Debates on Race and Capitalism, New and Old

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In what follows I explore nineteenth century abolitionism, twentieth century racism and anti-racism, and the remaking of race in today's financialised capitalism taking cues from Michael Dawson (Dawson 2016) and Nancy Fraser (Fraser 2016). This exchange is itself part of a renewed debate on whether the manifold signs of a political system teetering on the edge should be seen as tantamount to a 'legitimation crisis' of Western capitalism. Dawson's article appeared in *Critical Historical Studies* (Dawson 2016) while Nancy Fraser's articles on feminism and neo-liberalism first appeared in *New Left Review* and are reprinted in Fraser's book *Fortunes of Feminism*, (Fraser 2014) while her riposte appeared in *Critical Historical Studies* in Spring 2016.

Many historians in the 1960s and 70s were inclined to ignore or minimise the contribution of slavery to the rise of industrial capitalism. Eric Williams's classic study *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) was regarded as exaggerated and out-dated. Historians of abolitionism at this time often neglected black witness and black agency in the anti-slavery struggle. Most of the classic 'slave narratives' were out of print, or only available in editions produced by Philip Foner, the redoubtable Communist historian. A debate on abolitionism launched by Thomas Haskell in the *American Historical Review* in the 1980s and 1990s incorporated nearly a thousand citations but no reference to Toussaint Louverture, C.L.R.James, Fredrick

Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, Sojourner Truth or any black protagonists (Bender 1992) Yet the lives of these extraordinary men and women had a large impact on white anti-slavery.

Slaveholder Capitalism and Bourgeois Hegemony

David Brion Davis, whose work was the target of Haskell's critique in the *American Historical Review*, had established two important conclusions, firstly that slavery was not condemned by secular or religious authority until the 1760s or later, and secondly that it was during, and because of, the Age of Revolution that the institution was publicly challenged for the first time.(Davis 1973, see also Hunt 2008). Davis himself saw this as the corollary of the emergence of a new and ambivalent bourgeois 'hegemony', extolling free waged labour and striving to rectify the course of bourgeois revolution, breaking its prior alliance with slaveholders.

The American and French revolutions, with their doctrines of popular sovereignty, had created a 'legitimacy crisis' throughout Europe which was not laid to rest by the defeat of Napoleon (Clark 2014). The broad-but-narrow political participation of the 'White Man's Republic' in North America was a powerful challenge to the European empires and monarchies.(Saxton 1993). Official anti-slavery allowed the badly shaken imperial and monarchical states to lay claim to virtue and benevolence. Abolitionism boosted the self-esteem of rulers and met the challenge of the United States, described by John Quincy Adams as 'the dangerous nation' because of its democratic and expansionist character (Kagan 2006). British abolitionism arose, in part, as a response to the victory of the American

Revolution. Christopher Brown has shown how Britain's rulers believed that their role in acting against slave trade endowed them with 'moral capital' and renewed belief in their right to rule (Brown 2008). The United States also ended slave imports in 1808 but without abolitionist fanfare and self-congratulation. The rulers of the US instead invested themselves in the 'political capital' of republicanism, democracy and a spread-eagle 'manifest destiny'.

While there were no philosophical or theological challenges to slavery in early modern Europe there was popular hostility to the entry of slaveholders in regions where slavery had disappeared. A late medieval 'free air' doctrine offered enfranchisement to those who lived for a year and a day in such free cities as Bologna, Paris or Toulouse. However the popular antagonism to slavery in Europe did not prevent European colonial merchants buying African captives and transporting them to the Americas to become the principal labour force for the plantations. Roman law, Christianity and natural rights doctrine were invoked to justify this new institution. Enslavement saved lives as well as souls. The captives had been legally acquired according to the laws and custom of African monarchs (Tuck 1979).

Montesquieu broke new ground when he used irony to challenge racial enslavement in *The Spirit of the Laws*. His lampoon ridiculed an absurd consensus rather than mount an elaborate critique. The subsequent three or four decades witnessed an extraordinary transformation, with attacks on the Atlantic slave trade and slavery itself by newly Enlightened philosophers, jurists and clerics such as John Millar, George Wallace, John Wesley, Abbe

Raynal, Abbe Gregoire, Jean de Pechmeja, Diderot, Condorcet and many more . There had always been dispersed and particularistic refusals of enslavement on all sides of the Atlantic. The generalising spirit of the Enlightenment prompted more sweeping denunciations of slavery (Sunkar Muthu 2005). These repudiations were powerfully assisted by the emergence of abolitionist movements and the suppression of the Atlantic slave trade iby Britain and the United States in 1808 followed soon after the defeat of Napoleon's forces in Haiti in1804.

Thomas Haskell argued that the spread of market relations was equipping newspaper readers with long-distance vision and uneasy knowledge of the presuppositions of their world. (Bender 1992) The Scottish jurist George Wallace and the English religious dissident John Wesley concurred in arguing that the African captive who was bought and sold was not a party to the contract of sale which was accordingly void. Wallace went further, repudiating the claims of private property and advocating immediate emancipation. Condorcet's 'free womb' approach was more cautious urging that existing slaves live out their term and freeing only those not yet born. (Blackburn 1988, 50, 100-3) Both conservatives and radicals distrusted the market and wished to 'protect society' from its ravages. The distancing effect of market relations had allowed for the rise of slavery in an overseas sphere of injustice 'beyond the line'. Rival patriotisms - English and French, American and European – celebrated freedom not enslavement. They adopted the popular prejudice against slavery and saw no room for the slave trader in their imagined community. The patriot's conservative opponents were well aware of such contradictions and, like Samuel Johnson, wondered

why ‘we hear the loudest yelps for liberty from the drivers of Negroes’ (Davis 1973; Brown 2006, p. 122).

It turned out that the New World slave systems, in what some are calling the ‘second slavery’, could thrive without an Atlantic slave trade. In North America the slave population grew without new arrivals. And while slave imports from abroad were meant to cease a large-scale domestic slave trade hauled the large numbers from old to new plantation zones. (Tomich 2004) So long as slavery survived it would foster new slave trades, legal or otherwise, whenever needed. The slave order was an embedded and tenacious regime of white racial privilege, not to be vanquished by one blow, even ‘abolition’.

The history of slavery and abolition is often presented in ways which flatter national conceit, acknowledging the ugliness of racil enslavement but taking pride in the rectifying and redemptive actions of a Wilberforce, Schoelcher or Lincoln. It is easy to be seduced by a narrative of progress or national uplift according to which there is steady advance across longish periods of time. The major epochs in national life strike downwhat is inhuman and barbarous. All that is good in the nation vanquishes all that it bad in the nation, in and through such momentous events as, for example, the American Revolution, the US Civil War and the civil rights era. However there is a school of writers which challenge this narrative and present a more pessimistic account, which stresses the persistence of oppression within the larger story. The rise of the Second Slavery would count as a massive reversal, as would Jim Crow or a variety of Supreme Court judgments that entrenched white supremacy. Saidiya Hartman’s book *Scenes of Subjection*

(Hartmann 1988) was a powerful challenge to the narratives of uplift and it had helped to inspire other dissidents and 'pessimists' such as Frank Wilderspoon III (Wilderspoon 2003) and Aaron Carico (Carico 2016). This body of work is echoed in the exchange between Dawson and Fraser.

The Ambivalence of Emancipation

Fraser stresses the historic role of emancipation in the nineteenth ce'one need only mention epochal struggles to abolish slavery, liberate women and free non-European peoples from colonial subjection all waged in the name of "emancipation"'(Fraser 2014, 232). Fraser is well-aware of the ambivalence of the concept as applied to women. That ambivalence was also glaring in the case of the abolition of slavery since the colonial states who were the immediate authors and agents of the emancipation decrees used pseudo-abolitionism to justify colonial conquests. (Hussey 2013) The carve up of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1883-4 was carried out in the name of slave trade suppression and slave emancipation.

The idea of emancipation implies an emancipator (which is why Marx, in the foundation documents of the First International, spoke of 'self-emancipation' of the working class). Moreover many leading abolitionists shrank from immediate emancipation, and full racial equality and citizenship. Suffragists and freedmen both struggled for the franchise, leading to an unfortunate clash – as it turned out possession of the vote by black men turned out to be incomplete and precarious. (Davis 1987) Given the deep roots of racism it is nevertheless interesting that in France and the United States freedmen won the vote prior to women, who had to wait until

the 20th century. Part of the reason lay in the military contribution made by black men. Once they had risked their lives as soldiers for the Republic or Union it was more difficult to deny them citizenship.

Nancy Fraser has tenaciously pursued the way in which successive epochs have framed human inequality, participation and representation. The Atlantic slave trade and the boom in slave produce has sometimes been seen as integral to the first globalisation, helping to create hidden abodes of slave expropriation and exploitation overseas, or concealed behind the parapets of 'states' rights.'. Thomas Haskell was wrong to suppose that market relations would automatically reveal the real workings of the slave regimes and promote 'recipe knowledge' but if one takes account of resistance, clandestine information circuits and class struggle then, as the slave community matured then the Slave Power would become more vulnerable. Radical abolitionism promoted knowledge at a distance and undercut the arbitrage of slave owner and slave trader. It was a precursor to more recent attempts to expose the abuses hidden in the global supply chain.

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he Plantation Revolution and Slavery

The massive literature on New World slavery and abolition has often been oversimplified and romanticised, with not enough attention to capitalism and race. Recent work is beginning to change this so it will be helpful to preface

my response by offering a thumb-nail sketch of colonial slavery and its sequels.

The New World slave plantations were summoned into existence by mercantile capitalists in 17th century Europe to supply such popular luxuries as tobacco, sugar, cotton and coffee. In a society in)creasingly gripped by capitalist agriculture and manufacturing wider layers of the population had the cash to pay for such exotic items, because they were earning wages and salaries or receiving rent. Rising demand for plantation produce created an acute labour shortage in the plantation colonies. The planters tried to staff their plantations with Native American captives and European indentured servants but they were not available in adequate numbers and often lacked necessary skills and discipline. Captive Africans proved far more effective. They found escape more difficult, they were familiar with agricultural methods and were less vulnerable to the disease environment. The planters bought hundreds of thousands of captive Africans – eventually over ten million - and subjugated them to the relentless toil of the slave gang, invigilated by the slave driver with his whip. The rise of the slave plantation in the Americas gave enslavement there a more intense and racialized character than had been seen in Ancient Rome or medieval Europe.

In his book *Black Odyssey* the African American writer Nathan Huggins foregrounded the emergence of race from the practice of Atlantic traders: ‘The twentieth century Western mind is frozen by the horror of men selling and buying slaves and even more stunned at the irony of blacks serving as agents for the enslavement of blacks by whites. Shocking though it is, this human barter was truly the most stark representation of what modernism and

Western capitalist expansion meant to traditional peoples. In the New World people became items of commerce, their talent, their labors and their produce thrown into the market place, where their best hope was to bring a decent price. The racial wrong was lost on African merchants, who saw themselves as selling people other than their own. The distinctions of tribe were more real to them than race, a concept that was yet to be refined by nineteenth and twentieth century rationalists.' (Huggins 1977)

Planters treated black skin as a convenient and indelible marker of race and enslavement. Racial slavery had initially stabilising effects because (1) it allowed all white men, even if they owned no slaves, to claim respect and (2) It allowed planters to establish a hierarchy within the plantation, where elite slaves would enjoy some petty privileges. Huggins could also have mentioned religious and political identities because these also played a big role on all sides of the Atlantic in selecting who would be the victims of enslavement and who would the beneficiaries. Note that the generality of non-slaveholding whites might enjoy the 'wages of whiteness' (Roediger 1995) or might simply be relieved to find that the harshest toil was reserved for racialised others.

European authorities justified slaveholding and slave trading by urging that it was highly conducive to national prosperity, and that Africans were heathens and savages who needed coercion and restraint if they were to be useful to others or themselves. Aristotle had insisted that some were born to it and Noah, the 'good man', had condemned to enslavement the 'sons of Ham' – an entire descent group. In the New World many slaveholders were to claim that black skin was the visible sign of this curse. (Kidd 2006)

Planters often enjoyed lording it over their slaves but the raison d'etre of the plantations was commodity production since only the latter could cover the planter's considerable costs. Moreover the planters were locked into competition with one another, a fact which weeded out the less single-minded.

Nancy Fraser's recent essay 'Expropriation and Exploitation in Racialized Capitalism: a reply to Michael Dawson' (Fraser 2016) agrees that 'primitive' capitalist accumulation was not confined to some early, bygone phase. Successive phases of capitalism have continued to generate racism and other ideologies that justified the expropriation and super-exploitation of natives and the enslaved. This chimes in with a new emphasis on slaveholding capitalism in recent studies. It can also be seen as dovetailing with the work of feminists who have stressed the role of unpaid domestic labour in the reproduction of labour power under capitalism.

Fraser helpfully itemises the variety of social institutions that subject labourers to expropriation and super-exploitation – and in the spirit of her argument one could add the role of a 'reserve army of labour' (the unemployed and marginal) in depressing labour standards. But is it the case that capitalism absolutely requires patriarchy, slavery and their various modern reincarnations? North American capitalism did not collapse in the 1860s when slavery was suppressed. The Jim Crow plus debt-bondage which followed was viciously racist but with its modest market and low productivity was not the ideal partner for Northern capitalism. The Republican abandonment of the freedmen and women was the more despicable in that more generous and principled policies simply required the

political courage to take on the Southern racists and corporate bullies. Other major surges of capitalism show it certainly seeks out easy profits, and disregards human or environmental costs. Progressive alliances with capital are invariably short-lived. But capitalism is often more productive when obliged to respect a socially-regulated 'free labour' regime. Marx supported the formation of trade unions and the agitation for an eight hour day, seeing them as ways of promoting class formation. Dawson and Fraser's justified emphasis on 'expropriation' should not lead us to ignore the contradictory impulses at work in the accumulation process

The original impetus to rural capitalism in 16th and early 17th century England did not emerge from colonialism and slavery. As Robert Brenner and Ellen Wood have explained, it reflected tenancy arrangements that encouraged incipiently capitalist farmers to hire waged workers and to commit to commodity production. (Brenner 1977 and Wood 1988) By raising cash crops tenant farmers could pay rent and purchase labour when needed. Faced with rising labour costs these farmers had an incentive to invest in labour-saving improvements. Of course some English statesmen thought that the enslavement of English workers was the answer. When Protector Somerset tried to re-introduce slave labour in 1547 he found it impossible. The common people would not countenance it and the farmers did not need slaves because wage-earners were available even if they had to be paid higher wages. More extensive commodification went hand in hand with raised productivity and more intense exploitation.

An important corollary was that the payment of wages – and of rents, fees and salaries – all helped to broaden the internal market and to stimulate

demand for plantation products. And as Brenner also explains 'new merchants' arose in the colonial trade who bought the planters' tobacco and sugar and sold them indentured labourers and African slaves. (Brenner 1993) Hence, as Fraser notes, the complementarity of 'free labour' at the core and enslavement in the periphery, with 'race' as more consequence than cause of divergent institutional regimes of labour. Racism went into the making of New World slavery but it was not as focussed, systematic and intense as the racism that subsequently emerged from it.

There were proto-racist elements in Tudor and Stuart culture mingled with seeds of criticism (such as Thomas Browne's debunking of the myth of Noah's curse). Shakespeare's flashes of humanism did not prevent the emergence of colonial racism in Ireland. The English settlers in Ireland, even poets like Spenser, justified 'expropriation' leading Theodore Allen to identify the elaboration of the English regime in Ireland as the 'invention of the white race' (Allen 1997)

But expropriation is a contradictory process, generating struggles over values and institutions as was to become clear in and after the Second World War. The impressive growth of capitalism in post-war Europe was accompanied by some historic defeats for racism including great acts of decolonization, thanks to anti-colonial and anti-fascist movements. The post-war egalitarian impetus waned in subsequent decades as the Soviet challenge ebbed. During its recent time of troubles Europe has witnessed the rebirth of racism directed at immigrants, white as well as black.

The ebb and flow of capitalism and racism is also seen in the ideologies went that into the making and unmaking of colonial slavery. Nineteenth cenctury racism acquired greater scope, feeding back into new racisms in the colonial empires and metropolitan regions. Walter Johnson has drawn attention to the mid19th century ideology of 'global white-manism' bringing together the racial conceits of North American slaveholders and European colonialists (the latter including white settlers, merchants, planters and managers, portraying themselves as the bearers of civilisation. (Johnson 2014). Britain's gunboat abolitionism was targeted the Atlantic slave trade but, as noted above, actively promoted British colonialism in Africa (Hussey 2013). In the early decades it also proved better at establishing European rule than at suppressing slavery in their African colonies

Africans were familiar with the institution of slavery, which could be very harsh but was also flexible and diverse. Enslavement was not necessarily permanent as the caaptive often became a soldier or concubine. The fate of the slave in a New World plantation was overwhelmingly in menial employment and it was, as Huggins observes, highly racialized.

The slavery of the New World was also 'chattel slavery'. Slaves were property and the knot of enslavement was tied by the sacredness of private property, the greed of capitalists, the seductions of consumerism and the blinkers of commodity fetishism. Religion established the category of the heathen, the unbeliever and infidel as well as just-so stories which urged that black skin was the result of tainted blood and incorrigible sin, including the inheritance of curses by surviving descent groups (such as Noah's curse of perpetual enslavement pronounced against Ham's son, Canaan, because of

his father's offence). Last but not least, rival national and imperial projects played a key part in promoting slavery expansion, and quarrels over who would appropriate the slaves' gigantic surplus product. However armed conflict mong the whites over the spoils of slavery unsettled the slave regimes. The Age of Revolution (roughly 1775-1848) created conjunctures which proved favourable to anti-slavery breakthroughs, both in plantation zone and in the metropolis. Egalitarian principles sapped the authority of the Old Order and lad the basis for the proclamation of the 'Rights of Man'.

I have noted that racial privilege gave whites who owned no slaves an incentive to support the slave order. Fear of the enslaved blacks was part and parcel of a slave regime which many whites saw as a pause in a race war that could erupt at any moment. Jefferson explained that enslavement was like holding a wolf by the ears, it being impossible to keep him like that for long or to let him go.

Over time the plantation and racial order generated counter-veiling social forces, in the shape of less atomized, more assertive, slave communities and a growing layer of free people of colour. Free people of colour played a major role in promoting anti-slavery and especially in challenging its racial underpinnings.

The history of anti-slavery in sometimes presented as if the institution was already doomed with the advent of modernity or the rise of capitalism and the market society. But the record shows that the 18th and early 19th century surge of capitalism led to more slavery as the plantation owners and merchants struggled to keep pace with demand. But it is true that the rise of

industrial capitalism also led to a more extensive class struggle and the emergence of a new proletariat. In Britain, France and the United States the years 1815 to 1860 led to the emergence of early trade unions and workers parties who rallied to 'free labour' doctrines and denounced the land hunger of the slaveholders. The defection of the "Free Soil' Democrats created the space for a party, the Republicans, that could win the Presidency without any support from the South. This was a major factor in provoking the Confederate rebellion. (Foner 1970, and 1986).

While it is wrong to deny the role of bourgeois abolitionism it is just as important to register the broadening of support for abolition amongst native and immigrant farmers, artisans and general labourers. As with feminism in recent times, abolitionism reflected and fostered a new subjectivity, with novels and poetry playing a part. The narratives of those still enslaved, and of former slaves, contributed the evidence of their own experiences. The journals and newspapers, educational bodies and literary societies which fostered a new 'public sphere' within which the wrongs of slavery could be addressed. For the slaveholder to be successfully challenged anti-slavery the institution had to be had to be politicised and brought home to those living in metropolitan regions far from the sound of the whip.

The rise of the slave plantation had been rendered possible by a pro-slavery consensus, and by a denial of the common humanity of the enslaved. The concurrent rise of the market society, and progress of accumulation had supplied powerful material incentives. But slavery was suppressed long before it entered into economic decline. The sea-change in views about slavery was provoked at much by the successes of the slaveowners as by

their failure to industrialise. The outbreak of the great slave revolt in Haiti helped to dispel the notion that slaves were happy with their lot. It also led Southern slaveholders to be inordinately demanding and aggressive towards both neighbours in North America and domestic opponents, earning the South the label, 'The Slave Power'. It was feared that the slaveholders would seize the main spoils of the war against Mexico and that at home they would require Northerners to turn slave catcher as they assisted the return of runaways. Such conflicts led to the Civil War, to a radical abolitionism and to the arming of 200,000 black soldiers.

As the great acts of emancipation succeeded one another the cunning of history was not yet finished with abolitionism. As previously noted, the official anti-slavery of the leading states could easily engender the view that the virtuous West should take up the 'white man's burden' and undertake a 'civilising mission' vis-à-vis freed slaves, and towards colonial and native peoples. In the US Republicans, including many former abolitionists, grew weary of championing the cause of the Negro and, in 1876, eventually agreed to the withdrawal of federal troops from the South. The Reconstruction regime, with its concession to freedmen and women, proved short-lived, because it was expensive, because Northeners did not have the stomach for a new clash with the South, and because whites in both sections held blacks in contempt. However the abolitionist current did not evaporate entirely but re-emerged, albeit on a much smaller scale, in opposition to lynching, 'Imperialism' and the flouting of elementary worker rights by the 'Robber Barons'.

Gender ideology played a role in the consolidation of New World slavery.

Slaves were feminised and infantilised as well as racialised. Legally, like the femme couverte, the slave existed wholly inside the household of their owner. Mary Wollstonecraft was not the first, and certainly not the last, to point out the disturbing parallels between the status of the slave and that of the woman, whether daughter or wife.

Nance Fraser observes that 'as eighteenth and nineteenth century political cultures intensified gender difference' new, explicitly gendered senses of dependency appeared – states considered proper for women but not for men. Likewise, emergent racial constructions made some forms of dependency appropriate for the "darker races" but intolerable for "whites"'. (Fraser 2014 90)

Women's Unfinished Revolution

The last half century has witnessed a transformation in the rights and social recognition of women that – mutatis mutandis - can be compared with abolition. While true equality for women remains still quite distant at least lip-service is paid to it as a goal. Moreover this second wave of women's advance was critically assisted by the achievement of female suffrage by feminism's first wave. This is sometimes downplayed because the granting of votes for women seemed, to begin with, to change little, since patriarchal assumptions and institutions were so deeply entrenched. The new voters made cautious use of their power. But wartime mobilisation, Cold War competition, consumer capitalism and the size of the female vote eventually eroded patriarchal power.

The 20th century changes in women's position were, of course, uneven and contested, with defeats and setbacks but within an oscillating and often contested spiral ascent. The successes of first wave feminism - the winning of the vote and elements of juridical equality – could at times seem like containment since deep-rooted ideologies and practices still excluded women or thwarted women in the public sphere, leading to confinement and frustration in the private sphere. But recurrent crises linked to war and revolution in industrialising capitalist societies impressed on male ruling elites the necessity of bidding for the support of women. Here there is a parallel with abolitionism which made its most dramatic gains when the whole social and political order was thrown into question. Crises of national existence – the Jacobin republic in 1794, Britain's Reform Crisis in 1832, the US Civil War in 1863-5 - had favoured anti-slavery as the contending parties searched for effective rallying cries. At such times the claims of property were weakened, racial animosity was muted and national identity redefined.

The eventual passage of slave emancipation in Britain, France, the United States, Spain and Brazil emerged from deep-seated crises and were seen as watershed moments in national life. Since the emancipated became free, and some became citizens, there was a transition to a new moral order. This moment is redolent of the passage between regimes of capitalism to which Fraser, following Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, has drawn attention in the following passage: 'In their important book *The New Spirit of Capitalism* [Boltanski and Chiappello] contend that capitalism periodically remakes itself in moments of historical rupture, in part by recuperating strands of critique directed against it. In such moments elements of anti-capitalist

critique are re-signified to legitimate an emergent new form of capitalism which thereby becomes with the higher moral significance needed to motivate new generations to the inherently meaningless work of endless accumulation.' (Fraser 2014. 220)

Abolitionism and feminism both had immediate goals compatible with capitalist society but both developed visions of equality and emancipation that reached beyond it. As is well-known, abolitionist women played a significant role in the birth of the movement committed to female equality and women's suffrage at the Seneca Falls conference in 1848. Both movements were themselves in part responses to exclusions in the discourse of the 'rights of man' characteristic of the Atlantic patriotic and democratic revolutions of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In her book *Inventing Human Rights* Lynn Hunt argues that anti-slavery – radical abolitionism and the Haitian Revolution - were foundational for the modern conception of human rights, including the rights of women (Hunt 2007).

Nancy Fraser's bracing 2013 essay on feminism and neo-liberalism spotted the affinity that sometimes developed between the neo-liberal advocacy of labour market 'flexibility' and the feminist critique of the patriarchal assumptions built into 'family wage' or a number of welfare arrangements constructed for dependents' (women and children) whose own contribution was hidden.

Another example is Fraser's argument that expropriation and slavery does not just feed capitalism occasional super-profits but that this accumulation

process has a systemic need to solve its own crises of profitability by appropriating cheap sources of labour, land and raw materials in a process she dubs ‘expropriation’. Thus the complex of appropriation rests on ‘the two exes’, expropriation and exploitation, with the former often being as important as the latter. Thus in the antebellum United States in 1860 the value of the slaves was far greater than the value of land, canals, tools, and machinery in the whole Union.

Civil Society, State and Slavery

Nancy Fraser develops these points with her characteristic lucidity and forcefulness, furnishing a pithy sketch of how mired capitalist accumulation has been in expropriation as well as exploitation. This is a valuable reminder and focuses on many forms of special oppression as well as modern slavery. But some empirical and conceptual issues remain and it is these that I now adThe claim that ‘cheap labour’ is a boon to capitalists and helps them recover profitability is often questionable, even though the individual employer might see it like that. Robert Allen has argued that British manufacturing wages were higher than those of its competitors during the decades of industrialisation of 1780-1840. High industrial wages gave manufacturers a strong incentive to invest in labour-saving innovations. These wages also expanded domestic demand and drew the wage-earners into greater reliance on the market. (Allen 2014) Complex machinery required skill to operate it. To begin with well-paid artisans might work together with super-exploited women and children but class struggle eventually brought regulation of the hours and conditions of labour. Labour

reform had inherent limits but these were not nearly so narrow and fierce as those which confined the enslaved.

As for slave labour it was often quite expensive as is reflected in the general tendency of slave prices to rise. Slavery permitted planters to open up new territory but In the ante-bellum period in the United States the Northern farms and factories expanded more rapidly than did the Southern economy, with its narrow internal market being a source of Southern weakness. Because slaves could be forced to grow their own food and make their own clothes they helped to foster the problem of weak demand. Certain labour-intensive sectors (farming, textiles) to this day witness employers resorting to highly oppressive methods of labour recruitment and debt bondage. State regulators are meant to track down and prevent such practices, but often lack the resources that would enable them to do so effectively. Age as well as race render children vulnerable to such super-exploitation.

The phenomenal growth of China and Vietnam has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty. It has been accompanied, sadly, by ruthless appropriation of village land, wholesale destruction of natural resources and brazen official looting. Zhao Liang's recent film *Behemoth* furnishes an awesome portrait of this hell and of the ghost cities it has created. Such expropriation also been seen in Indonesia and Africa but without the growth, without autonomous industrialisation and without Chinese-style ghost cities. State-orchestrated capitalism is part of the story here, but so is the fact that China and Vietnam had an educated and literate work force. Workers endowed with 'social capital' and eager to improve themselves became phenomenal agents of growth. Such a population was soon bound to

demand decent conditions and social rights, challenging the grim regime of state sanctioned plunder and ‘expropriation’.

In the conclusion of her response to Michael Dawson, Nancy Fraser argues that the state played a key role in promoting colonial slavery and the plantation system. It was the state, she explains, which validates expropriation and which is responsible for a ‘political subjectivation’. While this may have been the case in other social regimes the state played a surprisingly modest role in the emergence of plantation slavery in the Americas, from its 17th century origins to its nineteenth century climax. The colonial state did recognise plantation wealth, but it was the competitive Atlantic context which gave free lance merchants and bankers their chance and which they perfected with the ‘Second Slavery’ of the nineteenth century (Tomich 2004, Johnson 2014 and Baptist 2005).

The colonial trading companies failed in the Americas. The plantation boom was the work of independent traders, beginning as ‘interlopers’, practicing de facto free trade. These classic entrepreneurs carried millions of captives across the ocean. Traders, planters and factors learnt from one another and devised many of their own laws in their own assemblies. The French colonial merchants insisted that they must have unfettered access to European markets and one of them – the merchant economist Thomas Le Gendre - invented the slogan *laissez faire, laissez passer*. The French royal authorities drew up the Code Noir, but colonial proprietors simply ignored any regulations they disliked. Racial slavery in the English American colonies was very much a product of civil society, not the state. John Locke was responsible in the 1690s for revising or approving colonial laws as

director of the Southern department of the Board of Trade. But the great philosopher thought the colonial slaveholders were a valuable check on the royal power so did nothing to weaken their position. This foundational moment saw a colonial institution – chattel slavery - accepted by the metropolis, not imposed by the metropolis on the colonies.

The US Constitution, in deference to planter wishes, provided for a minimal state with the lowest possible taxes (Einhorn, 2008), with law and order being guaranteed by local militia and patrols not federal troops. The US Army numbered 18,000 in 1820 compared with over 400,000 state militia.

The planters faced varied resistance but made their own security arrangements, which were quite effective down to 1860 – and again after 1877. If I have understood her correctly Fraser holds that the origins of 'race' and slavery should be sought in the state. However the impetus to enslave emerged first in civil society and only subsequently obtained state sanction. The new Atlantic imperial states did their damnedest to profit from slavery but the slaveholders struggled to limit this and eventually established new states – the US and Brazil - that were highly decentralised. Without ever quite attaining it, their ideal was a self-governing civil society that would interfere as little as possible with slaveholder power (on which more below).

Slaveholders everywhere in the Americas had a lively fear of meddling by metropolitan philanthropists and ignoramuses. In the United States in the 1850s the Southern slaveholders were so alarmed by the prospect of a Republican president that they took the huge gamble of Secession to avoid

it. The slaveholder could maintain dominance within their own areas but they had a horror of unreliable federal office-holders, of anti-slavery propaganda and of a fickle Northern public opinion. Fraser's argument that the slaveholders needed the state because they needed 'political subjectivation' would certainly be relevant here.

If we look at Jim Crow and the reconstruction of white supremacy in the US South it showed similar ambivalence and was anchored in civil society not the federal state. The main Southern demand was for 'states rights' and Southern autonomy. The 'expropriation' and terrorisation of the former slave was guaranteed by patrols and militia organised by the slaveholders themselves. In some parts of the South US occupation saw a challenge to planter power in 1868-77 but almost immediately the planter militias and patrols morphed into white vigilante groups.

Frank Wilderson is right to locate the racial dynamic of enslavement and capitalism close to the ground level. The subtitle of his article is 'Whither the Slave in Civil Society?'. (Wilderson 2003). Slaveholders needed the state, and they needed allies, but they were not confident that they could rely on either in a crisis. Wilderson draws attention to the ubiquity of planter patrols and militias in slave societies. After the failure of Reconstruction the disciplinary function belonged to the local state. In more recent times the National Guard, police and vigilante groups directly inherit the role of enforcing the racial order.

Yet Radical Reconstruction also bequeathed a highly positive legacy which ‘Afro-pessimistic’ writers ignore or decry. It is said that the ‘rights-bearing’ discourse of the abolitionists proved a snare and delucion. Yet the freedmen and women had participated in Black Conventions and endorsed a ringing Declaration of Rights and Wrongs. They and their descendants fought against lynch mobs and for the ‘public right’ of equal access to public accommodation and transport. They created African American schools, colleges and churches where a black civil society could take shape. The NAACP embodied this tradition and gave it international resonance. Aaron Carico’s bracing account of Reconstruction and after makes too little allowance for these more creative manifestations of African American politics and civil society. (Carico 2016). However the pessimists are certainly right to give due weight to more than a century of extraordinary oppression following ‘emancipation’.

Reconstruction collapsed with the withdrawal of federal forces from the South. It was replaced by a decentralised regime of terror which combined elements of spontaneity with the backing of former Confederate officers. The willingness of the authorities in Washington DC to go along with Southern lynching and segregation was in deference to the Southern elite and the initiative still lay with such civil society actors as landlords, store-keepers and bankers.

Fraser writes that ‘the United States perpetuated its “internal colony” by transforming recently emancipated slaves into debt peons through the share-

cropping system.' (Fraser 2016,) This could be misleading since it attributes too little autonomy to the Southern elite. The white South had its own agenda and was often able to impose it on Washington. It was a junior partner nationally but a monopoliser of power locally. This is not to exonerate the North which made huge concessions to South. Northern Republicans feared the Southern elite and shared their contemptuous views about blacks. Racism, like patriarchy, thrived because of its roots in civil society and the weakness of the federal state. White supremacy was based on the facts on the ground, on armed bodies of white men. And the pact between the sections means that North and South remained a single nation state, not the convenient myth of a binary entity in which the North had no responsibility for the South, a myth righty attacked by the 'pessimists'.

Where Does Anti-Racism Come From?

In her fascinating concluding sketch Fraser does not sufficiently register the historic defeats inflicted on racism in the mid twentieth century - the defeat of Nazi Germany, the rise and fall of Imperial Japan, the founding of the United Nations, the Chinese Revolution, the anti-colonial revolutions, the civil rights struggle in the United States and the downfall of apartheid. Racism stubbornly survives, and the successes and failures of capitalism generate new varieties of racial oppression. But nevertheless white supremacy and others forms of institutional racism were deeply discredited by fascism, colonialism and segregation. Indeed the glaring contradiction between racial regimes and their official demise contributes greatly to the latter-day 'legitimacy crisis' of racialised and financialised capitalism..

The word ‘racism’ acquired negative and critical connotations only very recently. As a critical concept it dates from the twentieth century and was only widely adopted in the anti-colonial and anti-fascist movements. The defeat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan did much to discredit racism, an ideology and practice that imbued European colonialism, US segregation and South African apartheid. (Cox 1949, Kovel 1970). W,E.B Dubois, the NAACP and the Haarlem Renaissance helped to renew the tradition of black abolitionism and to transmit it to new generations. The emergent post-war world saw East and West competing for influence. According to the new doctrine white racists were enemies denied the respect due to all members of the human race. The US tolerance of segregation and apartheid seriously weakened its international standing.

If we ask where do the new anti-racist norms come from then part of the answer would be, as Lynn Hunt has shown, the anti-slavery revolts and movements. (Hunt 2007). They challenged dominant religious and secular doctrines and, at least from time to time, brought out their more progressive and universalistic beliefs. National liberation movements and the emergence of the ‘Third World’ directly inspired – and were inspired by - the critique of racism found in the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois, Ruth Benedict, Oliver Cromwell Cox, Claude Levi-Strauss, Franz Fanon, Joel Kovel and the work and the testimony of many other writers and activists.

The anti-slavery breakthroughs placed the critique of racism on strong grounds. This was an intellectual, cultural and political achievement of anti-colonial, anti-fascist, anti-apartheid and black liberation movements each of which helped anti-racism to avoid false universalism and empty formalism.

Western capitalism was nourished by a host of expropriations but some currents of liberal and bourgeois thought and politics broke with colonial and racial paternalism and welcomed t he UN General Declaration of Human Rights, the latter inspired by the neo-abolitionist NAACP.

While incomplete and flawed in various ways the General Declaration furnished key reference point for anti-racist mobilisation. Attempts to portray the discourse of 'human rights' as a purely bourgeois construction, as is sometimes claimed by both partisans and critics, are misguided. But the sorts of class struggle typically provoked by capitalist accumulation and appropriation – and most particularly by 'expropriation' - often strive to combine anti-racist and anti-capitalist themes. Thomas Haskell claimed that 'humanitarianism' was the result of horizons enlarged by the spread of market relations (Bender 1992) , yet in truth anti-racism made few inroads prior to the UN General Declaration of 1948. Prior to this US New Dealers, and European Liberals and Socialists were typically complicit with Southern or colonial racism. During the inter-war period the international Communist movement was almost alone in campaigning against white racism and colonialism. The UN General Declaration arose from Eleanor Roosevelt's response to the initiatives of W. E. B. Du Bois and the Soviet delegation. (Hunt 2006, Blackburn 2011)

Fraser powerfully advances our understanding of the ways in which capitalism generates inequality and exclusion, thereby fostering and feeding racialization. The impetus here derived from civil society. However the state certainly furnishes guarantees, legitimacy and powers to these social relations, a fact that becomes very visible at times of general crisis, war and

revolution. At such times the ruling order was divided and the oppressed and excluded could make their presence felt. The test of war and revolution generated a need for mobilizing appeals that could challenge oppression and gain wide acceptance. It furnishes points of rupture. However vigilance is in order because state elites can be easily distracted and forces within civil society inimical to racial equality will undermine and falsify prior gains.

What Is To Be Done?

Nancy Fraser's argument is rich in programmatic implications. She boldly calls for an alliance between the Sanders movement and Black Lives Matter. This prompt the question 'What could challenge the drive to expropriation, exploitation, and social exclusion, and encourage cross-racial mobilisation?' Thus the US Social Security system has withstood assault from both Republican and Democratic presidents because everyone contributes, and nearly everyone benefits. But in the era of globalisation, as Fraser has shown, redistribution has to be reframed to tackle yawning global inequalities. It requires taxes on capital rather than labour, and levies which reach into the tax havens. However the global poor are so poor that they could be helped by a global old age pension or youth grant of no more than a dollar a day. Because women live longer, and have little opportunity to save, the great majority of the global poor are female. Even a dollar a day would help and South Africa has shown that a public old age pension can be reliably delivered using finger prints and mobile ATMs. The cash they need can be raised by a Financial Transaction Tax or share levy. (Blackburn 2010).

Fraser has offered a compelling argument concerning the recurrent and persistent role of debt in condemning subject populations to expropriation and exploitation. which certainly should inform campaigning and polcy formation. She has targeted the role of debt in financialised capitalism something that should prompt research and debate on effective debt-forgiveness strategies. Debt now lies like a dead-weight on the global capitalist order. It also oppresses many of the poorest. An effective way of bringing down personal debt would help to revive demand. Steve Keen has proposed that the new money minted by central banks should be re-directed. Instead of feather-bedding the commercial banks the new cash should give every citizen a dividend of , say, $100,000 each, with the stipulation that, if indebted, they should pay off their debt before spending the money on anything else. This would be a counter-expropriation device for reducing poverty, but is not inherently anti-capitalist.

A dimension of racial expropriation crying out for redress is the high US incarceration rate, its strongly racial character and its denial of civic rights to former inmates. As it happens the US Constitution establishes a providential remedy in the shape of the presidential pardon, which could become the focus of a public campaign to release all those – white or black – who have been imprisoned for non-violent crime. The parole service is said already to have drawn up a programme for large scale emancipation. President Obama has used the power of pardon very sparingly but may make more of an effort in his final opportunity to deliver a blow for elementary justice in 2017. But his successor could make amends by freeing successive waves of inmates at a rate that would halve the US prison population in four years. The presidential pardon, by quashing the original indictment would also restore

civic rights. Of course no president is going to carry out such a programme unless there is a very strong movement urging such action. But the power to pardon is there and there is no constitutional limit to it. Of course even if successful to some degree, vigilance would be needed and a wider prison 'abolitionist' perspective brought to bear on the results. Mass de-incarceration, like mass debt-forgiveness would probably be best pursued using a colour blind approach rather than by singling out for help members of one or other ethnic group.

With all its limitations the Lyndon Johnson era showed that it was possible to promote civil rights and social justice in ways that were complementary rather than antagonistic. Fraser's earlier quoted observations on revolutionary rupture underline the point that great transformations tend to cluster. There is also a way in which structural change has a cumulative character such that what might start out as a modest and even naive attempt to reach for racial justice within capitalism gradually turns into a cross-racial challenge to capitalism itself. Fraser is incisive when describing the racial character of debt, but in a recent interview she vividly describes how the crisis nevertheless destroys the privileged niche of wide sectors of the white population too (Fraser 2017) .

As cultural constructs, race and gender both seek to deny full humanity to those they target but ultimately this attempt provokes successive waves of critique and resistance. While there are certainly wide differences between abolitionism and feminism they do supply encouragement to a progressivism that challenges social stereotypes and is neither euphoric nor fatalistic. Defeating racism will require the democratisation of state and civil society

with bold acts of political de-subjectivation, reappropriation and class struggle.

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