, 'Connect and Develop: Inside Proctor & Gambles's New Model for Innovation', *Harvard Business Review*, March 2006.
[19] Chesbrough, *Open Business Models*, p. 43.

spending $1bn on open-source software development—using Linux as 'a horse to ride' to grow IBM's operating-systems business, in which open-source software would be complemented by proprietary middleware: 'giving one away helps increase sales of the other', as Gerstner put it.[20] IBM and others would 'support' free software by selling installation, trouble-shooting and back-up services; by integrating it with proprietary infrastructure—IBM drives, software-hardware interfaces and so on. By transferring its software patents to a non-profit, open-source foundation, it was creating a broader base for its own products and services.[21]

Through a series of calculated tactics, firms can appear to be altruistically contributing technologies to the public domain, while indirectly promoting demand for their products. Software can be 'versioned', making it free at entry level but charging a fee for more advanced operations, like MySQL. Free services can produce niche audiences to sell to advertisers, as with Facebook and Google. The game is to use an innovation—even if it is presented as free and public—for profit-making by some other means, ideally in connection with a wide range of related processes. To the extent that the new forms of open innovation entail the 'free'—as in royalty-free licensing and donations to the public domain—these generally prove on closer examination to be long-run business strategies aiming to capitalize on a wider range of opportunities.[22] This is not, as free software developer Richard Stallman put it, 'free as in freedom'.

Virtual sweatshops

One thing the 'openness' paradigm does aim to get for free, or for next to nothing, is labour. When we leave the sphere of the business-school seminar and enter the abode of production, the new business models are shown in a grimmer light. While globalized 'flexible production' continues to rely on vast transshipments of goods and lightning-fast capital flows, labour has been far less mobile. With 'open production', via the internet and other IT systems such as cellphones, the global labour market can be tapped for a wide range of tasks, from problem solving to

[20] Chesbrough, *Open Business Models*, pp. 192ff, 240.
[21] Joel West and Scott Gallagher, 'Patterns of Open Innovation in Open Source Software', in Henry Chesbrough, Wim Vanhaverbeke, and Joel West, eds, *Open Innovation: Researching a New Paradigm*, New York 2006, p. 94.
[22] Chris Anderson, *Free: How Today's Smartest Businesses Profit by Giving Something for Nothing*, New York 2009.

menial work, ushering in a new era of virtual sweatshops. A classic example is the online retailer, Zappos, which had noticed that products with well-written customer reviews sold better than those with equally favourable comments, but plagued by grammar or spelling mistakes. The firm crowdsourced the copy-editing of its 5 million product reviews, using a 'find, fix, verify' process, at a mere 10 cents per review—spending a few hundred thousand dollars to generate several million dollars in revenue, while paying virtually nothing to individual editors.[23]

The T-shirt company Threadless is another well-known example of the use of crowdsourcing to access labour-market expertise for rock-bottom costs. Anyone can submit a T-shirt design online, anytime. Threadless then orchestrates online competitions, with a modest cash prize to the winner; the judging is crowdsourced, too. As an online message explains: 'For the next two weeks, let's watch 8 Threadless designs battle it out—help us decide who wins each battle by "liking" your favourite design on our Facebook page. Those votes will count as 80 per cent of that design's score. BONUS: One randomly chosen voter will win a $25 Threadless gift code to pick up the design they voted for!'[24] The company has effectively eliminated design labour costs, through the development of skilled yet unwaged work. It is unclear what proportion of Threadless' designers are financially secure, with time on their hands, or unemployed and reflecting a new desperation: working for nothing, in the hope of using the experience to gain some sort of remunerative employment; 'immaterial labour' here being rewarded with immaterial wages—a profound and insidious twist on Hardt and Negri's vision.[25]

There are plenty of other examples of 'virtual sweatshop' firms that pay next to nothing. Amazon's 'Mechanical Turk' website lists numerous 'human intelligence tasks', or HITS, which artificial intelligence cannot handle, despite their relatively simple and repetitive nature. The jobs are submitted by firms which pay the site a fee of 10 per cent for the completed tasks. In 2013 wage rates for individual HITS were as low as $57.85 for a 7-day job, or $8.26 a day. A 2010 survey found that 47 per

[23] Panos Ipeirotis, 'An Ingenious Application of Crowdsourcing: Fix Reviews' Grammar, Improve Sales', behind-the-enemy-lines.com, 5 April 2011.
[24] Jess Hanebury, 'Threadless Mobb: And the Winner Is . . .', threadless.com blog, 18 March 2013.
[25] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, New York 2004; *Commonwealth*, Cambridge, MA 2009.

cent of Turkers come from the US and 34 per cent come from India.[26] They generally use their Mechanical Turk earnings to supplement other income, although for over 10 per cent in the US and almost 30 per cent in India, these are their principal earnings. Again, payment is for piece work—for the job, not for a unit of time—characteristic of sweatshop labour.

Virtual sweatshops represent a new tier in the division of labour facilitated by new communications networks, which render localized work even more unstable. Rewards for both 'high' and low-end work can be far below the floor of minimum wages: nothing, or a few cents from nothing. Qualified people are working for free, or nearly free, at tasks that have an increasing similarity to those at the low end of the value chain. A recent European study detailed new kinds of precarious labour that entail unregulated freelance work—not quite 'self-employed' and not quite 'dependent employment'.[27] The relative dearth of stable, living-wage jobs matched with people's skills paves the way for an overlap between low and high-end labour forces, reflecting crises of over-qualification and deskilling among skilled workers.[28] The result is a world reserve army of *skilled* labour, in addition to the vast ranks of the unskilled, ready to accommodate firms' needs at all parts of the value chain, while the only compensation for dwindling wages has been an explosion of credit, in turn fuelling corporate growth while consumers linger in debt as a way of life. Credit has become crucial; it is the mechanism by which corporations can sustain markets while paying workers as little as nothing. The description of neoliberal subjects as 'entrepreneurs of themselves'[29] takes on renewed significance as millions scour the global digital landscape for opportunities—working for nothing, apparently living on hope.

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[26] Panos Ipeirotis, 'Demographics of Mechanical Turk', archive@NYU, New York 2010.

[27] Manuela Samek Lodovici and Renata Semenza, eds, *Precarious Work and High-Skilled Youth in Europe*, Milan 2012.

[28] For discussions of the mismatch between skilled 'knowledge workers' in particular and the increasingly unstable, deskilled, and low-paid jobs they take on, see for example: Bill Lessard and Steve Baldwin, *Net Slaves: True Tales of Working the Web*, New York 2000.

[29] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, New York 2008, p. 226; the direct quote is: 'In neo-liberalism . . . H*omo oeconomicus* is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself.'

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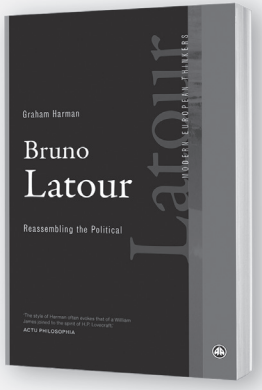

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ERDEM YÖRÜK & MURAT YÜKSEL

CLASS AND POLITICS IN TURKEY'S GEZI PROTESTS

Successive mass protests have erupted seemingly out of nowhere since the financial crisis. The Arab uprisings of 2011 were fast followed by mobilizations across the Eurozone periphery, from Greece to Spain, and by Occupy in the US. Anti-corruption sit-ins paralysed Indian cities; Brazil and Turkey erupted in 2013, while counter-mobilizations polarized Ukraine. What social forces and what politics have been in play? Earlier contributions to this journal have analysed the emergence of 21st century 'oppositional' strata and examined the confluence of classes in the Brazilian protests—'new proletarians', typically telemarketers with degrees, and the inflation-hit middle class.[1] In this text, we focus on the social and political character of Turkey's 'Gezi' protests, named after the small park in central Istanbul whose threatened demolition sparked a nationwide uprising that would last for more than a month.

The Gezi protests have already inspired an extensive literature on the causes, form and content of this upsurge. There is a widespread assumption in much of this literature that the protesters were drawn largely from the 'new middle class', and that participation from those further down the social scale was either low or non-existent. Turkey's protest movement has been seen as a manifestation of a new middle-class politics—democratic, environmentalist—whose global import is predicted to grow. Here, we test these assumptions through analysis of four sets of quantitative data: three surveys and a newspaper-based protest dataset. In contrast to many accounts, which concentrate largely on the central core of protesters inside Gezi Park itself, we examine the Turkish uprising at its height, when the greatest numbers were mobilized across

the country, and look at levels of passive support as well as activist cadre. In the sections that follow, we briefly outline the arc of the protests, explore the arguments concerning their nature, sketch the broader economic and political context in which they took place and conclude with our own analysis, based on survey and protest data.

Course of the protests

Gezi Park itself is a small area of grass and trees abutting Taksim Square, Istanbul's social and cultural centre. The AKP-dominated Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality had granted permission for it to be turned into a shopping mall, fronted by an ersatz reconstruction of the ornate Ottoman-era Artillery Barracks that had once occupied the site, as part of a broader construction project involving the pedestrianization of Taksim Square. A small group of environmental activists began to organize a campaign in the early months of 2013 and applied unsuccessfully for a court order to stop the work. The destruction of the park began on 27 May 2013, with bulldozers tearing up a small pathway and a number of trees. Activists already present on the site managed to stop further demolition work, and were joined the following day by a larger group of campaigners, including opposition members of the Turkish parliament. Some put up tents in the park, to maintain a vigil overnight. When news spread on social media that these Occupy-style protesters had been brutally attacked by the Istanbul police in the early hours of 29 May, far greater numbers joined them in the park. An aggressive intervention by Prime Minister Erdoğan, declaring that the government would press ahead with the shopping mall, no matter what its opponents said, had a similar effect.

The movement snowballed in response to this repression: the numbers taking part rose from tens to hundreds and then thousands between 27 and 30 May, finally reaching hundreds of thousands on the night of 31 May, as a sea of protesters crowded İstiklal Street and other boulevards around Taksim, building barricades and trying to reach the square itself and Gezi Park, which were then surrounded by police. Protests spread to other parts of Istanbul: thousands managed to cross the Bosphorus Bridge from the Anatolian side, reaching Taksim in the early

[1] Respectively, Göran Therborn, 'New Masses?', and André Singer, 'Rebellion in Brazil', NLR 85, Jan–Feb 2014.

hours of 1 June. Hundreds of thousands more in other cities followed what was happening in Istanbul through social media and took to the streets in their own localities. Istanbul's Sixth Administrative Court belatedly granted a stay of execution on the shopping-mall project, but it was already too late to defuse the protests.

Following a night of clashes, during which over a thousand demonstrators were injured, the police withdrew. Barricades were thrown up around the whole area, creating a liberated zone—the Taksim commune—where money didn't circulate: food, drink and medicines were shared collectively. In the days that followed, an estimated 16 per cent of Istanbul's population joined the protests, some 1.5 million people. In İzmir, Turkey's third largest city, the figure was half a million. After police retook the square on 11 June, lower-level protests continued in people's assemblies and neighbourhood forums—forty in Istanbul alone. The park was saved, though repression continued, as selected activists were sacked, arrested or put on trial.

Interpretations

The first serious analysis of the Gezi events came from the eminent Turkish social scientist, Çağlar Keyder. In a series of interventions, Keyder has argued that the protests are best seen in terms of a newly emerging middle class, dissatisfied with the 'neo-liberal authoritarianism' of the ruling AKP, taking their demands and aspirations to the streets.[2] According to Keyder, the Gezi protesters were predominantly university-educated youth who had benefited from the economic growth and openness to global influences of the past decade:

> Turkey now has some 200 universities and more than 4 million university students; 2.5 million new graduates have been added to the population since 2008. These figures portend a new middle class in formation, whose members work in relatively modern workplaces, with leisure time and consumption habits much like their global counterparts. But they also look for new guarantees for their way of life, for their environment, for their right to the city; and they resent violations of their personal and social space.[3]

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[2] See for example Çağlar Keyder, 'The New Middle Class', *Bilim Akademisi*, 1 August 2014.

[3] Çağlar Keyder, 'Law of the Father', *LRB Blog*, 19 June 2013.

Keyder contended that their economic situation sets these new graduates apart from the old middle class and the bourgeoisie, but also from the traditional proletariat. They do not own the means of production, but their cultural capital—education, knowledge, skills—makes them indispensable for the production process; they are paid for mental rather than manual labour. In similar fashion, the political sociologist Cihan Tuğal has emphasized the significant role played by professionals, especially during the early stages of the Gezi protests. From 28 to 31 May, he stressed, as the number of protesters rose from hundreds to thousands, professionals made up the overwhelming majority. According to Tuğal:

> Professionals not only led the movement, but also constituted the core of the participants . . . The Gezi Resistance appears to be an occasionally multi-class, but predominantly middle-class movement. Generously paid professionals who have some control over production and services (even though they may not have ownership), rather than white-collar proletarians (such as waitresses, sales-clerks, subordinate office clerks, etc.) seem to predominate.[4]

This perspective echoed the 'new class' concept developed by Alvin Gouldner in the 1970s, whereby a technical intelligentsia armed with 'cultural capital' enters into conflict with the ruling class, not because of structural contradictions at the economic level but because of heightened tensions between their subjective and objective situations and aspirations—'the blockage of their opportunities for upward mobility, the disparity between their income and power, on the one side, and their cultural capital and self-regard, on the other'.[5] For Loïc Wacquant, too, Gezi involved 'a fraction of the Istanbul population, the new cultural bourgeoisie of intellectuals, urban professionals and the urban middle class, rising to assert the rights of cultural capital against an incipient alliance of economic capital—commercial interests—and political capital—the state deciding to transform this park into a mall.'[6] He argued that the future of the movement would depend on the kind of relationship that this new urban middle class managed to cultivate with the marginalized

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[4] Cihan Tuğal, '"Resistance everywhere": The Gezi revolt in global Perspective', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 49, 2013.

[5] Alvin Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Middle Class*, New York 1979, p. 58.

[6] Loïc Wacquant, 'Urban Inequality, Marginality and Social Justice', Bosphorus University, 17 Jan 2014, available at Istifhanem.com.

urban groups, who were unable to accumulate any kind of capital and were represented very little, if at all, during the Gezi events.

Against this view, one of Turkey's leading Marxist scholars, Korkut Boratav, saw Gezi as an example of what he calls a 'mature class uprising': the protesters were predominantly highly skilled and educated proletarians, whom others have (mistakenly) categorized as part of the new middle class, and students, most of whom he believes to be future proletarians.[7] The only exceptions to this were the independent professionals, who might be regarded as belonging to the new middle class, since their livelihood is based on the provision of services to their clients. Boratav agreed that there was considerable support from this layer at the Gezi protests, but saw it as conjunctural and contingent. In his view, Gezi should be understood as a class revolt against the attempts of crony capitalists and their political representatives to appropriate urban space. Likewise, Ahmet Tonak insisted that, in terms of their relationship to the means of production, those who joined the Gezi protests were predominantly workers, potential workers (students), children of workers, unemployed and even retired workers.[8] For Michael Hardt, meanwhile, Gezi exemplified the notion of 'multitude' by bringing together a range of disorganized subjects and disintegrated conflicts.[9] In order to achieve its long-term demands, whatever they may be, it will have to build sustainable relationships among its different constituents. The popular assemblies organized after the Square was cleared could provide only a provisional solution.

Before examining the evidence for and against these claims, it may be helpful to give a quick sketch of the economic and political developments since the neoliberal-Islamist Justice and Welfare Party (AKP) dislodged the parties of the Kemalist establishment in 2002. The past twelve years have been a period of breakneck economic growth in Turkey: GNP has expanded from $230bn to $788bn, driven by the AKP's export-oriented free-market strategy and huge inflows of foreign investment. While financialization, land speculation and overseas trade have generated big

[7] Korkut Boratav, 'Olgunlaşmış bir sınıfsal başkaldırı', *Sendika*, 22 June 2013.
[8] Ahmet Tonak, 'İsyanın Sınıfları', in Özay Göztepe, ed., *Gezi Direnişi Üzerine Düşünceler*, Ankara 2013, pp. 21–28.
[9] Can Semercioğlu and Deniz Ayyıldız, 'Interview with Michael Hardt', *Mesele Derigisi*, no. 90, 2014.

fortunes for a minority of capitalists and a section of the upper middle class, real wages have declined significantly and the gap between rising manufacturing productivity and wage growth has widened. At the same time, a wave of rural-to-urban migration, starting from the 1990s—with peasants pushed from their land by the elimination of rural subsidies, as well as the internal displacement of more than two million Kurds from the countryside—has accelerated the growth of a vast informal proletariat. By 2011, some 55 per cent of the labour force was working in the informal sector. This dispossessed population has boosted the level of structural poverty in metropolitan areas. A sharp class divide between the globally integrated urban bourgeoisie and upper middle classes, on the one hand, and the growing informal proletariat on the other, has emerged as one of the most important characteristics of contemporary Turkish society.

As Yunus Kaya has shown, these dual processes of proletarianization and polarization have produced the parallel growth of capitalist, professional and proletarian classes, at the expense of the peasantry. In 1980, nearly 54 per cent of the workforce had been engaged in agriculture; by 2005 that figure had fallen to 29 per cent, while 25 per cent were employed in manufacturing—including a significant number of women in the low-tech export sector—and 46 per cent in services. The largest increase by employment category was of routine non-manual workers (administrative, sales, services), whose share of the labour force rose from just over 5 per cent to nearly 13 per cent.[10] The massive expansion of tertiary education, to which Keyder refers, has so far yielded little in terms of employment returns: in 2009, nearly 20 per cent of graduates between the ages of 20 and 30 were unemployed.

AKP's hardening hegemony

The AKP has positioned itself within this fast-changing social landscape by claiming to champion the interests of the majoritarian popular classes, while pursuing an orthodox neoliberal, pro-EU, pro-NATO line.[11]

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[10] Yunus Kaya, 'Proletarianization with Polarization: Industrialization, Globalization and Social Class in Turkey, 1980–2005', *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, vol. 26, no. 2, June 2008.

[11] For an earlier analysis in these pages, see Cihan Tuğal, 'NATO's Islamists', NLR 44, March–April 2007; see also Ece Temelkuran, 'Flag and Headscarf', NLR 51, May–June 2008.

It portrays the Kemalist political establishment—chiefly composed of the Republican People's Party (CHP) and its media outlets—as representing the economic, social and military elite. With the help of a credit-fuelled boom, the AKP has been able to establish an unassailable electoral majority through its hegemony over the informal urban proletariat and the rural poor, bolstered by astute clientelist practice. But its pro-Western policies also attracted the support of left-liberal strata, alienated from the Kemalist bloc. By contrast, the CHP has mostly relied on an urban middle-class electoral base. The AKP's onslaught against its Kemalist rivals escalated into a regime-wide purge during the 2000s, with the Erdoğan government initiating vast police and juridical operations against its opponents, jailing journalists, academics, politicians and army officers in the infamous Ergenekon trials. The regime juggled temporary tactical alliances with a wide array of different groups, including the tightly organized religious group of Fethullah Gülen, to align against its enemy of the moment: the military, the PKK, some parts of the bourgeoisie, trade unionists and Alevis.

In 2010, the AKP pushed through a referendum allowing it to rewrite the constitution (though the most repressive features were retained). The following year, Erdoğan won his third electoral victory, harvesting almost 50 per cent of votes cast. Now with a freer hand, his 'zero problems' foreign policy soon pivoted into a dirty war against the Assad regime, rhetorically backed by Sunni chauvinism. The regime became more openly authoritarian and socially conservative. Pressures on organized labour increased, both through privatization and subcontracting, and direct political repression. Legislation was drafted to limit women's rights, including tightening the law on abortion—legal in Turkey since the 1980s—and informing pregnant women's families about their condition. Honour killings of women increased fourteen-fold between 2002 and 2009, alongside the killings of transgendered people. The AKP also introduced stricter regulation of the sale of alcohol. One result of these moves was to produce a radicalized secularist constituency, whose disappointment with the failure of the mainstream opposition drove them toward militant street activism as the only remaining way of challenging the AKP.

This explains why the number of political protests was already rising steadily in the year preceding the Gezi uprising: from fewer than 60 in July 2012 to over a hundred a month from September to December

2012; from 150 in January 2013, to over 200 in March and 250 in May, spiking at over 400 protests in June 2013.[12] In the fall of 2012, Kurdish protests—including a 68-day hunger strike that involved thousands of Kurdish prisoners—helped push the AKP into peace talks with the PKK after thirty years of armed conflict. Alevis challenged the increasingly sectarian, Sunni-oriented policies of the AKP, symbolized by Erdoğan's naming the new Bosphorus bridge after Yavuz Süleyman, the sixteenth-century Ottoman sultan who had ordered the slaughter of 40,000 Alevis. Protests by feminist groups forced the government to withdraw the new abortion law. Labour militancy rose, with strikes by Turkish Airlines employees and textile workers. LGBT activists took to the streets against hate crimes, while in December 2012 protesting students were beaten back by riot police at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara. Environmental activists campaigned against government proposals to build new hydroelectric and nuclear plants. Secularist CHP supporters turned the Republic Day celebrations on 29 October into anti-government protests. Football 'ultras', who would be at the heart of the Gezi protests, were increasingly involved in street-fights with the police. Gezi would bring together these different groups on the basis of anti-government sentiment, mobilized, in the face of fierce state violence, around the most innocent of political demands: 'Don't demolish our city park'.

Social analysis

Who, then, were the Gezi protesters, in the broadest sense—what was the class composition of the uprising and what ideologies did it espouse? In what follows, we analyse the results of three surveys: two by the KONDA Research Institute, during and just after the protests in June and July 2013; and one by the SAMER Research Institute, conducted in Istanbul and İzmir in December 2013.[13] We use the SAMER data to present a fine-grained analysis of the Gezi protesters and their supporters, deploying the class

[12] Authors' analysis of newspaper sources, July 2012–July 2013.

[13] The first KONDA survey was conducted from 6–8 June 2013, based on a randomly chosen sample of 4,411 respondents in Gezi Park itself. The second KONDA survey, conducted in July 2013, immediately after the protests, involved interviews with 2,629 respondents in a random sample representing the entire Turkish population. The SAMER survey, conducted in Istanbul and İzmir in December 2013, was based on a stratified random sample of 3,944 respondents. We analysed the raw data from SAMER and KONDA using descriptive statistical methods, and present the KONDA results from its 'Gezi Report', June 2013, available in English on KONDA's website.

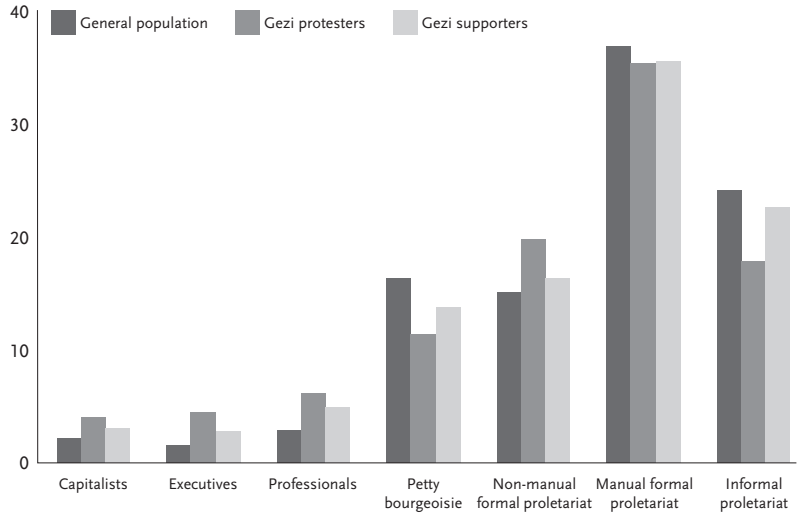
categories developed by Alejandro Portes and Kelly Hoffman: capitalists (proprietors or managing partners of large/medium firms), executives (managers or administrators of large/medium firms or institutions), professionals (university trained, in public service or large/medium firms), petty bourgeoisie (own-account professionals, micro-entrepreneurs), non-manual formal proletariat (vocationally trained salaried technicians, white-collar employees), manual formal proletariat (skilled or unskilled waged workers, with labour contracts) and informal proletariat (non-contractual waged workers, casual vendors, unpaid family workers).[14]

Figure 1 (overleaf) shows the results of our analysis of the social distribution of Gezi protesters and their supporters, compared to the general population for Istanbul and İzmir.[15] The largest single group of protesters was from the manual formal proletariat (36 per cent), followed by the non-manual proletariat (20 per cent), the informal proletariat (18 per cent), the petty bourgeoisie (11 per cent), professionals (6 per cent), executives (5 per cent), and capitalists (4 per cent). In other words, more than half of the protesters—approximately 54 per cent—belonged to the formal and informal proletariat, the two lowest echelons of the class structure. Adding the non-manual formal proletarians, i.e. white-collar employees and technicians, increases the proletarian participation rate to 74 per cent. At the same time, the upper classes had a higher representation among Gezi protesters than among the population as a whole: in other words, the likelihood of an individual having participated increased if he or she was from a higher class location. This does

[14] Alejandro Portes and Kelly Hoffman, 'Latin American Class Structures: Their Composition and Change during the Neoliberal Era', *Latin American Research Review* 38, February 2003. The SAMER survey allows us to operationalize these categories through a class module in the questionnaire that asks about employment status. In addition, the module allows us to develop a model based on households, rather than individuals. Class modules targeting individuals normally end up (in the Turkish case) with 40 per cent of respondents categorized as housewives and students. However the SAMER class module takes the class position of households into account and lets us create an exhaustive class categorization of the sample. In this module, if an individual states that he or she is not economically active, then the person is asked to answer the class module questions again in terms of the family member who is most economically responsible for the household.

[15] For the SAMER survey, we define Gezi supporters as those who ranked themselves as 4 or 5 on a scale measuring support for the protests, with 1 for 'totally oppose', 5 for 'totally support' and 3 for 'neither oppose nor support'.

FIGURE 1 : *Social distribution of Gezi protesters and supporters, Istanbul and İzmir (%)*

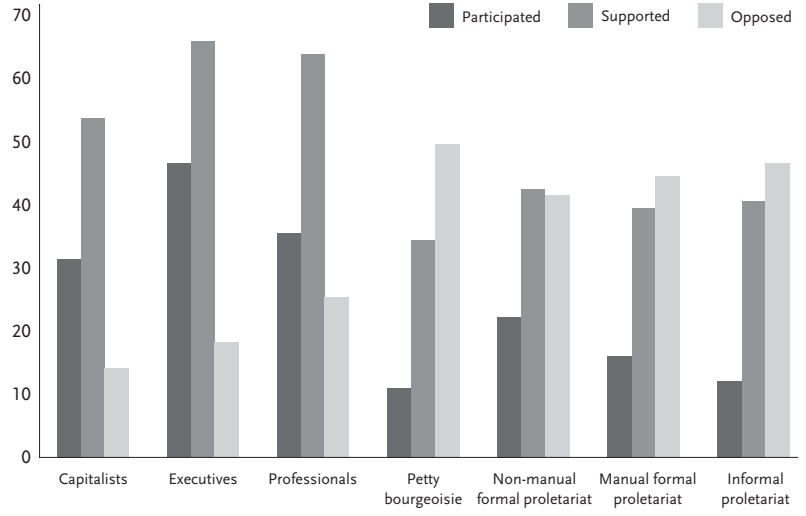


Source: SAMER.

not, however, erase the fact that the absolute majority of protesters came from a proletarian background.

Next, we analysed the proportion of those taking part in or supporting the protests from each social class (Figure 2). Although the rate of participation was much lower among the manual formal proletariat and the informal proletariat, 14 and 12 per cent respectively, they contributed more than half of the total protesters because of their greater numerical strength. (The lower rate of participation may also be related to their limited time and other resources in comparison to the other strata.) The 'new middle classes' referred to by many commentators would correspond to the following layers: non-manual formal proletariat (salaried technicians and white-collar employees), professionals (university-trained, salaried professionals in the public service and large or medium-sized private firms), and executives (managers and administrators of large/medium firms and public institutions). Our analysis shows that these strata constituted 31 per cent of Gezi protesters. While this represents a larger proportion than their overall presence in the Istanbul–İzmir sampled population—20 per cent, according to SAMER—the Gezi pro-

FIGURE 2: *Gezi Protests: class participation, support and opposition, Istanbul and İzmir (%)*



Source: SAMER.

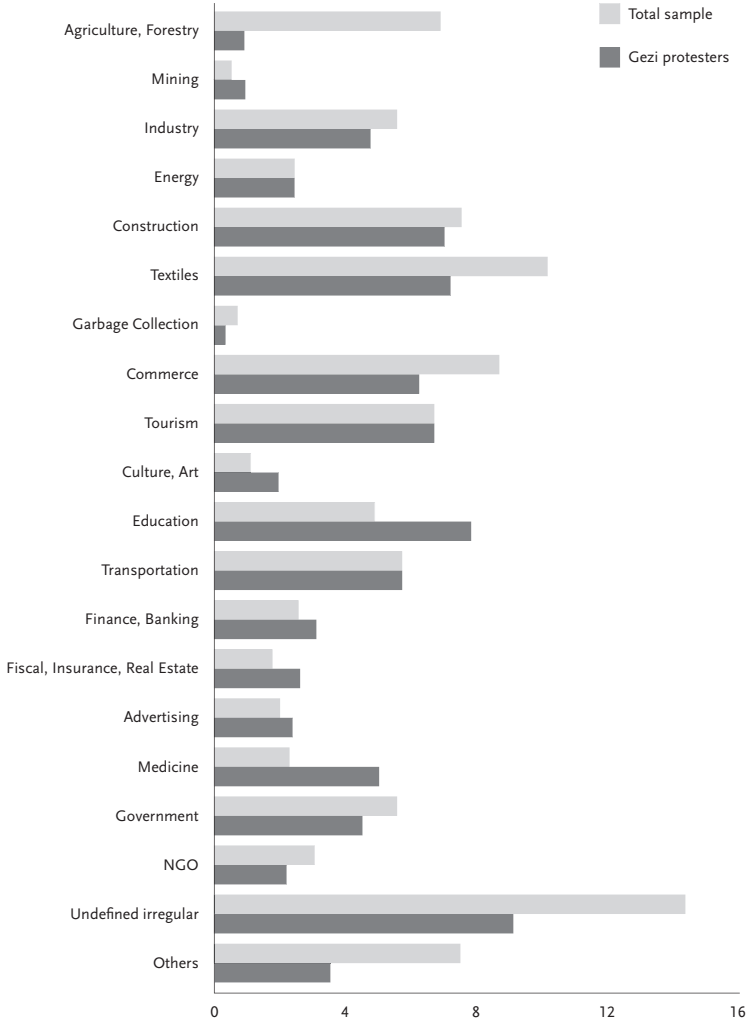
tests at their height were not a 'new middle class' movement: 54 per cent of participants were proletarians, 11 per cent petty bourgeois and 4 per cent capitalists.

Gezi protesters were thus drawn from a heterogeneous class population. The rate of participation was very high among professionals, executives and capitalists (35–45 per cent) and relatively low among proletarians (12–21 per cent). This helps explain why the protests have been so widely perceived as a 'new middle class' uprising. While the majority of protestors came from a lower-class background, the high rate of participation within the middle and upper classes created the impression of a predominantly middle-class crowd. In addition, the middle classes had more control over the means of communication and could therefore represento themselves as a greater social force in the Gezi protests than they actually were.

Analysis of income distribution shows that two-thirds of Gezi protesters had a monthly household income below $1,250—only slightly lower than the segment of the total Istanbul–İzmir population whose income

falls below that threshold. In terms of employment, the sectoral distribution of Gezi protesters was very similar to that of the broader population in the two cities, although there were slightly more protesters working in medicine and education and slightly fewer in textiles, commerce, agriculture and irregular activities (Figure 3). The same held true for wage distribution: informal and manual-formal proletarian protesters had

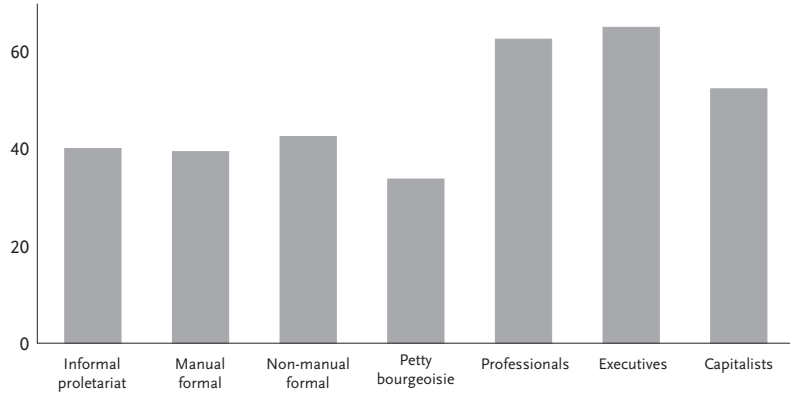
FIGURE 3: *Sectoral distribution of the Istanbul–İzmir sample and Gezi protesters (%)*



Source: SAMER

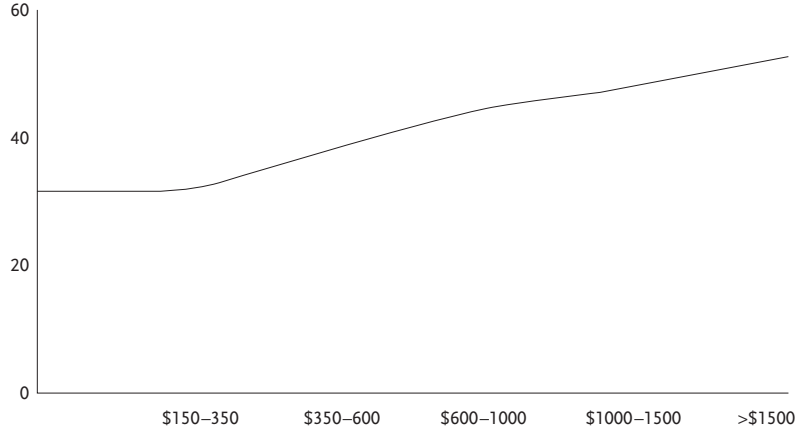
slightly higher wages than is the case for these layers as a whole, but otherwise Gezi protesters received the same wage levels as the larger sampled population. And despite the public perception that workers were hostile or at least indifferent to the protests, the surveys show that around two-fifths of all proletarians supported Gezi, while among the upper strata this ratio increases to around three-fifths (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: *Gezi supporters as a proportion of their class (%)*



Source: SAMER

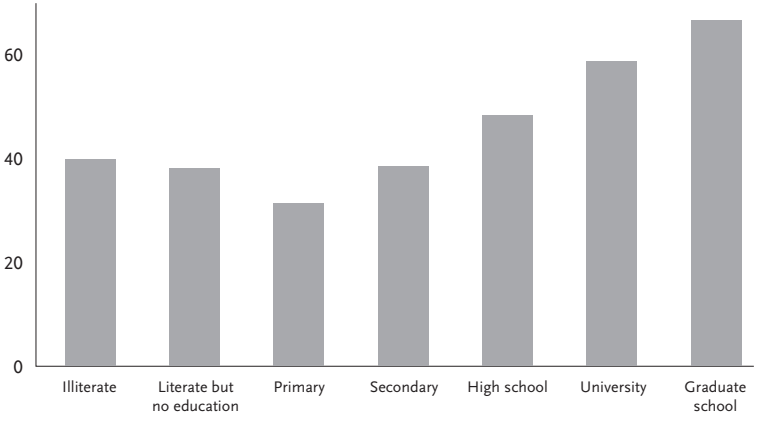
FIGURE 5: *Support for Gezi by $ monthly household income group (%)*



Source: KONDA countrywide survey

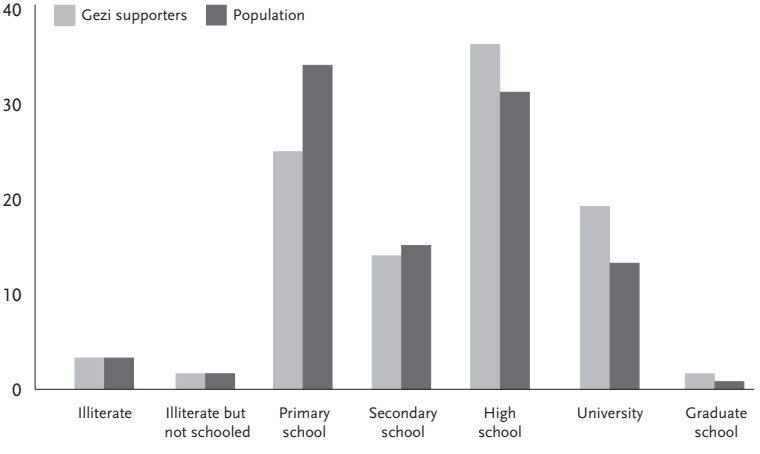
So far we have examined the data from the Istanbul–İzmir survey. Turning now to the second KONDA survey, we again find that the level of support for Gezi rises among higher income groups (Figure 5). There is a similar correlation with higher levels of education, with a slight decrease among primary school graduates (Figures 6 and 7, below). But, as with the Istanbul–İzmir survey, the fact that support for Gezi rises in parallel to income and education levels does not mean that these higher strata

FIGURE 6: *Gezi protests support by education level (%)*



Source: KONDA countrywide survey

FIGURE 7: *Education level distribution of Gezi supporters countrywide (%)*

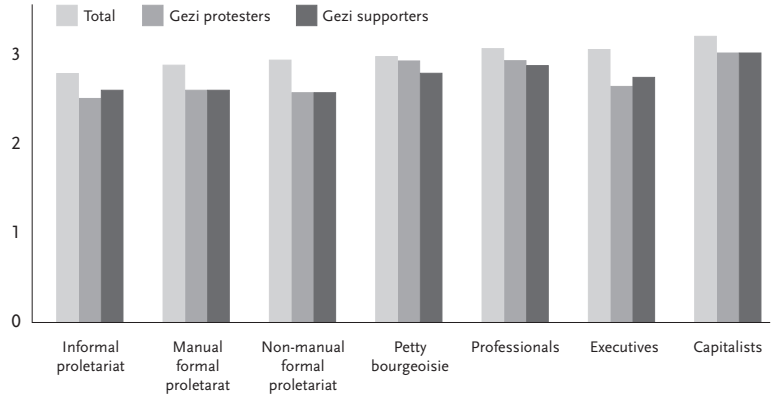


Source: KONDA countrywide survey

were a majority. On the contrary, the countrywide survey shows that 76 per cent of Gezi supporters in Turkey have monthly household incomes below $1,000—an income distribution which perfectly matches that of the general population.

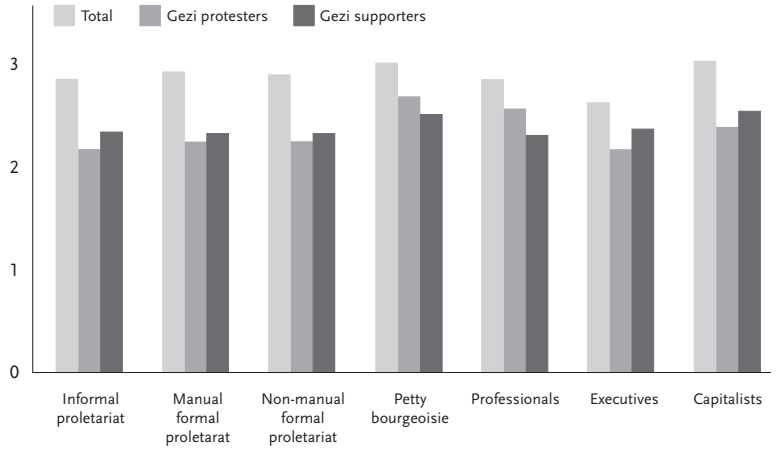
What was the impact of broader economic conditions on the Gezi protesters and supporters? When those in Istanbul and İzmir were asked

FIGURE 8: *Satisfaction with changes in economic welfare of your household, by class*



Source: SAMER

FIGURE 9: *Satisfaction with changes in economic welfare of Turkey, by class*



Source: SAMER

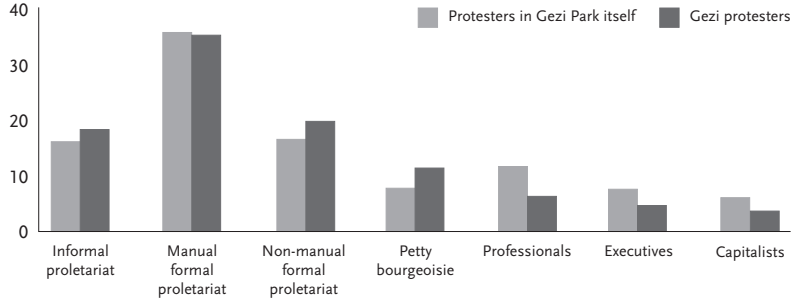
about the situations of their household and of Turkey as a whole, their evaluations were slightly more pessimistic than the average for their class stratum (Figures 8 and 9). Nevertheless, the difference between the larger sampled population for the cities and the Gezi supporters and protesters remained constant over different social classes, which shows that economic insecurity should be seen as a factor driving not only the 'new middle classes' but all other classes as well.

So far, we have demonstrated that 'Gezi protesters' in the widest sense were broadly representative of the wider population in class terms. Those who went to Gezi Park itself, however, as opposed to Taksim Square or the other protests, presented a rather more elevated class profile. There were fewer workers, and more professionals and executives, among

FIGURE 10: *Occupational distribution of Istanbul sample and protesters who went to Gezi Park*

Source: SAMER

FIGURE 11: *Class distribution of all Gezi protesters and of those who went to Gezi Park*

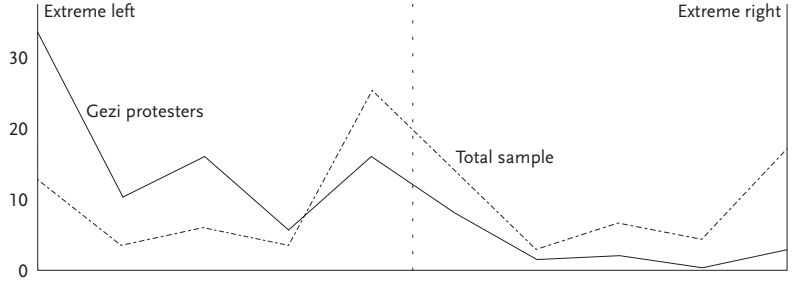


Source: SAMER

those who stated that they went to the park during the protests. Relative to the overall Istanbul population, students made up a large proportion of the protesters in Gezi Park, while housewives were notably underrepresented (Figure 10). In the park itself, class distribution was skewed slightly upward (Figure 11) as the more organized activists and left-wing groups were mainly concentrated in Taksim Square and the barricaded streets surrounding it, while unaffiliated individuals congregated in Gezi Park and took part in the social activities and performances. According to the KONDA survey, 79 per cent of those in the park said that they did not belong to any political organization, and 94 per cent said that they came to the park as individuals and not to represent any particular group. For 55 per cent, the Gezi protests were the first political demonstration they had ever joined.

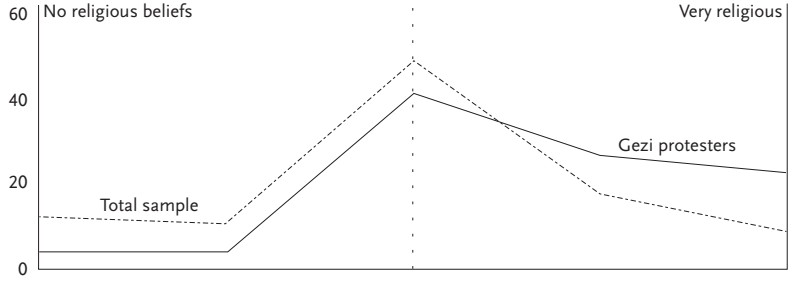
But if all classes were proportionately represented, our analysis shows that Gezi protesters and supporters differed from the rest of society in terms of their political and cultural orientations. While the populations

FIGURE 12: *Ideological alignment of Gezi protesters (%)*



Source: SAMER

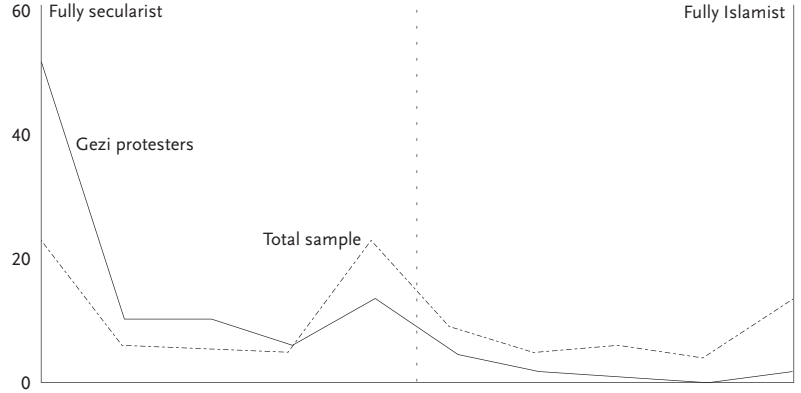
FIGURE 13: *Religious affiliation of Gezi protesters (%)*



Source: SAMER

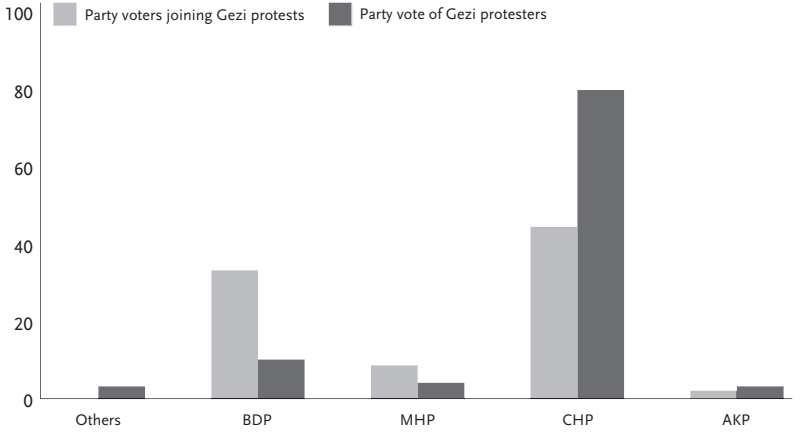
of Istanbul and İzmir tend to cluster on the centre ground, leaning slightly more to the right than to the left, Gezi supporters aligned themselves strongly with the left. In terms of religious beliefs, they were less pious than the general population, although the median number had some religious affiliation (Figures 12 and 13). They differed most significantly from the rest of the population in their view of secularism (Figure 14). In terms of their political alignments, a large majority of Gezi supporters were CHP voters,

FIGURE 14: *Level of Secularism of Gezi supporters (%)*



Source: SAMER

FIGURE 15: *Party vote of Gezi protesters, and percentage of Gezi protesters among supporters of each party (%)*



Source: SAMER

with a smaller group opting for the Kurdish BDP. Although there are slight class variations, approximately 80 per cent of Gezi protesters would vote for the CHP, with 10 per cent favouring the BDP. Support for the AKP and the far-right, ultra-nationalist MHP was much lower (Figure 15).

What were the subjective motivations of the protesters? According to the KONDA survey, nearly half—49 per cent—decided to go to Gezi Park after seeing the police violence. The overwhelming majority expressed their demands in terms of anti-authoritarianism and civil rights: 'for freedom' (34 per cent), 'for rights' (18 per cent), 'against dictatorship and oppression' (10 per cent), 'for democracy' (8 per cent), 'against police brutality' (6 per cent). A fifth of the protesters (19 per cent) had come to the park when the municipality started tearing out the trees. Only 5 per cent of protesters said that their main demand was against 'the removal of the trees and the replica barracks'. By contrast, according to our data sets for newspaper coverage of protest events in the year prior to Gezi, the dominating issues were of human rights (40 per cent), along with freedom of expression (23 per cent) and workers' rights (20 per cent). Even though there were a significant number of workers among the Gezi protesters, labour-based claims were not predominant. Some 61 per cent of protesters said they took part 'as citizens', while just 5 per cent did so 'as workers'; the same was true of professionals (the 'new middle class').

These findings suggest that the Gezi protests were not a sudden outburst but part of a larger protest cycle, in which the level of political activity had already begun to escalate during the year preceding June 2013. Within this cycle, the protests should not be seen as the movement of any particular social layer, be it 'the new middle class' or 'the proletariat'. Professionals, executives and big proprietors had a slightly higher representation relative to their overall weight in Turkish society, but this does not mean that they constituted the majority of Gezi protesters. On the contrary, most came from white- or blue-collar proletarian backgrounds. The widespread assumption that the 'new middle classes' were the main social force behind the Gezi uprising probably derives from the fact that these strata had greater representative power in both social and mainstream media, which made them more publicly visible than other classes. Also, those who were in Gezi Park itself, where media attention was focused, had slightly higher class profiles, which may have

contributed to the impression that Gezi protesters in general came from middle-class backgrounds.

Class is therefore not effective as an explanatory variable for the Gezi protesters. What differentiated them was not their class background but their political and cultural orientation. The protests should be understood as a popular movement driven by political demands, in which all social classes participated proportionally. The AKP's authoritarianism and socially conservative policies, together with their brash rebuilding and commercialization of the urban environment, had angered wide layers of the population, ultimately provoking countrywide protests against the government. The demands were predominantly political and embraced all social classes. As such, the main target was not capital and its owners, but the Erdoğan government.

How should the Gezi protests be seen in comparative perspective? Broadly speaking, the revolts since the 2008 financial crisis might fall into three categories. The first, and to date the weakest, would be anti-austerity, anti-neoliberal protests in the crisis-struck capitalist heartlands: Occupy Wall Street, the *indignados* in Spain, the Greek protests against EU–Troika rule. The second type would be the anti-authoritarian, pro-democracy protests, often triggered by rigged election results, which have erupted across the neo-capitalist former Second World, including the Arab states, Russia and now Hong Kong. (Ukraine might be seen as a combination of the second category—the anti-Yanukovich protests in Kiev—and the first: anti-neoliberal, anti–EU occupations in the Donbass Basin.) Thirdly, there have been mass protests in the other BRIC countries, notably Brazil and India, characterized since 2008 by inflationary, credit-fuelled expansion, construction booms and new levels of corruption. Here, as in the US and EU, a rapid rise in student numbers has confronted a contraction in secure white-collar jobs, and the precarization of formal as well as informal sectors.[16] A new generation has taken to the streets.

At face value, the Gezi protests might seem to fit the third category, especially given the trigger—anger at government-backed commercial

[16] Arguably one could define a fourth category, characterized by the exacerbating effect of external military intervention, overt or covert, within domestic political struggles: Libya, Syria, Ukraine.

construction encroaching on a rare fragment of public green space—and the seeming youth of the protest leaders. But although Gezi shares some characteristics of this category, at least in terms of demands voiced by the protesters, we contend that it fits better into the second category: anti-authoritarian and pro-democracy protests. The alliance of 'new proletarians'—typically, graduates working in telemarketing—with inflation-hit middle classes, which André Singer has defined as a central feature of the 2013 Brazilian protests,[17] does not capture the extent to which 'old proletarians' participated in the Turkish events. Again, economic issues—including soaring prices in privatized public goods, such as transport—were crucial in Brazil, whereas in Turkey, the main triggers were political.

[17] Singer, 'Rebellion in Brazil'.

Michael Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian*
Indiana University Press: Bloomington 2013, $35, paperback
274 pp, 978 0 2530 0728 5

Emilie Bickerton

A BONFIRE OF ART

It is unusual to be thrilled by a list, especially one as apparently standard as the oeuvre of an artist at the end of a book about him. But the pages Michael Witt has devoted to 'Works by Godard' at the end of his *Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian* paint an unfamiliar portrait, completely changing our conception of a man usually thought of as the director of *Breathless*, *Alphaville*, *Pierrot le fou* and *Weekend*. Witt's list includes these, but also all the rest: scripts, videos, press catalogues, trailers, books, invented interviews and texts reflecting on his own practice. To see Godard foremost as a multimedia artist sheds an entirely new light on his work. The importance of his feature films is not diminished; they now appear as early stages in a much longer, ongoing journey motivated by a central concern: what are the possibilities for genuine communication? Over the years he has looked for the answers in different mediums, using a range of tools, from scissors and glue to photocopiers, found footage, photographs, tape recorders, digital cameras and now 3D. Witt tackles his subject, in what is his first sole-authored book, in such an unfussy manner and without the elliptical quality tainting much Godard commentary—artsy, complicated prose trying to compensate for a kernel of confusion—that the experience of reading *Cinema Historian* is like a door swinging open.

The central subject of the book is Godard's personal and poetic reflection on cinema and history, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, first released in 1998 as a four-and-a-half hour video series. As evoked in Witt's title, this epic work is about

cinema's own history, and most of the material comes from stories told by it on the big screen. But *Histoire(s)* is also a running commentary on the telling of world history, and how it might be re-envisaged through the use and montage of cinematic forms. This combination of cinema and history is one of the defining features of Godard's oeuvre, and Witt chose this work as his focus because he considered it the theoretical and material culmination of Godard's 'self-appointed mission' to explore the possibility of genuine communication 'against the backdrop of the flood of reproductions in circulation on television, in the mass media, and on the internet'. Formally speaking, *Histoire(s)* is divided into eight parts of varying lengths, some less than 30 minutes and others nearly an hour, all weaving back and forth through the films of the twentieth century; the mood and themes change, but there are recurring motifs, underscored by an idiosyncratic account of the birth, brief life and, in Godard's view, protracted decline of cinema.

In his opening pages Witt gives a useful breakdown of *Histoire(s)* and in doing so provides us with a roadmap for navigating through the series. He argues that the first two-part chapter, made up of episodes 1A (51 mins) and 1B (42 mins), is the cornerstone of the work. 1A, 'Toutes les histoires' presents in condensed form 'the principal lines of thinking that run through the remainder of the series': the great promise of cinema and its catastrophic political-aesthetic decline. In 1B, 'Une histoire seule', Godard examines his own place within the history of cinema, and pursues some theoretical reflections on cinema's defining characteristics. The subsequent six episodes are 'localized case studies': 2A, 'Seul le cinéma' (27 mins), unfolds the metaphor of 'projection', already introduced in 1B; 2B, 'Fatale beauté' (29 mins) explores cinema's relation to beauty; 3A, 'La monnaie de l'absolu' (27 mins), focuses on the representation of war, with particular reference to Italian neorealism; 3B, 'Une vague nouvelle', offers a personal account of the French New Wave; 4A, 'Le contrôle de l'univers', is a meditation on Hitchcock as one of cinema's great artists—'he made difficult, sensitive, mysterious and successful films that didn't follow a recipe', Godard has said, and 'that's extremely rare'. The final section 4B, 'Les signes parmi nous' (38 mins), is both 'a sombre, intimate self-portrait' and a meditative stocktaking on the work as a whole.

Running throughout, as Witt puts it, is 'a three-way tension between a bleak overarching narrative of cinematic decline, the vitality of the crystalline forms through which that narrative is expressed, and a recurrent thematic emphasis on artistic metamorphosis and renewal'. Already the youngest of the arts, cinema was 'the child that turned out bad': it failed to live up to its historic responsibilities. There are also, however, moments of resurrection—one of the recurrent motifs in the series along with fire and sacrifice—to suggest that *Histoire(s)* is not just a tragedy in eight acts, but

also an exploration of the possibilities of image-making in the context of such powerful and negative influences.

On first viewing, *Histoire(s)* is a breathtaking ride through cinema's history, or in Witt's more seductive description, 'an audiovisual tapestry of astonishing sumptuosity'. One problem with this sumptuous tapestry is how hard it is to talk about: the viewer is left with feelings and impressions, and perhaps a sense of illumination, but these are all frustratingly resistant to linguistic expression. The 'dense texture and serpentine forms', Witt ventures, 'are closer to those one more readily associates with poets and musicians', recalling modernist modes of serial and fugal composition. Because text, commentary, sound and image co-exist or cut into each other all the time, describing isolated passages rarely manages to satisfactorily capture their spirit or our experience of watching them. The five-minute homage to Hitchcock, for example, is suddenly announced in the middle of 4A by a black screen and the inter-title L'ARTISTE flashing up between images of Robert Bresson, Fritz Lang, Eric Rohmer. Hitchcock's voice then comes in, giving a definition of the art of cinema, quickly overlapped by another commentary from Godard, and then another, while clips of Hitchcock films are at the same time shuttering across the screen. The sequences we are watching do not match the commentaries, but 30 seconds later the scenes under discussion do appear. On the soundtrack, samples of music increase in intensity, creating a crescendo effect with new inter-titles flashing and Godard whispering praise for the director. We can only absorb all this in snatches and, using the elements we manage to retain, try to impose our own interpretative logic upon it. The effect can be exhilarating, but only if we abandon the attempt to grasp the totality of the material—the rush of images, music, text to read and overlapping spoken dialogue, in complex internal relation to each other—for our own critical reflection.

This immediatist, non-reflexive reaction is the desired effect. Godard said he wanted to generate feelings, not words, so as to touch something deeper and essential in his viewers. *Histoire(s)* 'should emanate directly from the combination of images and sounds rather than from an explanatory or interpretative text written about or imposed on them', he told Eric Hobsbawm in 2000 during a panel discussion with other historians to mark the work's release. The task of the spectator, Witt elaborates, 'is not necessarily that of understanding but rather of hearing, receiving and "seeing" the effects of his compression and concatenation of his disparate source materials in the intuitive, emotional and visceral way one might experience a piece of music'.

Cinema Historian has the big ambition of changing the way we see Godard as an artist. Witt sets about doing this in a nuts-and-bolts fashion, taking apart *Histoire(s)* in all its forms. He examines the origins of the series in the

1970s, exploring the parallel works made during the decades of its gestation, and the models and guides—artistic, historical, philosophical—with whom Godard maintained real or imaginary dialogues, and whose ideas fed into the final series. Further complicating our grasp on *Histoire(s)* is its various manifestations: as videos, books and CDs. These have all come out at different stages and none replicates exactly the contents of the other. Witt deals with this with aplomb, treating the books and CDs as fundamentally different objects from the audiovisual series rather than simple offshoots. *Histoire(s)* is not solely an audiovisual series, he says, but 'a more complex integrated multiform work'. Looked at in this way, we see a multimedia artist at the height of his powers, not casually spinning off a book or soundtrack from a video series, but literally transforming each into striking works of graphic design, iconographic criticism, and experimental musical composition.

Witt was guided by two essential insights gleaned during his doctoral research on Godard's collaborative work with Anne-Marie Miéville in the 1970s. Both form constitutive elements in his portrait. The first was the realization of the scope and variety of Godard's work in different media and contexts; the second the integrated nature of Godard's life project and the 'flow and metamorphosis' within it of references, ideas, motifs. Each work is '"to be continued" into the next', says Witt, quoting editor and filmmaker Jacques Doniol-Valcroze in 1965. In its own style and rhythm, *Cinema Historian* has something of this fluid and metamorphic quality. In each chapter Witt builds his arguments carefully, but he also weaves and twists elegantly around themes, goes forwards for a closer look at something mentioned in passing, then moves ahead again. The result is to leave open the contradictions and tensions in Godard's own work. Interpretations are confidently offered, but nothing is ever shut-down or absolute. At times this can be frustrating, but it is at least true to its subject. Godard's counter-cinema has always resisted giving straight answers. It is one means among many of challenging what Peter Wollen called 'the seven deadly sins of cinema', including the single diegesis and closure, with corresponding 'cardinal virtues', in this case multiple narratives and openness.

One additional and vital layer of analysis and commentary in *Cinema Historian* comes from its own iconographic criticism. In the very design of his book Witt has followed the example of the Third Republic art historian Élie Faure, who famously said 'I do not comment upon the picture through the text. I justify the text through the picture.' Godard also takes Faure for a guide, and has fulminated against the redundant use of images by film writers, usually from a literary background, who 'put a photo' so that the reader 'can be certain that this is indeed the film under discussion'. *Cinema Historian*, by contrast, gives almost as much space to its vast selection of stills from *Histoire(s)* and other films as it does to the text. The images

appear on nearly every page, in an outer column delineated by a soft green background, running down the side of the inner writing. The result is like a work of art history, with the same glossy colour pages.

In his discussion of the major intellectual and artistic influences on *Histoire(s)*, Witt identifies five distinct groups: historians and philosophers of history; art historians; cinema historians; found-footage essayists; and audiovisual critics and historians. In this large and diverse crowd some figures stand out: Charles Péguy and Jules Michelet for their 'poetic' approach to history; Serge Daney for a long-running conversation on the role of the image in the era of mass media; above all, Henri Langlois and André Malraux. In the 1950s, the director of the French Cinémathèque had famously nurtured the tastes of the nascent New Wave. 'One evening / we went to see / Henri Langlois / and then there was light', as Godard puts it in 3B. Langlois's mixed screenings—film noir, silents, B-movies, French and American classics of the inter-war years—proved to Godard that 'showing was a form of thinking', and that it was possible to develop a visual cinema history through the juxtaposition of different films.

The relationship with André Malraux was more vexed, but no less fundamental. Malraux's *Psychologie de L'Art* (1947–49) and *Le Musée imaginaire* (1952–54) 'showed me the way', Godard has said, towards a poetic, visual approach to the composition of history. In the late 60s Malraux as French Culture Minister had become Enemy Number One, but in the 80s Godard was ready to turn to him again as a source of inspiration. Conceptually, Witt argues, three Malrucian ideas have been definitive: first, the notion of art as 'the small change of the absolute', as the title of 3A has it—an outcome of humanity's unending struggle against the human condition, the passage of time and the inevitability of death. Second, there is the idea of artistic creativity as not the representation but the transfiguration of the real—in Godard's metaphorical take, 'art is like fire, it is born out of what it consumes'. Third, there is Malraux's exploration of art's metamorphoses, both in the transformation of the idea of art from epoch to epoch, or culture to culture, and in the remembrance and destruction of inherited forms, and creation of new ones, in the art of the present. If we are accustomed to thinking of Godard as a solitary figure, operating for the past forty years from a tiny town on the shores of Lake Geneva, an unexpected portrait emerges from this sustained look at his defining intellectual relationships. Godard has of course always drawn on the work of others, in his use of explicit references and quotations; he collaborated closely with Jean-Pierre Gorin in the 1970s, and thereafter with Miéville. Witt's picture is of an artist in constant and open dialogue with his contemporaries and predecessors.

Godard's unforgiving account of cinema's political-aesthetic degeneration is the central theme of *Histoire(s)*. Witt first clarifies the concept

of cinema which *Histoire(s)* constructs, evoking the director's profound engagement with the silent era since his Cinémathèque days, and his identification with the great hopes for a truly modern art form held out by the earliest forms of the cinematograph. Those who have found Godard's negativity towards contemporary forms of cinema excessive, or his celebration of its silent era uncritical, need to take into account the depth of his belief in the revolutionary potential of the cinematograph, Witt argues. Cinema's failure to live up to its initial promise as an art form was not just an aesthetic but a cultural-political disaster, giving its late-twentieth century course the proportions of a tragedy.

It is not hard to share Godard's exhilaration at those times when the first films were being made—the era when Jean Epstein could exclaim 'Bonjour Cinéma!' without irony. In an age of social revolution, artistic endeavour and technological innovation had combined with two vital ingredients: montage and projection. The first of these has always been essential to Godard, the faithful follower of Robert Bresson's injunction: 'Bring together things that have never been brought together and did not seem predisposed to be so.' The scissor-wielding montage pioneers Griffith, Méliès and Eisenstein transformed the initial desire to study human movement into an art. Projection by the Lumière brothers turned it into an industry, which also brought films to a mass audience and offered viewers a new way of engaging with themselves and society. 'Cinema projected / and people / saw / that the world / was there', as Godard puts it in 1B. In Witt's words:

> Inherently inclusive in its extra-linguistic mode of address, and drawing social classes together in the movie theatre, the popular nascent art form carried the promise, for Godard, of a contagious democratizing effect: by simply representing the physical and social world to vast numbers of individuals in an instantly recognizable form, it facilitated a makeshift process of self-psychoanalysis on the part of the viewer and a profound negotiation of one's place in the world.

In part, this is a formal attribute: the juxtaposition of images in cinematic montage creates an immediate basis for comparison. Godard:

> You see a rich person and a poor person and there's a comparison. And you say: it's not fair. Justice comes from a comparison. And from then weighing it in the scales. The very idea of montage is the scales of justice.

Witt then outlines the overt reasons Godard has offered for cinema's decline: the arrival of sound, commercial exploitation, the mass spread of banal and blinding television imagery, and its failure to acquit itself in face of the Judeocide and the anti-Nazi resistance. His nuanced reading qualifies Godard's melodramatic claim in 3A that 'the flame'—of cinema—'was

extinguished for good at Auschwitz'. Like Kracauer in *From Caligari to Hitler*, Godard ascribes cinema with the power to conduct 'a sort of visionary ethnology, or embryology, of imminent social mutation, *foreseeing* emergent patterns of political turbulence and social upheaval.' In the 1920s, Renoir's *La règle du jeu* foresaw the disintegration of Europe into war, while Murnau's *Nosferatu* depicted a Berlin reduced to rubble long before it took place. The point is hammered home in IA when Godard cuts repeatedly between the dancing skeleton in Renoir's film and archival footage of the concentration camps. But a second, complementary political-historical function lay in cinema's ability to confront and broadcast the events it has prophesied for democratic debate, as they come to pass. As Witt puts it: 'momentous moments of social instability and conflict are crystallized immediately in cinematic form, and made available for discussion.' Immediacy is critical here for cinema to enable the popular 'self-psychoanalysis' evoked above.

Godard knows, of course, that some films did try to play this role, and shows both Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* and Lubitsch's *To Be or Not To Be* in IA. But for the most part, he claims, cinema abdicated its responsibilities, leaving the field to the impoverished medium of the newsreel. As IA's intertitles state: 'what there is of cinema / in the war newsreels / says nothing / it doesn't judge'. Godard dismisses two Polish works on the camps—Munk's *Passenger* and Jakubowska's *The Last Stage*—as 'expiation films' and individual ventures, rather than collective efforts by the Polish nation to confront its recent past. He has been scathing about Lanzmann's *Shoah*—'a scenario for a film rather than a finished work'—and Benigni's *Life is Beautiful*, and has nothing but contempt for *Schindler's List*. But he also sees cinema's abdication extending more broadly: it barely addressed the French Resistance, or May 68—Godard dismisses his own work from that period.

What is the explanation for the medium's political-historical failure? Witt suggests that in *Histoire(s)*, Godard shows us cinema had already been weakened, misused and corrupted, 'insulted and injured' for several decades before the 1940s. Commercialization was a key culprit—cinema's roots had been in science, but it was quickly seduced by the allure of glamour and profit to become an offshoot of the cosmetics industry. Male domination was also a disabling force: Godard is hardly known for his feminist sensibility, but *Histoire(s)* has powerful passages reflecting on the early screen obsession with sex—first evoked, then punished—and the manipulation of women. The talkies were a third blow, robbing cinema of its universal language and its ability to make people see, without the distraction of spoken dialogue. Cinema was already crippled as a democratic medium before World War II. At first it 'stammered' history, and then at a given moment it no longer did it. 'Cinema stopped there'. But cinema has not exactly 'stopped

there', in as much as the missed encounters have forced new movements and experiments into action, including those of Godard himself.

One of the most interesting contradictions in *Histoire(s)* comes with Godard's model of what constitutes 'true cinema', as opposed to 'films'. The latter can always be made, but 'cinema' itself requires a rare combination of elements, all with their roots in national consciousness. It is worth dwelling on this 'unresolved tension', as Witt calls it. One thing that immediately strikes any viewer of *Histoire(s)* is how much material is drawn from Godard's personal list of *auteurs*. The likes of Dreyer, Hitchcock, Lang, Renoir and Welles have nourished his work since his earliest days as a film critic at *Cahiers du cinéma* when he championed the *politique des auteurs*. However, in *Histoire(s)* Godard presents 'true cinema' as existing only when the collective thirst for a national self image produces a simultaneous revolution in film language. According to Godard this has happened only a handful of times: in post-revolutionary Russia, the German cinema of the 20s and 30s, Italy's post-war neo-realism and American Hollywood in the 40s and 50s. He also manages to slip in his own French New Wave by way of a revisionist account attacking its *politique*, and admitting the movement was the 'twitch of a twitch', having described Italian neo-realism as 'the last twitch of cinema'.

The tension between an *auteur* approach to cinema and one based on national consciousness is a rich one; it animates one's viewing of *Histoire(s)*, rather than blocking it. It is easy to challenge, and one feels the division cannot be absolute for Godard himself. After all, the history of cinema is replete with examples of trans-national borrowings, which have led to the development of new filmic languages, from the revolutionary Russians and Griffith, with his one-time assistant from Vienna, Erich von Stroheim, to Godard's own New Wave, inspired by techniques and genres from Hollywood's studio directors. A knottier problem is the narrowness of Godard's pantheon in *Histoire(s)*. While he is right to make a distinction between isolated works by brilliant directors and 'cinema' in a broader sense, this does not compensate for his limited geographical scope of reference. Witt acknowledges that Godard 'sets to one side the overwhelming majority of national cinemas', and consistently locates the origins of cinema and its true trajectory in the Western aesthetic tradition. But this merits more attention, because the result is a skewed account of cinema's history that has such obvious counter-examples, the most glaring being Japan. In *Histoire(s)* Godard features the work of Mizoguchi, but he maintains that while the country had fine directors and a substantial film industry, it was not caught up in any widespread quest for national identity. Yet the output of the stellar filmmakers in postwar Japan contradicts this. Kurosawa, Oshima, Shindo, Yoshimura, Ichikawa, Suzuki and Matsumoro were all dealing with Japan's shattered national identity in

the wake of Hiroshima, and also breaking the revered aesthetic traditions upheld for so long by the formidable studio system. Their work collectively would seem to fit Godard's 'true cinema' definition, but he has not sought to expand the pantheon he established early on in his career.

Godard, of course, never promised to account for every film ever made, and *Histoire(s)* is purposefully not a systematic historical narrative of cinema. He subscribes instead to the view outlined by Hollis Frampton in his appropriately unfinished epic project on cinema history, *Magellan*—that any 'completist' film historian is on a one-way road to the asylum. Perhaps this is why Witt decided not to pursue the question of geo-cultural limitations. Instead, in keeping with his portrait, he is a cinema historian in a poetic way, who values the lyricism and evocative nature of Michelet's work, for example, over more accurate but drier accounts of the past. Godard has, indeed, always admired chroniclers and has preferred to pursue imaginary dialogues with historians from Alexandre Koyré to Georges Canguilhem, while his attempts to talk to real ones when *Histoire(s)* came out on video did not generate particularly interesting results. For Godard, the 'proper' historians have that dangerous habit of sticking to the facts without taking any risks, meaning they often miss the essence of the times they are exploring and trying to evoke. So, in his bid to get at the essence of cinema, one can imagine Godard did not mind too much about excluding almost completely the film traditions from Asia and Africa. Somehow, this is not the point.

'The important thing is what they hide from me, not what they show me' said Bresson about his actors. We could say the same of Godard. What he shows us is half the story; what he does not show is just as important. His model of cinema leaves the door open to more than he has allowed inside; it is up to us to expand his definition of cinema to include more filmmakers than *Histoire(s)* would otherwise acknowledge. So, too, with the so-called end of cinema. As Witt points out, 'running alongside his account of the disintegration of cinema's documentary eye is a competing story that emphasizes renewal'. After the flame of the cinematograph was 'extinguished', there was Italian neo-realism and the French New Wave. The same goes for the beginnings of a new era on screen, the one described by Serge Daney as the shock of the camps signalling an end but also 'a founding trauma underpinning the self-conscious forms of modern cinema'. In *Histoire(s)* Godard seems to agree with this, in clips evoking a classic sign of this modern cinema: actresses looking directly back at the camera in *Summer with Monika*, *Europa 51* and *Bonjour Tristesse*.

Ends and beginnings, in other words, run throughout *Histoire(s)*, and what seems to have stopped or been extinguished can rise again in a new form. This is also true for television, the subject of Witt's penultimate chapter. In *Histoire(s)* Godard is unequivocal about the impact of the small

screen. He refers to the post-television era as 'after Chernobyl' and describes how 'the Beast devoured Beauty'. But television has also been integral to Godard's creative project, Witt argues, in its role as a 'negative exemplar', providing the 'quasi-mythological destructive force against which he has reacted and struggled in the creation of his work and in opposition to which he has defined cinema as art'. One of Godard's vital insights has been his criticism of the silent and corrosive effect of television on modern filmmakers who have unconsciously internalized the small screen's banal aesthetics. On this point, Witt appropriately includes a memorable exchange between Woody Allen and Godard, who asks Allen whether he thinks television could affect his filmmaking, 'like radioactivity can have a harmful effect on your brain'. Allen's confusion only confirms what is evident in his later work: these films lose nothing when viewed on television because its aesthetic informs their every shot. Allen seems unaware that such a critique could be possible.

Witt's journey through *Histoire(s)* ends with the possibility that Godard may be moving into new territory even as he reaches his ninetieth year. In *Film Socialisme* (2010) Witt detects a 'turning of the page' in Godard's historiographic project, as well as 'abundant evidence of formal vitality, of a continuing belief in the potential of new technologies—if used imaginatively—to produce the potent poetic imagery, and of deep curiosity for the digital image economy and contemporary world'. In Godard's newest, fully-3D release, *Farewell to Language*, there is further evidence of this new phase, though the film is also filled with ambiguity and counter-arguments. In its most positive form, *Farewell to Language* is an education in what 3D technology can offer cinema. Godard takes up the mantle from Hitchcock, who had understood its potentials so well in 1954 with *Dial M for Murder*, placing all those plant pots in the foreground of his frame and drawing spectators into the narrative by turning us into murder accomplices, as Grace Kelly secretly handed us her scissors out of view of everyone in the film. For such a master of montage as Godard, 3D is an exciting proposition: he is no longer restricted to placing images one after the other, he can now put them on top of each other to generate moments of active co-creation for the spectator. In *Farewell* there are passages when one can either keep the double images blurred on the screen or close one eye and see a single image, open another eye and see a different one.

This is rich territory, but it comes with a particularly bleak outlook in which a dog, Roxy Miéville, appears to have a richer life than the man–woman dyad. The title of the film, and the choice of Roxy as one of his protagonists, suggests Godard may be retreating from his search for forms of real communication. The 3D medium, in Godard's hands, takes on a rather violent, at times overwhelming quality. It is more difficult than ever to reflect on what we are seeing as the inter-cutting of sound, text and image is so intense,

and we are literally right in there, among the swirling car lights and the saturated fields of flowers, or down at ground level with the dog. After this it remains as hard as ever to predict what might come next with Godard. In his closing reflections, Witt describes *Histoire(s)* as 'not only a bonfire of the art of the past, but also a time capsule filled with traces of films, evidence of a lifelong passion for cinema and a record of the secret of cinematographic montage'—'an incendiary device designed to be projected into the future to nourish art forms as yet undreamed of'. Years after *Histoire(s)*, it is clear Godard has not yet finished adding to the contents of this time capsule.

Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression*
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Joshua Rahtz

LAISSEZ-FAIRE'S REINVENTIONS

Despite its ubiquity, the concept 'neo-liberalism' resists consistency of meaning. It is too often deployed as a neutralized alternative to naming capitalism; but more thoughtful study also encounters real ambiguity in its referent. There are two principal inflections. The first, most basic, is a result of historical periodization. Within the advanced capitalist world, this gloss of the term denotes the era succeeding that of Keynesian mixed economies. Taken this way, it was a policy response first felt across the Anglosphere after the onset of the 1970s downturn, characterized by an attack on organized labour, the deregulation of markets, privatization of public assets and the take-off of finance. Its strictures and injunctions are now global. In a second register, that of ideas, 'neo-liberalism' designates the antecedents to this policy programme. The name in this case derives from the work of a group of economists who had been waiting in the wings since the inter-war period for the opportunity to put their ideas into practice. While histories of neo-liberalism may justifiably subordinate the concept's genealogy to its appearance as policy, they risk neglecting its distinctness as a movement of thought. Because neo-liberalism has been something altogether more expansive than a set of policy prescriptions, though less coherent than an ideology, reconstructing its intellectual development requires close attention to its internal variations.

Angus Burgin's *The Great Persuasion* is an attempt at this. Rather than tracking a shift from latency to expression, Burgin follows the intellectual transformations of neo-liberalism as idea, charting the *differentiae specificae* of its principal strains from their genesis in what he calls a 'transnational community of ideas', with its points of concentration at the London School

of Economics, the Universities of Freiburg and Chicago and the Institute for International Studies in Geneva. Burgin contends that neo-liberalism developed an art of persuasion to shift public opinion from mistrust of the market to embrace of it as the only legitimate basis of social life. His approach incorporates both synchronic and diachronic perspectives: punctuated cross-sections of the neo-liberal thought world, and narration of its mutations from a social philosophy of the market, in the 1930s, to an effective public-relations network in the 1970s, issuing a flood of concrete policy proposals. The 'more strident market advocacy of recent years', he writes, emerged 'only after an extended period of contestation and debate.'

Such an account should clearly hope to illuminate neo-liberalism's persistence as *doxa* after the implosion of its material base in the world economic crisis of 2008, signalling the modular features that appear to have allowed it a significant afterlife. Burgin book-ends his story with two historic announcements of the end of laissez-faire, opening in the 1920s with Keynes's ringing proclamation of its imminent demise—some years, in fact, before the Crash and Great Depression, in Hobsbawm's words, 'destroyed economic liberalism for half a century'—and closing in 2008 with the chorus of voices insisting that 'free-market fundamentalism' was over after Lehman Brothers' fall. Burgin cites Keynes: 'A study of the history of opinion is a necessary preliminary to the emancipation of the mind.' In our present predicament, he suggests, it is worth recalling that:

> The assumptions of an era seem less firm when they are placed in a context that includes their formation, degeneration and reformation . . . Those who set themselves against the prevailing opinions of today can take comfort in the knowledge that discursive constraints are never absolute, and often help create the conditions of their own decline.

Burgin, who teaches history at Johns Hopkins, is not the first to devote a monograph to the long gestation of neo-liberal policy within an international network of think-tanks; essential contributions in this field have been made by Dieter Plehwe, Bernhard Walpen, Ralf Ptak, Philip Plickert, Richard Cockett and Matthias Schmelzer, *inter alia*. Nor is *The Great Persuasion* the only recent study to distinguish early forms of neo-liberalism, with their theorizations of a strong state to ensure a basic framework for a market society, from later vulgarizations. The work, adapted from Burgin's 2009 doctoral dissertation, *The Return of Laissez-Faire*, is more insistent than most on this trajectory, however, and offers an especially stark periodization. From the 1930s to 1962, neo-liberal thinkers problematized pre-1929 doctrines of laissez-faire, sought a social or ethical grounding for their economic project, adopted an intellectually elitist approach—symbolized by the figure of Hayek—and had minimal impact on economic policy-making. From 1962 to

2008—the starting point here marks the publication of Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*—neo-liberalism openly proclaimed the virtues of laissez-faire, abandoned social philosophizing in the name of economism, adopted a populist approach (symbolized by Friedman himself) and had a global impact on policy-making.

The opening sections of *The Great Persuasion* offer a high-resolution examination of the ensemble of thinkers who built up a defence of liberalism during the 1930s. Burgin goes on to provide a concise distillation of the main currents of neo-liberalism in the mid-twentieth century, taking the Mont Pèlerin Society as the vector of the most important innovations, as well as the most illuminating divisions. His book promises a mapping of this tradition outside of existing social-scientific literature and intellectual biography. The point, Burgin writes, is to situate 'the major figures in dialogue with one another' through the extensive use of archival evidence; Hayek's correspondence, in particular, is an invaluable source. What emerges from this account is a group portrait of half a dozen highly distinctive economic thinkers, set in their respective locales during the inter-war period, working against the grain of social democracy and Keynesianism, while also remaining profoundly aware of problems in the tradition of laissez-faire.

His story begins in London where, by the start of the 1930s, Lionel Robbins had positioned himself at the vanguard of forces changing the political composition of the Economics Department at the LSE, which had hitherto been Fabian, by reading the conjuncture through the lens of Carl Menger and Eugen Böhm-Bawerk's disciples in Vienna. Robbins, more than anyone, helped to introduce to English economics a new account of the capitalist crisis which blamed an expansionary monetary policy for the problem of over-investment in fixed capital—the source of deflation—and thus for the transformation of what otherwise might have been a tolerable, normal recession into a world-historic depression.

It was during this restaging of the Austrian *Methodenstreit* that Robbins recruited the young Friedrich von Hayek, a prodigy in Ludwig von Mises's famous private seminars, to the LSE. In the pre-war period the department developed into an international nerve centre for those opposed to an emerging Keynesianism, notably Frank Knight and Jacob Viner at the University of Chicago. Viner, closely tied to Robbins intellectually and personally, had simultaneously set up, with Knight, a programme articulating their principled opposition to Roosevelt's New Deal. After the 1936 publication of *The General Theory*, Keynesianism had largely overtaken the more strident liberalism of Mises in academic economics; their work brought the LSE and Chicago into increasingly close contact.

Burgin takes care to specify the conceptual differences between these groups. Although they both claimed an epistemological modesty, from which

their free-market recommendations issued—given the limits of human comprehension, only the aggregate decisions of individual consumers could determine social need—Robbins and Hayek at the LSE were far more amenable to an unleashed capitalism than their North American counterparts in Hyde Park. In Burgin's telling, Knight, 'the most influential of the market advocates at Chicago during the interwar years', refused systemic absolutes, including the promises of the severely limited state along Hayekian lines. But Knight's concern had a moral as well as an epistemological dimension. Capitalist society bred deformed subjects: it could sustain itself 'only to the extent that it consisted of individuals whose behaviour departed from the norms it incentivized'. In other words, the market was only the best of bad alternatives, and required an extra-economic moral basis.

Global scepticism cut both ways for Viner, too. In his defence of the market, he claimed no fidelity to any 'abstract doctrine', and this allowed him criticism of economic concentration as well. According to Burgin, Viner notably deferred to popular sovereignty over the imperatives of markets, understanding the vocation of economists as that of fastening public demands—even for direct economic controls—to workable policy responses. Such formulations were perfectly acceptable to Knight's former pupil from Iowa, Henry Simons, who had joined the Chicago faculty in the late 1920s. Burgin contrasts this way of thinking with later Chicago liberalism, whose partisans, he relays, looked back in horror at Simons's writings, positioned as much against the monopoly power of big cartels as the meddling of the state.

Parallel contemporary formations existed in continental Europe at the time, outside of Austria. Among them was the ordo-liberal group at Freiburg, under the direction of Walter Eucken and Franz Böhm. Like-minded colleagues in Marburg and Berlin, Wilhelm Röpke and Alexander Rüstow, both fled to Istanbul in 1933. The former eventually settled at William Rappard's Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, holding a post there until his death in 1966; the latter remained in Turkey until 1949. After the war, Eucken and Böhm founded the journal *Ordo*, with Hayek, Röpke and Rüstow as contributing editors. In France, the key figure for Burgin is the philosopher Louis Rougier, formerly of the Vienna Circle, who in 1937 was appointed editor of the Librairie de Médicis, which aimed 'to promote liberalism and to combat potentially subversive political theories', i.e. Marxism. Rougier, later *consigliere* to Pétain, eventually found his way to the New School on a Rockefeller grant.

The appearance in 1937 of Walter Lippmann's *Inquiry into the Principles of The Good Society* 'sent seismic waves' through this network. Rougier published it in French the following year, under the imprint of Librairie de Médicis, as *La Cité libre*. Burgin writes that the disparate groups of

Depression-era liberals, operating until then often with only a dim awareness of one another and with only partial contact, seized on the book by this well-known American commentator as a point of unity. By August 1938, in an initial effort at formal ideological coherence, Rougier had arranged for their first international meeting, held in Paris, titling it the Colloque Walter Lippmann. The conference, following the spirit of Lippmann's book and in line with Rougier's political agenda, sought a revival of liberalism which could orchestrate an international response to the trend of planned economies in the advanced capitalist world, while revising it enough to avoid the problems of laissez-faire. It set in motion the programme of an international 'constructive liberalism'. Burgin stresses Rüstow's view of the majority perspective within the colloquium, which emphasized the political and ethical limitations of the nineteenth-century liberal model:

> In order to rescue liberalism, it would be necessary to find a way to reconcile liberal insights with the fundamental human need for integration into a broader social organism, with stronger lines of connection than those provided by abstract reason alone. Lippmann expressed implicit agreement with Rüstow, indicating that the maximization of utility was a social good but not necessarily the only standard by which progress should be measured, although Rüstow reminded him that acknowledging this raised the unresolved question of what alternative standard one should apply. This vision of 'constructive liberalism' relied on an acceptance of the idea that the problems with laissez-faire could not be addressed merely through a network of limited restrictions on the grosser excesses of the market. Rather, they demanded the abandonment of the abstract paradigm of the *homo economicus*, and the integration of the market economy into a redefined and morally renewed social order.

Supplements to the logic of the market could indeed include a generous menu of social welfare protections. It is in fact the core of Burgin's argument in *The Great Persuasion* that this constructive liberalism—dubbed 'neo-liberalism' by Rougier at the 1938 conference—was of a different order altogether from the paradigm of the 1970s and 1980s. He warns that 'the history of the latter must resist the temptation of presumed continuities'.

Burgin does not reject continuity as such, however, since his history depends on institutional linkages built up by the Mont Pèlerin Society, the most direct successor to the Colloque Lippmann. Founded in 1947 by Hayek, with funding from the Swiss businessman Albert Hunold and from the legacy of Kansas City furniture millionaire William Volker, the history of the group provides the framework for the central sections of Burgin's book. He has good reason for this, since the Society featured the spectrum of notable liberals of the time—from Ludwig Erhard to Milton Friedman—

and operates to this day, drawing hundreds of members to its annual and regional meetings, which have been held on every continent. For Burgin, the shifting internal politics within the Mont Pèlerin Society heralded ideological changes in the world of post-war liberalism. Indeed, one need only look at the original statement of aims of the society to see that, in its ambiguity, it left open much room for internal disagreement, allowing for state action 'not inimical to the functioning of the market'. Its charge would be to preserve the market, and this could only be achieved by presenting it as part of a 'compelling world-view'.

Among the emerging factions within the Mont Pèlerin Society, Burgin argues, a more crusading and virulent form—totally opposed to the tempered, social philosophy of Hayek and uniformly hostile to social welfare and wide-ranging scientific inquiry—took command in the aftermath of what is sometimes known as the Hunold affair. In this telling, the Society's original funder, prone to paranoiac fits, took the moderate Röpke with him as he abandoned an alienated membership to the American economists at the University of Chicago, led by the young Milton Friedman. Though a great admirer of *The Road to Serfdom*, Friedman set aside the synthetic ambition of Hayek in pursuit of a publicity blitz, monochromatically focused on finding policy answers. He formally assumed the presidency of the Mont Pèlerin Society in 1970, but Burgin suggests that the publication of *Capitalism and Freedom* in 1962 effectively resolved the subterranean struggles within the society in favour of an offensive against all forms of state intervention, signalling a revival of laissez-faire at the dawn of what Burgin calls 'the age of Milton Friedman':

> Cumulatively, Friedman's new polemical mode heralded both a return to the market advocacy of the nineteenth century and the arrival of something wholly new. In his efforts to expound his approach to political economy to the public, Friedman developed the rhetorical architecture of an unapologetically market-centered world.

This is the nub of *The Great Persuasion*: neo-liberalism was, until the late 1950s, a relatively moderate, defensive intellectual movement, open to reconciliation with the social state. Its transformation tilts on Friedman's ascent through the ranks of the Mont Pèlerin Society network. The last third of the book is given over to Friedman's rise from small-town New Jersey to the University of Chicago, with a war-time stint as a Federal statistician. Dazzled and politicized by the 1947 meeting of the Mont Pèlerin Society, Friedman only achieved public prominence as an adviser to Goldwater in 1964, the year after the publication of *A Monetary History of the United States*. In contrast to Hayek's high-minded exchanges on capitalism, culture and religion,

he cultivated a brash populism: 'The two groups that most threaten the market are businessmen and intellectuals', etc. By the late 1960s Friedman was launched on a glitzy, high-profile career—*Newsweek* column, *Fortune* profile, *Playboy* interview—and henceforth did little substantial scholarship. In 1973 he was electioneering in California with Ronald Reagan, who 'could not resist Friedman's infectious enthusiasm'. Honours were heaped upon him; towards the end of his long life he could crow that, in his experience, taking unpopular positions had seldom involved high costs.

Narrowing his focus after 1962, Burgin presents latter-day neo-liberalism as a one-man show. Missing here is any concept of mediation: why did *Newsweek*, *Fortune*, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* want to publish Friedman's views? Burgin offers no analysis of the conjuncture of the 1970s, nor does he pause to examine the causes of falling growth and rising inflation. Labouring to confine Friedmanite neo-liberalism to the hard right of American politics, he struggles to explain the onset of monetarism under the Carter Administration, with Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker's restriction of the money supply in 1979, beyond saying that Friedman's writings had 'shifted prevailing views'. Elsewhere, we are told that Reagan's 1980 election victory marked 'the rise of Friedman's ideas', as if stagnation and falling real incomes had nothing to do with it.

Similarly, Friedman's idea for a negative income tax—effectively, a basic income—is explained simply as a 'Trojan horse that would allow for the gradual diminution of welfare benefits until they disappeared altogether', to the benefit of the Republicans who sought to undermine the popular New Deal-era bureaucracy. There is no discussion of the broader intellectual climate in which this proposal was made. Defying Burgin's thesis, which takes Friedman at his word, it was the Democratic Party which oversaw the most significant reduction of the welfare state in the US, without any political need for a compensatory, simplified, basic income. The limits of Burgin's perspective are equally evident in his treatment of Friedman's own transformation from the mainstream of the Mont Pèlerin Society to its libertarian fringe. Real historical changes disappear in his narrow-gauge focus on professional rivalries within the Society.

Burgin makes much of 'the role of ideas in history', but his method often appears less philological than simply idealist. In his account, economists transmit their wholly conscious intent in a language whose meaning is self-evident, designed to produce—and in this story, successfully producing—the exact desired effect. In this way, Burgin renders ideas as inert quantities, their varying expression across time and space the result of the degree of their dilution. The necessary adjunct to this theory of historical causality is the determining force of great personalities, administering the doses. Rather than qualitatively distinct, their ideas are determined by the ratio of

two ingredients: state and market. It is striking that an intellectual history of economics should have produced this mechanical schema, the kind for which economic history itself is usually censured. What is absent is any assessment of ideas as accurate representations of reality—in this case, of the actual dynamics of the world capitalist economy.

Burgin's claim that neo-liberals only achieved policy influence in the US involves an extraordinary edulcoration of the group's politics. He simply fails to mention the earlier role of Mont Pèlerin Society member Alfred Müller-Armack in Nazi Germany. An NSDAP member and author of the Nazi pamphlet *Staatsidee und Wirtschaftsordnung im neuen Reich* (1933), Müller-Armack became an adviser to Ludwig Erhard and an official in the Ministry of Economics during the post-war period. Nor does Burgin mention that Rougier, organizer of the Lippmann colloquium, was funded by the industrialist Marcel Bourgeois, a backer of Jacques Doriot's fascist Parti Populaire Français. The aporia is so great that Burgin at one point describes the neo-liberals as 'vocal anti-fascists'. Where *The Great Persuasion* broaches the topic of the Chicago economists in Chile, it is largely to commend Friedman's sensitivity in not accepting an honorary degree from Pinochet. There is no mention here of the open subversion of Allende, freely admitted by the Chicago-trained economists, nor of Friedman's 1982 talk of the 'Chilean miracle' as both economic and political. Nor does Burgin discuss Hayek's well-documented friendliness with the Pinochet government, and his role in securing the 1981 regional Mont Pèlerin Society meeting in Viña del Mar—a deliberate provocation, since this was the city from which the coup d'état against Allende originated—thereby undermining his leitmotif of an apolitical Hayek overtaken by the crusading Friedman, as well as any ambiguity in the political commitments of both.

Burgin's framework has the advantage of simplicity, and is useful in understanding the basic textures of the Mont Pèlerin Society group. But simplicity becomes distortion when entire continents drop off the map. After accounting for Friedman's ascent to the presidency of the Society, the promise of a transnational history of ideas is largely abandoned. A reader of *The Great Persuasion* could hardly be blamed for thinking Wilhelm Röpke's political influence had been confined to American conservatism, mainly as a touchstone for William F. Buckley's *National Review*, though he was mentor and adviser to the Chancellor of the Bonn Republic. Burgin's failure to mention either the IMF or the World Bank in this history of neo-liberalism, as potential instruments of international capital and of American economic diplomacy, is another outcome of its restricted view. This parochial conceptualization allows him at one point to refer to Jeffrey Sachs, shock doctor of Eastern Europe, as an economist 'on the left'.

A provincial North American focus likewise strains the lines with which Burgin would divide neo-liberalism: the orthodox faction which recalled nineteenth century laissez-faire, and the heterodox one open to the possibility of state intervention. The difference between these factions is inflated. In his *International Order and Economic Integration*, Röpke idealized the liberal nineteenth century, its free-trade regime made possible through the international principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, ensured by British imperialism. Nor is there any discussion of neo-liberal outcomes in Europe. Erhard himself, architect of the 'German miracle', Chancellor of the Federal Republic from 1963–66, and a member of the Mont Pèlerin Society, appears only once, as an intermediary between warring factions in its ranks during the Hunold affair. Readers of this volume will get no sense of Erhard as the architect of deflation in the immediate post-war period, following ordo-liberal advice; nor of his push within the CDU for the abandonment of the Christian-Socialist Ahlen charter. The Düsseldorf guidelines of 1949, which replaced it, called for a society grounded in 'performance-based competition' in a market setting, to be secured by law.

As for the neo-liberal features of the European Union—from its technocratic, juridical committees, beyond the reach of democratic pressure, to the capital-friendly terms of the Maastricht Treaty, which expanded the austere charter of the Bundesbank to the entire Eurozone—these never enter into Burgin's line of sight. This omission has the effect of obscuring the real historical experience of neo-liberalism in continental Europe, presenting it as an alternative, moderate recipe, not yet tried. Neo-liberalism is better conceptualized as a liberal strategy that is not in the least opposed to regulation or the state as such. Rather, it casts the state as an adjunct to capital, one capable of regulating democracy by appeal to market rationality. There is geographical variation in neo-liberalism's expression. But Europe remains the most deflation-prone region of world capitalism today, not least because of the ECB's interest rate hike of 2011. In opening a more expansionary sequence in recent years, Mario Draghi has been careful to assure central bankers that the ECB will not stray from its 'ordo-liberal principles', a suggestive comment that would repay historical investigation. The same is true of the European Commission and contemporary German political leadership, enforcing to this day the austerity directly culpable for the catastrophic depression in Greece.

The Great Persuasion cannot be burdened with accounting for all of these outcomes, since it is expressly a history of 'free-market ideas' rather than policies. But the extent to which Burgin represses neo-liberalism outside of the United States—and especially in its European homelands—is a serious flaw of this study. It was in Europe that the Mont Pèlerin Society penetrated the

highest levels of officialdom, including among its membership European heads of state, such as Erhard or Luigi Einaudi of Italy, as early as the 1950s. The EU, a novel political apparatus, was re-built, and its member states' economies restructured, in the very period that neo-liberalism was gathering momentum. In the European context, the persuasion in question is not as recent as Burgin claims. It has concerned not so much a 'return to laissez-faire' as the solidification of neo-liberal regulatory institutions, immune to democracy. A history of the relation of these terms might have produced a more trenchant account.

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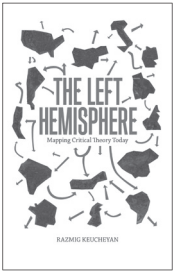

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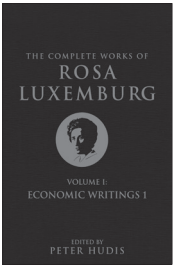

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Richard Burton, *A Strong Song Tows Us: The Life of Basil Bunting*
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Alex Niven

THE ROAD TO BRIGGFLATTS

Anglophone literary modernism, famously, has often had very little to do with English writers. The brahmins in the traditional account—Ezra Pound, James Joyce and T. S. Eliot—were all non-English in origin, for all the strenuous Anglophilia of Eliot's later years. More recently, the Anglo-American academy has tended to journey to the postcolonial margins in its quest for liberal pluralism—or, if you prefer, neo-Gladstonian munificence. Caught in the gap between these two tendencies, the English modernist poet Basil Bunting (1900–85) has not received as much attention as might have been expected for a writer with his avant-garde credentials. An adherent of Pound and Eliot who began as a politically radical, experimentalist poet of the twenties and thirties, and ended as an unlikely counter-cultural hero of the sixties and seventies, Bunting has been mentioned less and less in recent critical debates in the field. This in spite of his former centrality to the international poetry scene—among his many devotees in later life were Robert Creeley, Hugh Kenner, Thom Gunn and Allen Ginsberg—and the fact that his masterpiece of 1966, the verse autobiography *Briggflatts*, is surely the most substantial English-language poem of the late-modernist period.

The question of Bunting's maverick status in modern verse is the central narrative of Richard Burton's impressively weighty *A Strong Song Tows Us*—its title taken from a line in *Briggflatts*—which is the first biography of the poet that can fairly claim to be definitive; both *Basil Bunting: A Northern Life* (1997) by Richard Caddel and Anthony Flowers, and *Basil Bunting: The Poet as Spy* (1998) by Keith Alldritt are cursory sketches rather than fully realized portraits. In Bunting's early years, Burton uncovers much that is suggestive of a writer congenitally at odds with the high-bourgeois

English culture he would later use as a point of antithesis. Though born into relative suburban affluence, Bunting was raised against the backdrop of industrial Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and schooled in an environment at far remove from the pastoral Anglicanism that was and remains the *locus classicus* of so much English literature. His father was a Fabian doctor with close professional ties to the industrial mining culture of the English northeast; moreover, while he does not seem to have been a practising member of the Religious Society of Friends, he sent his son to Quaker schools in Yorkshire and Berkshire. Burton maintains that Bunting's Quakerism was half genuine, half a pose. But it seems clear that these early experiences fostered an attitude of politico-religious recalcitrance that would play a key role in ensuing years. Called up when he left school in the last months of World War I, Bunting took his radical Quaker stand as a conscientious objector and was rewarded with the better part of a year in jail. His treatment there was, by all accounts, brutal; Bunting was usually taciturn on the subject, but his friend Denis Goacher would later relate that 'the experience embittered Basil for life. He said it coloured all he thought about England, about the Establishment'.

Following his release from Winchester Prison in the summer of 1919, Bunting enrolled at the London School of Economics, encouraged perhaps by its Fabian patrimony. Among his contemporaries there was a young Lionel Robbins, who seems to have ushered Bunting toward the leading lights of high modernism at a crucial moment. As he would later inform Pound:

> I met Robbins just before I went to LSE and did him the bad turn of persuading him to go there too. Tastes more or less better class Bloomsbury—i.e., aware of a lot of things you might not expect a prof of economics to have heard of. First person, I think, to show me any of Eliot's work, certainly first to show me bit of Ulysses in The Egoist (or was it Portrait of J.J.)? He used to like your works and probably still does.

Distracted by Robbins's reading recommendations—Pound's *Homage to Sextus Propertius* and Eliot's 'Preludes' were of particular interest—Bunting left university after four years without taking a degree, having set his sights on a career in writing. His poetic juvenilia had been, by his own admission, 'no good'. But the discovery of Pound and Eliot inspired him to look beyond the poetic climate of twenties London, where the mannerly nostalgia of the Georgian poets held sway until it was gently supplanted by the formal gradualism of W. H. Auden and his circle at the decade's close. Decamping to Paris in 1923, Bunting found employment at Ford Madox Ford's *transatlantic review*, and it was during his tenure here that a lifelong friendship with Pound was begun, after a chance encounter in a Montparnasse café.

Bunting soon became a prominent member of what the publisher James Laughlin called the 'Ezuversity', the circle of poets, artists and musicians who gathered intermittently around Pound in the exiles' idyll of Rapallo on the Ligurian coast in the twenties and thirties. This was the making of him creatively. In the company of Pound, Yeats, George Antheil, and younger poets such as the American Marxist Louis Zukofsky, he was given a point of entry into the interwar avant-garde, and for a while he relished the opportunity. He helped Pound with preparations for a seminal series of concerts at the Teatro Reale in Rapallo, began a major translation of the Persian epic *Shahnameh*, became peripherally involved in the 'Objectivist' verse movement spearheaded by Zukofsky and William Carlos Williams, and unfurled a sizeable body of work, most of which appeared as the lead contribution to Pound's *Active Anthology* of 1933. In his own laconic summary: 'it was a very pleasant time. I got a lot of poetry written, enjoyed the conversation, enjoyed sailing my boat, enjoyed the sunshine. I saw a good deal of Yeats'.

According to Yeats, the young poet was 'one of Ezra's more savage disciples', and indeed there was more urgency to the Rapallo excursion than is suggested in Bunting's account. But for now the disputations were aesthetic rather than political. When he wasn't sailing his boat in the Tigullio Gulf, Bunting channelled his disdain for the English establishment into a determined onslaught on its literary traditions, a campaign that mixed puritanical modernist zeal with acerbic Geordie humour. He wrote to American editor Harriet Monroe in July 1931 to say that he was embarking on a project of 'editing' Shakespeare's sonnets by removing apparently superfluous words, simplifying the syntax, sometimes deleting entire poems from the sequence—'after sufficient cutting and straightening out of inversions, rather a nice poem should emerge'. The formal critique of English literature was elaborated in 'The Lion and the Lizard', a prose piece of the period:

> It is partly because English poetry is so splendid that it is so inadequate. Life includes splendour but is not sustainedly splendid. Effulgence is liable to blind the beholder to all save itself: the detail, the texture of life, is lost or blurred. English poets are too often on their dignity, they strive too constantly to be sublime and end by becoming monotonous. This is partly because they have neglected the music of Byrd and Dowland so much more supple rhythmically than English poetry, and because they despise or patronise jazz and other popular music.

Reacting against this splendid tradition, which he claimed stretched from Marlowe to Eliot, in his own verse Bunting attempted to extend Pound's earlier imagist project by innovating an austere lyric realism, combining experimental gestures with a grounding in popular musicality.

The poets of fifteenth-century France were as present to him as to Pound. 'Villon', his debut work of 1925–6, takes poetry and history as its subject, conflating the life of François Villon with his own prison experiences:

> In the dark in fetters
> on bended elbows
> I supported my weak back
> hulloing to muffled walls blank again
> unresonant.

Its opening section illustrates Bunting's emerging poetic:

> He whom we anatomized
> 'whose words we gathered as peasant flowers
> and thought on his wit and how neatly he describes things'
> speaks
> to us, hatching marrow
> broody all night over the bones of a deadman

There is a curt, acoustically barbed aspect to these lines. The effect is derived in part from the use of quotation-collage—lines 2 and 3 are translated from a sixteenth-century prose text—in part also from the surgical, bathetic diction—'anatomized', 'how neatly he describes things'—but perhaps mainly from stringent pruning processes applied *après la lettre* by the poet and his collaborators: Bunting's compositional motto was 'cut out every word you dare', and like Eliot's *The Waste Land*, 'Villon' was hacked down into its final published form with the aid of Pound's editing pen, presumably in an attempt to rid the verse of its effulgent, 'English' aspect, and free up its rhythmic vitality.

However, while these techniques were stylistically successful at close range—'broody all night over the bones of a deadman' is a typically jagged Bunting riff—the drawback to this iconoclastic approach was that it could easily tip over into a form of self-effacing nihilism that abridged poetic composition altogether. Bunting's life was riddled with hiatuses, depressions and near-fatal creative dead-ends. As a result, Burton's narrative is necessarily uneven, having to account for several lengthy spells where no verse, not even of the radically abbreviated modernist-imagist variety, was being produced at all. Burton offers several plausible theories for Bunting's creative abstemiousness: his private life was turbulent; he was a formal perfectionist; he may have suffered from clinical depression. More prosaically, there is the fact that for most of his career Bunting was roundly ignored by mainstream English publishing, which eventually became a rigid career obstacle rather than a spur for oppositional endeavour. A tragicomic sub-plot in Burton's

book is carved out of Eliot's repeated refusals to publish Bunting at Faber and Faber from the thirties onward. Interestingly, Burton suggests, this antipathy may have been caused by the latter's stubbornness as much as by Eliot's growing distaste for aesthetic heterodoxy in the style of the *Active Anthology* as he became the Anglican-royalist-classicist potentate of English letters.

Whatever the cause, Bunting was not a functioning poet by the end of the 1930s. He trained to become a commercial sailor in 1937, and in 1940—Quaker principles notwithstanding—enlisted in the air force, serving as a squadron-leader in British-occupied Iran. As the war drew to a close, in a further astonishing twist, he became a British intelligence operative there. In 'The Well of Lycopolis' (1935), one of his last prewar poems, Bunting had satirized World War I and its aftermath, imagining a pandemic spreading from the trenches to plague Bloomsbury bohemia with a sort of cultural gonorrhea:

> Join the Royal Air Force
> and See the World. The Navy will
> Make a Man of You. Tour India with the Flag.
> One of the ragtime army,
> involuntary volunteer,
> queued up for the pox in Rouen. What a blighty!

However, in Iran such vaudevillian savagery fell away completely, as he became involved in intelligence operations in Tehran and Isfahan. By 1947 he was enjoying a life of some luxury, installed as 'chief of all British Political Intelligence in Persia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, etc'. After a brief return to Northumberland in 1950 with a sixteen-year-old Kurdish wife in tow—they had married two years earlier—Bunting went back to Iran as *Times* correspondent, only to be expelled from the country for good when Mossadeq came to power. His response to this episode has a distinct reactionary flavour, and cannot be explained away as mere personal bitterness. By 1953, the blimpish transformation complete, he went so far as to tell Pound in correspondence that he much preferred hawks like Churchill and Truman to a 'stultified clerk like Clement Attlee'.

As with the creative paralysis that stretched, more or less, from the mid thirties to the mid sixties, this ideological volte-face may have been another consequence of Bunting's scepticism. A self-proclaimed acolyte of 'Hume, the doubter', and a subscriber to Wittgenstein's dictum 'whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent', he was continually putting prohibitive barriers in the way of his intellectual and political impulses. A list of formative influences made late in life began: 'jails and the sea, Quaker mysticism and socialist politics, the slums of Lambeth and Hoxton'. Outside the Persian

interlude, Bunting identified as a socialist, eulogized the northern mining unions, and drew on a bedrock of puritan idealism as he sought to demolish traditionalist false idols. But his naysaying urge was such that it regularly threatened to subvert his own raison d'être. In his extraordinary mid thirties correspondence with Pound—letters that remain substantially unpublished, though Burton quotes a handful of key passages—Bunting can appear admirable as he opposes Pound's increasingly vicious Mussolinian fascism. A famous exchange of 1938, in which Bunting passionately berated Pound for anti-Semitic remarks directed at Louis Zukofsky, marked the temporary end of their friendship:

> Every anti-semitism, anti-niggerism, anti-moorism, that I can recall in history was base, had its foundations in the meanest kind of envy and in greed. It makes me sick to see you covering yourself in that kind of filth. It is not an arguable question, has not been arguable for at least nineteen centuries. It is hard to see how you are going to stop the rot of your mind and heart without a pretty thoroughgoing repudiation of what you have spent a lot of work on. You ought to have the courage for that: but I confess I don't expect to see it.

But then Bunting's means of opposing Pound could also expose his own ideological confusion. Writing from his temporary home in the Canary Islands in 1935, a depressed, isolated Bunting was stubbornly non-partisan in the midst of the communism versus fascism debate then raging between Zukofsky and Pound: 'You and I and Zuk have to keep the language alive, and damn difficult it is too, and we don't do any appreciable good by turning aside to propagate the worthiest causes in economics or politics.' Though he still clung to the distant non-conformist dream of another civil war, by 1937 Bunting's scepticism about the prospects of English reform had hardened:

> What seems quite certain is that not only no great change, but not even any substantial alleviation of the lot of the poor in England is going to be possible in future without civil war. That seems to be widely recognized. The owners will play the confidence trick as often as they can—Zinoviev letters, Post Office Savings in peril, League of Nations, Two Living Husbands—having the whole press in their pockets and an opposition led from Eton and Oxford, that's not very difficult. But they have let it be known that if their trick doesn't work they will use their police.

A Strong Song Tows Us is not as alive to the significance of these thirties debates as it might have been. The narrative is readable, well-researched and compelling, but in his understandable desire to offer the first proper summary of Bunting's life, Burton has mostly shied away from extended historical and critical discussions, opting instead for a series of even-handed summaries

of the extant source material. As a result there are long, consider-all-angles disquisitions on, for example, the break-up of Bunting's first marriage, and his alleged interest in pubescent girls. These topics are not without interest, but given the importance of Bunting's role in certain crucial developments in mid-twentieth century history and culture, and the current paucity of the critical canon on the subject, the focus on private to the detriment of public life emerging from Burton's archival-summary method can be disappointing. An expansion of the two crucial decades in Bunting's life as an artist—the thirties and the sixties—and a lighter emphasis on foibles of character, might have made for a text that was analytical and interventionist rather than merely informative.

Burton does in fact devote considerable attention to the later of Bunting's two efflorescences: the tumultuous sixties period in which he enjoyed such a spectacular revival. Here the social backdrop is inescapable. In 1963 Bunting was sought out in retirement in rural Northumberland by Tom Pickard, a local working-class writer enthused by certain neo-modernist currents in post-war verse—the Black Mountain School, Ginsberg and the Beats, the new lyric culture of jazz and pop music. Pickard's teenage energy piqued the elder poet out of a decadal depression, and Bunting soon became the focal point of the Morden Tower readings, counter-cultural happenings organized by Pickard and his wife Connie in a dilapidated section of Newcastle's medieval walls. In the city as a whole, the star of popular modernism was in the ascendant: the painter Victor Pasmore had recently innovated a Bauhaus-style pedagogy at King's College—now the University of Newcastle—and vigorous Brutalist buildings were springing up throughout Tyneside. The Morden Tower milieu offered a more spontaneous underground correlative to these surface encroachments. In a context where much of the teleology of first-generation modernism seemed to be coming to fruition—that is, as certain parts of England finally, tentatively, and as it turned out rather briefly, began to *feel* modern—Bunting wrote the great English modernist poem *Briggflatts*, a densely constructed five-part work of some 700 lines, which he read for the first time to the Morden Tower's collective of students, academics, beatniks and proletarian delinquents in December 1965.

Briggflatts is an epic work of northern English non-conformism quite unlike anything written before or since. From its powerful opening lines, the poem offers a synthesis of lyric textures designed to resonate emphatically in the demotic ambience of the Morden Tower:

> Brag, sweet tenor bull,
> descant on Rawthey's madrigal,
> each pebble its part
> for the fells' late spring.

Dance tiptoe, bull,
black against may.
Ridiculous and lovely
chase hurdling shadows
morning into noon.
May on the bull's hide
and through the dale
furrows fill with may,
paving the slowworm's way.

Burton's close readings of the poem are sensitive, yet perhaps for reasons of space and critical genre he does not explore at length the deeper aesthetic roots of this peculiar verse music—its indebtedness to folk song, its faint recollection of the rhythmic pulse of Old English alliterative verse, its modernist sound patterns harking back to symbolist decorativeness. But the singularity of *Briggflatts* is surely apparent even without recourse to elaborate technical analysis; indeed, the poem's musical accessibility is the ground on which its political and formal identities coincide. Unlike Pound and Eliot, both of whom were rightists committed to various forms of social elitism, Bunting was latterly able to put into practice a deeply felt belief that modernist poetry could be both intellectually subtle and popularly vital if vocalized in the right setting. As he put it in 'The Poet's Point of View', a prose apologia of 1966:

> Poetry must be read aloud. All the arts are plagued by charlatans seeking money, or fame, or just an excuse to idle. The less the public understands the art, the easier it is for charlatans to flourish. It is not easy for the outsider to distinguish the fraud from the poet. But it is a little less difficult when poetry is read aloud. There were mountebanks at the famous Albert Hall meeting [the 'International Poetry Incarnation' held in London in the summer of 1965]. But the worst, most insidious charlatans fill chairs and fellowships at universities, write for the weeklies or work for the BBC or the British Council or some other asylum for obsequious idlers. In the eighteenth century it was the Church. If these men had to read aloud in public, their empty lines, without resonance, would soon give them away.

Born slightly later than his modernist confrères, which for a long time seemed a crippling disadvantage, Bunting eventually had the good fortune of living through the age of Bob Dylan as well as that of Ford Madox Ford. The sixties were a decade of egalitarian orality, and in them Bunting's long-running advocacy of poetry's spoken roots finally became socially apposite.

But for all that *Briggflatts* can be appreciated for its sonic immediacy, it is also a work that returns us again and again to underlying historical sub-currents—some of which are touched upon in Burton's account, some

not. The culmination of a lifetime of attempts to innovate an authentically progressive English verse, *Briggflatts* demands to be set beside Eliot's High Anglican *Four Quartets* (1945) as one of the major poems of public address of the mid twentieth century—what Pound might have called a tale of the tribe. Across its five sections, the poem narrates the struggle of an individual to succeed in a culture inimical to the mere notion of modernistic development. After a paradisal opening section set in the Wordsworthian far north-west of England—the 'spring' or childhood phase of Bunting's life—we follow the protagonist as he is continually rebuffed in his struggle to 'make it new'. Bunting's prison experience is elided, perhaps because it had already featured in 'Villon'. But there is much bitterness and political rancour in Bunting's merciless description of early twentieth century London, which he recreates as a nightmarish tableau of avarice and artifice:

> Poet appointed dare not decline
> to walk among the bogus,
> nothing to authenticate
> the mission imposed, despised
> by toadies, confidence men, kept boys,
> shopped and jailed, cleaned out by whores,
> touching acquaintance for food and tobacco.

The account of a tortuous struggle in Bunting's artistic career is paralleled by a figuration of the Viking warrior Eric Bloodaxe, 'king of York, king of Dublin, king of Orkney', whose death in battle in the northern English mountains is conveyed with phonaesthetic glee:

> Spine
> picked bare by ravens, agile
> maggots devour the slack side
> and inert brain, never wise.

Bloodaxe tried to conquer the world, the poem suggests, but his campaign was finally an ignominious failure which 'ended in bale on the fellside'.

In the central sections of the poem these historical echoes of defeat and vainglory are interspersed with further oblique accounts of Bunting's wanderings in the middle way of life—there are precise descriptions of an Italian seascape and an Asian desert—culminating in a bleak portrait of a depressive post-war experience: Bunting has by this point become 'accustomed to penury | filth disgust and fury'. Here, one might think, we are inhabiting a familiar mind-set of Eliotic pessimism, traversing a contemporary Dantesque inferno with a frustrated anti-hero whose superior intellect

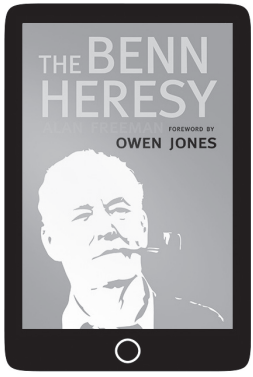
cannot protect him from the depredations of a fallen world. However, the uniqueness of *Briggflatts* lies in its ultimate rejection of such melancholic high-modernist platitudes. Against the martial egotism of Bloodaxe, Bunting places the figure of Cuthbert, a seventh-century Northumbrian saint, whose appearance occurs as the culmination of an insistent celebration throughout the poem of northern English cultural activity: the Lindisfarne Gospels, the medieval Brythonic poem *Y Gododdin*, and—what are far more unusual presences—the artistry of an anonymous stonemason and the sonorous work-music of coal miners:

> hear the horse stale,
> the mason whistle,
> harness mutter to shaft
> felloe to axle squeak
> rut thud the rim
> crushed grit.

This local backdrop also points to a way out of the dead-end of modernist subjectivism. Beginning with the introduction of the self-sacrificing Cuthbert, and continuing with a plotline in which Bunting rediscovers the lost love of his youth, the moral core of the poem progressively emerges as a sort of communitarian idealism. There is an implicit suggestion that the poet must relinquish his own vanity and renew himself in a harmonious social ecology where everyone and everything plays an equal part—a dream that for Bunting was immanent in his Northumbrian mythopoeia, an apparently non-hierarchical imagined community grounded in the productive labour of miners and shepherds and the buried remnants of the radical past.

The only thing about his life 'worth speaking aloud', as Bunting once put it, *Briggflatts* registers a *Weltanschauung* that is at once defiantly populist and anomalous in the pattern of English poetic culture. A work of popular avant-garde vitality in practice, its deeper significance lies in its excavation of a hinterland so different from the orthodox terrain embodied in its alter-ego work, Eliot's *Four Quartets*. A studious biographer, adept at factual précis, Burton points out that *Briggflatts* was named after a small village in the northern Pennines, where Bunting spent an idyllic summer as a teenager enjoying the youthful romance described in the first section of the poem. However, another crucial fact about this setting—which Burton notes but does not explicate in detail, perhaps because doing so would contradict his desire to gloss over Bunting's stifled messianism—is that Brigflatts was the *de facto* birthplace of English Quakerism. In 1652, in the third year of Cromwell's commonwealth, George Fox stayed in the village just prior to

establishing the Quaker movement by preaching to hundreds of Seekers on nearby Firbank Fell, inspired by a vision of 'a great people in white raiment by a rivers syde, comeing to the Lorde'. For Burton, this is incidental, but for Bunting the seventeenth-century legacy was the very heart of the matter. Back at the start of his career, in the mid 1920s, Bunting wrote to a friend to say: 'we got lost, I think in Cromwell's time, and we have [since] got further and further from the track'. The next step in appraising Bunting must be to draw the obvious connections between such atavistic insights, the brief moment of sixties modernism in which Bunting spoke to his own radical community, and the future possibility of an overhauled English landscape suggested by both of these now mostly obscured historical precedents.



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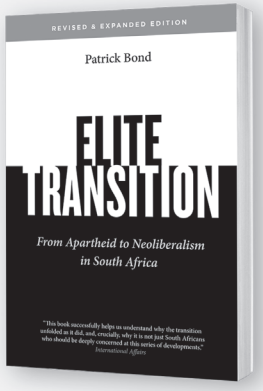

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