

# THE FALL OF 'RACE' AND THE COSMOPOLITAN CHALLENGE

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Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race*, London, Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 2000, 406 pp; £22.50 cloth, £8.99 paperback.

Given the continual and normalised reference to 'race', how far can the academic mantra that it is a 'social and cultural construction' challenge innate and naturalised forms of racial explanation? And, if constructivist arguments continue to reify 'race' through the same circular logic of biology, what are the political and ethical implications of its continued usage? These urgent conceptual, theoretical, and political questions exercise Paul Gilroy's critical imagination and form the point of departure for *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race*.

I want to consider three of the main issues developed within *Between Camps* that extend and move beyond the concerns of Gilroy's previous work. First, he traces the practico-theoretical order for the reification of 'race' that he terms 'raciology' through various political, cultural, and corporate discourses. He recognises the prime danger of raciology as its wide acceptance and use, ranging from the racial scientists and career racists of the political far right to broader social and cultural forms, including within anti-racist activism and popular entertainment. He then argues that the inescapably reified premises of 'race' support mythical ideas of embodied racial identification and group solidarity which bypass negotiated political affiliations. Departing from the key themes of 'race formation' in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* and hybridity in *The Black Atlantic* therefore - both of which accepted 'race' as a constructed identity qualified by social and cultural premises - *Between Camps* controversially moves to erase 'race' altogether. Gilroy's claim that the continued popular and academic reference to 'race' only serves to aggravate its reifying effect is extremely contentious, and invites the question of how racism might be addressed *without* the concept of 'race'. As such, *Between Camps* bisects key debates on 'race', racism, and ethnicity, and discussions of multicultural identities and rights predicated on the existence of ethnic 'groups'.

A second key theme within Gilroy's book is the suggestion that the increasing fixation with visuality has had a deleterious effect on black vernacular cultures. His focus on the drive of the contemporary culture industries to market cultural products through the explicit manipulation of glamorous and exotic bodily images is a significant supplement to his

previous work. *Between Camps* expands the 'outer-national' focus of *The Black Atlantic*, where Gilroy sought to uncover the diasporic 'routes' of black cultures hidden within the dominant notion of fixed national and ethnic 'roots', into a critique of the role of 'race' within globalised forms of popular culture. His idea that the commercial imperatives underscoring contemporary black popular cultures nullify the integrity of their artistic production and effectiveness as oppositional political forms is both compelling and provocative. On the one hand, it recognises that the work of artists such as Bob Marley and Peter Tosh emerge from a time when the idea of freedom and political engagement was more directly connected to popular cultural production than it is now. However, it also implies that the moment of worthy radicalism has passed, and that contemporary black cultures are corralled into one of two uninspiring avenues. The first submits to the conservative dictates of the corporate entertainment industry that objectifies blackness, for example, in the images of chiselled muscular slaves emerging from the 'middle passage' in the film *Amistad*. The second simulates dissent through regressive gestures of pseudo-freedom based on normative heterosexuality and material wealth, as evident in facets of hip hop culture. However, just as Gilroy's strident critiques of ethnic absolutism and cultural nationalism in *The Black Atlantic* sparked controversy in being seen to conflate the content and purposes of various nationalisms within a singular reactionary form, the critique in *Between Camps* negates existing expressions and potential avenues of cultural resistance.

The advancement of a post-racial humanism represents the third main intervention of *Between Camps* that I want to explore here. In suggesting the exhaustion of 'race' as a viable critical concept, Gilroy tries to envisage the ethical resources necessary to dismantle the explicit raciology and hegemonic status of 'race'. He advances a 'strategic universalism' as the basis for the reformation of an inclusive human identity that negates the exclusive allure of 'race'.

'After consistently opposing various forms of foundationalist thought such as ethnocentrism and cultural absolutism for well over a decade, this assertion of a universal humanism is a bold move. Given that universalism and humanism are often seen to partner 'race' as modernist concepts, it is not at all clear how they can be conceptually redeemed, while 'race' remains inextricably tied to its divisive history. Discarding the possibility of recuperating or reinventing the 'old' humanism, Gilroy drafts a collective human category that is based on a cosmopolitan ethics bound to the post-racial universality of species-life. This turn to inclusive progressivism as an enlightening spirit, while rejecting the partial and exclusionary practices of its high modernist application, is conceptually problematic. Just as Gilroy interrogates 'race', it has recently been asked whether the 'human' can be re-signified in ways that refute its ethnocentric Western history or alternatively, if we now require a 'post-humanism' with no ambition beyond signalling the contingency of subjectivity, communication, and ideas.<sup>1</sup> This

1. Iain Chambers, *Culture After Humanism: History, Culture, Subjectivity*, London, Routledge, 2001.

raises the larger issue of how to avoid the worst excesses of reductive thought, while retaining the capacity for penetrative social analysis and prescription - the point of departure for *Between Camps*, as well as its ultimate aim.

#### THE RISE AND FALL OF 'RACE'

Retaining a critical thread of Gilroy's previous work, *Between Camps* questions the extent to which the spectre of 'race' haunts the ideals of modernity and reveals its false promises. He argues that the social and cultural ideas and practices of modernity were themselves compromised by a flawed logic that he has referred to elsewhere as the 'complicity of racial terror with reason'.<sup>2</sup> He recognises 'the consolidation of modern raciology [that] required enlightenment and myth to be intertwined' (p59) and created the foundations for what he calls a 'distinctive ecology of belonging' (p55). This raciological form of belonging issued the individual citizen with symbolic commitments to fixed national, ethnic, and cultural affiliations, encouraging 'insular' modes of identification based on sameness. Gilroy highlights the ethical implications of this apprehension about difference, multicultural, and cosmopolitanism, an apprehension which encouraged a 'camp mentality' of cathartic identities based around sameness.

2. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1993, p73.

Gilroy's corrective begins with the observation that raciology 'cannot be readily re-signified or de-signified' (p12), and moves towards developing new 'non-raciological' forms of social identification and belonging. This is supported by the idea that 'the creative acts involved in destroying raciology and transcending "race" are more than warranted by the goal of *authentic democracy* to which they point' (p12, emphasis added). The urgent task of dismantling 'race' is assisted by the very crisis of raciology, inasmuch as

the idea of 'race' has lost much of its common-sense credibility, because the elaborate cultural and ideological work that goes into producing and reproducing it is more visible than ever before, because it has been stripped of its moral and intellectual integrity, and because there is a chance to prevent its rehabilitation (pp28-9).

This weakening of 'race' is enhanced by the development of medical technologies for treatment and research purposes that illuminate the internal sameness of the body in contrast with the irrelevance of external (phenotypical) differences. He then suggests that, confronted by our unifying corporeality, and made to face our internal similarities as opposed to our superficial external differences, we find the work required to sustain the hegemonic status of raciology exhausting, to the extent that the exhausted, if not terminal condition of raciology itself becomes irrefutable. For Gilroy, this prognosis initiates a series of critical questions: can we continue to use 'race' - with its unavoidable phenotypical resonance - in the full awareness that it has no biological foundation? Given its inescapably reified premises, can we possibly recuperate 'race' without reinforcing its

dangerous 'common sense' meanings? Or, put differently, can the concept of 'race' be redeemed in a way that is wholly separable from its iniquitous historical practices? Gilroy's enumeration of a series of conceptual dangers appears to answer these questions with a sometimes qualified 'no'. Although there is much to unpack here, the assertion that many progressive commitments to 'race' require 'the pious ritual in which we always agree that "race" is invented but are then required to defer to its embeddedness in the world' (p52) is a trump card. The customary qualification that 'race' is a social construction continues to rely on arbitrary criteria to group differentiated individuals together.

Gilroy argues that these naturalised forms of group affiliation have been mobilised in order to provide short cuts to political solidarity surpassing the need for negotiated positions. Furthermore, such easy political alliances are dangerously dependent on an overarching conceptual negativity, where group membership is authenticated by sets of criteria which inevitably establish those who do not belong: the Outsiders and Others. For Gilroy, this pervasive raciological negativity debases the conceptual universe of progressive anti-racist ideals; it fails to 'communicate any positive or affirmative notes' (p52), leaving us to wonder what a creative and positive anti-racist politics would entail. The political ironies and implications of adhering to this 'mythic morphology of racial difference'<sup>3</sup> become apparent in the 'fraternity of purity-seekers' who populate 'the unstable location where white supremacists and black nationalists, Klansmen, Nazis, neo-Nazis and ethnic absolutists, Zionists and anti-semites have been able to encounter each other as potential allies rather than sworn foes' (p219).

I understand the value of Gilroy's attempt to disavow 'race' most powerfully in terms of its critique of the inadequacy of many racial forms of description, explanation and justification. His perspective is easily applied to the description of the rioters, aggressors and provocateurs on the streets of Northern England during the urban uprisings of summer 2001 as 'Asians', 'Pakistanis', 'Indians', 'Bangladeshis' and 'whites'. This explicit use of racial terminology fixes disenchanting British citizens within an over-determined frame of 'race', mediated by the 'ethnic' differences of culture, religion, and nation. On these terms, the salience of ethnic differences inflates the conflicts into 'race/ethnic riots' instead of civil unrest, and separates the issues of multicultural rights and freedoms and ethnic identity from the broader demands of building a cosmopolitan democracy. Gilroy's implication is that we need to initiate positions and debates that are not built on the premises of 'race'; in other words, we might need to move beyond 'race' in order to deal more effectively with racisms.

It is at this point that objections to Gilroy's denunciation of 'race' - in the work of commentators as diverse as Molefi Kete Asante and Robert Miles - begin to crystallise around the very terms of his project. Asante writes of the impracticality of erasing 'race', and of *Between Camps* as indicative of a profound misunderstanding of the objective lives of the African-American

3. Paul Gilroy, 'Race ends here', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21 (5) 1998: 842.

community and of the social, political and cultural importance of its organic links to Africa.<sup>4</sup> Despite these expected differences, Asante's argument that *Between Camps* focuses on the *idea* of 'race' as opposed to racism or anti-racism, echoes broader conceptual reservations about the terms under which 'race' should be dismantled. The originality of Gilroy's argument becomes apparent by comparing it with Robert Miles's critique of the 'race relations problematic', where he examines the relationships between supposedly prior existing 'races' and between their distinct transhistorical identities.<sup>5</sup> Where Miles identifies racism, rather than 'race', as the primary subject of concern, Gilroy resists racism as an organising principle, and focuses on 'race' as a semi-autonomous cultural concept. The semi-independence of 'race' from social relations illuminates the extent to which Gilroy's willingness to forgo 'race' is less comprehensive than it initially appears. Stating that 'I am alive to all the ironies of my position' (p52), Gilroy anticipates the massing ranks of realist objections, and offers a highly significant qualification: 'to renounce 'race' for analytical purposes is not to judge all appeals to it in the profane world of political cultures as formally equivalent' (p52).

This caveat serves two functions. First, it separates the analytical from the practical bases of 'race'; second, in viewing the 'formal equivalence' between the two sceptically, it implies that differential appeals to racial forms of identification have differential values 'in the profane world of political cultures'. While this might partially be a reaction to the resistance of those he asks to relinquish their racial identities, the reference to a particularised black intellectual and cultural production throughout the book prevents this move from appearing as a merely gestural tactic. Nevertheless, the specific terms that validate claims to 'race' within the 'profane world' are left unstated; for Alana Lentin, this indicates a familiar practico-theoretical impasse in Gilroy's work:

Gilroy does not, indeed cannot, provide answers to the dilemmas he poses.... He is, like most contemporary students of 'race', racism and anti-racism, haunted by the problem inherent in the recognition of the critical futility of employing 'race' as a category and the concomitant realisation that, without these tried and tested concepts, anti-racism increasingly loses meaning.<sup>6</sup>

Without wanting to frame racism as the key social and conceptual problematic, with anti-racism as its political arm, Gilroy formulates 'race' as a conceptual dilemma that renders an intellectual project problematic.<sup>7</sup> While there is no obvious means of simultaneously retaining *and* erasing 'race', the consistent denunciation of raciology, and the powerful mythologies which universalise racial particularities, appears to deny even the desirability of such cathartic resolutions. Accepting that the racial aspects of certain social phenomena are often perceptibly real, the challenge issued in *Between Camps* is to confront how and why 'race' is theorised and

4. Molefi Kete Asante, book review of *Against Race*, *Journal of Black Studies*, 31 (6), 2001: 847-851.

5. Robert Miles, *Racism After 'Race Relations'*, London, Routledge, 1993.

6. Alana Lentin, 'Race', Racism and Anti-racism: Challenging Contemporary Classifications', *Social Identities*, 6 (1), 2000: 100-1.

7. Sophie Body-Gendrot, 'Now you see, now you don't: comments on Paul Gilroy's article', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 (5), 1998: 848-858.

operationalised, and how to explore the ethical implications of its continued usage without recourse to the customary evasions that configure it as a biocultural fact.

Even Gilroy's position remains implicated within the orbit of 'race'. Continuing the themes of his previous work, *Between Camps* frames its social critique around black intellectual figures and cultural fields. Such positioning of paradigmatic black figures and cultures can have two possible meanings; it either points to black intellectual and cultural production as distinctively and singularly 'black', or it situates these phenomena as particular aspects of a universal process. Whichever meaning is accurate - and I understand Gilroy to be doing the latter - his use of the term 'black' is problematised - and has even been criticised as an application of the 'one-drop rule' that surreptitiously reiterates the biologism of 'race'.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, his reading of intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon and Richard Wright as illustrating the hybrid insights of 'becoming' as opposed to 'being'<sup>9</sup> forms the basis of what John Hutnyk recognises as the 'hierarchy and history of hybridities'<sup>10</sup> which establishes the primacy of black intellectual and cultural producers.

These reservations over Gilroy's use of the term 'black' emerge from a reading of *The Black Atlantic* as offering a 'counter-model' of 'an outernational, hybrid blackness' which draws on many of the same 'reductively absolutist, vanguardist, exclusivist and essentialised-purist'<sup>11</sup> assumptions that he takes various cultural nationalisms to task for. This perspective points to a deeper, perhaps insoluble problem. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy uses the identification of 'black' and 'white' races across the political spectrum to frame 'another, more difficult option: the theorisation of creolisation, métissage, mestizaje, and hybridity'.<sup>12</sup> In *Between Camps* he recognises that, despite the extensive critical lexicon and elaborate grammatical syntax that is applied to 'race', 'a lack of a means of adequately describing, let alone theorising, intermixture, fusion, and syncretism without suggesting the existence of anterior "uncontaminated" purities' (p250) remains. This leaves a lingering conceptual problem inasmuch as concepts such as creolisation and hybridity suggest the existence of discrete and separable forms which are subsequently mixed or fused.<sup>13</sup> Derrida's critique of the Western privilege of speech over writing, and the associated metaphysics of presence, is instructive here.<sup>14</sup> If, as Derrida suggests, grammatical understanding and linguistic meaning have social and practical effects, a grammatological analysis of syncretism would entail assessing the extent to which it delineates original forms that prefigure contact and mixing. Alert to this possibility, Gilroy stresses a concern with fallacious representations of hybridity as indicating 'the stable, sanctified conditions that supposedly preceded the mixing process and to which presumably it might one day be possible to return' (p250). He thus situates the conceptualisation and discussion of difference within a commitment to *negotiated* political affiliations and solidarity that are ethically responsible. As the disputes over his use of 'black'

8. Jayne O. Ifewunigwe, 'Old Whine, New Vassals: Are Diaspora and Hybridity Postmodern Inventions?' in Phil Cohen (ed) *New Ethnicities, Old Racisms*, London, Zed, 1999, p181.

9. Paul Gilroy, '... to be real: the dissident forms of black expressive culture' in *Let's Get It On: The Politics of Black Performance*, Catherine Ugwu (ed), London, ICA, 1995.

10. John Hutnyk, 'Adorno at Womad: South Asian Crossovers and the Limits of Hybridity-Talk', in P. Werbner and Tariq Modood (eds), *Debating Cultural Identity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, London, Zed, 1997, p127.

11. Laura Chrisman, 'Journeying to death: Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*', *Race & Class*, 39 (2), 1997: 53.

12. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, op. cit., p2.

13. Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London, Routledge, 1995.

14. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans), Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

indicate, however, this ethical settlement is as difficult to attain as 'race' is to displace.

## FREEDOM AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE

Gilroy develops his arguments over the reification of 'race' within an analysis of the commodification and marketing of black bodies and vernacular cultures. His central argument is that an emergent visual culture has emptied black expressive cultures of the immediacy of real-time live performance and its attendant oppositional political imagination. This leaves him to 'mourn the disappearance of the pursuit of Freedom as an element in black vernacular culture and ask why it seems no longer appropriate or even plausible to speculate about the freedom of the subject of black politics in the overdeveloped countries' (pp184-5). Instead, freedom is focused on the private instead of the public sphere: 'Ritualized sexual play of various kinds and an erotic delight in the body supply the new means of bonding this new freedom and black life. What was once abject life becomes nothing more than one life-style among other, less exotic options' (p185). A nihilistic 'pseudo-freedom' is produced, organised around property, sex and violence, which, with extreme irony, 'ceases to be anti-social and becomes social in the obvious sense of the term: it generates community and specifies the fortified boundaries of racial particularity' (p199).

I would suggest that this rather grave view of the artistic and political content of contemporary black musical culture ignores its more affirmative, if less visible, possibilities. Gilroy's concentration on the corporate 'corruption' of black vernacular culture diverts attention from the plurality of its spaces and productive and expressive modes. Indeed, it represents a significant move away from his earlier observation that certain artists might adhere to a 'respectful and egalitarian representation of women and [a] ... more ambivalent relationship to America and Americanism', and from the contention that 'all three strands within hip hop - pedagogy, affirmation, and play - contribute to a folk-cultural constellation where neither the political compass of weary leftism nor the shiny navigational instruments of premature black postmodernism in aesthetics have so far offered very much that is useful'.<sup>15</sup> The denial of these progressive possibilities and the conflation of black cultures within a unitary, commercially dominated form fail to connect with debates that point to the performative and interpretative complexities of hip hop and which identify *both* progressive and regressive tendencies.<sup>16</sup>

Gilroy counters this by emphasising that many attempts to realise the progressive potential of hip hop avoid the hard work of exploring the 'phenomenology and integrity of musical creations', instead embracing the 'easier work of analyzing lyrics, the video images that complement them, and the de-skilled, technological features of hip-hop production' (p182). I would suggest that his chosen examples of 'gangsta' and 'booty'

15. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, op. cit., p85.

16. See for example Clarence Lusane, 'Rap, race and politics', *Race & Class*, 35 (1), 1993: 41-56; Mark Anthony Neal, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Culture and the Public Sphere*, London, Routledge, 1999; Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Hanover, Wesleyan University Press, 1994.

17. Common, 'A song for Assata', MCA 111970-2 compact disc.

rap are but two hip hop modalities that pursue a commodified vision of freedom, and that significant alternatives exist. For example, the significance of Common's 'A song for Assata',<sup>17</sup> which narrates the famous narrative of the arrest, summary trial, and imprisonment of the black power activist Assata Shakur to a new, younger audience extends beyond its poetic lyricism. The track includes a sample of Shakur's own voice, from the sanctuary of political asylum in Cuba, speaking of freedom as something that she has imagined but been unable to realise during her life. A commitment to freedom, both imagined and lived, remains a vital, if less commercially visible, aspect of hip hop production which remains attentive to the historical struggles of the black public sphere to the injustices of American democracy from past to present.

Recognising the broader formation of contemporary black cultural production requires not Gilroy's distinction between (historical) politicised and (contemporary) consumer-led modalities, but theorising the *coterminous* articulation of progressive and regressive positions. I would suggest that there is greater analytical and critical mileage in recognising and engaging with the dialectic of resistance and domination within (black) cultural production. Just as Fanon's affinity with violent masculinism and Wright's misogyny do not negate their intellectual value, confronting the coexistence of articulations of freedom and the constricting particularities of hip hop serves as the basis for articulating its oppositional scope. This is politically more productive than the zero-sum paradigm that sees either exemplary artists or demonic icons.

These debatable aspects of Gilroy's content-based condemnation of contemporary hip hop are extended by his analysis of the evolution of its form. His concern over the intrusion of technological mediation upon the skills of live performance bear the influence of Adorno's concern that the mechanical reproduction of commercial jazz involves abandoning the formal skills of instrumentation and composition. As such, Gilroy's defence of Adorno's notorious portrait of the embodied abandon and thus political docility involved in dancing to commercial jazz is illuminating. Gilroy recognises that Adorno misunderstood the 'possibility that jazz was helping to define and practice new freedoms' (p295), but he notes the 'good faith' of Adorno's misinterpretation. He defends Adorno's recognition of a curious symmetry between the ecstatic abandon inspired by jazz and the cultivated alienation of autonomous consciousness within Nazi authoritarianism, and his regard of both as manifestations of pseudo-freedom.

This ethical justification does not explore the implications of Adorno's misunderstanding; indeed, Gilroy's analysis reworks aspects of Adorno's resistance to musical evolution. His classification of mechanical reproducibility and visuality as the 'enemy' of live performance, skilled instrumentation, dialogic communication and contemplative engagement is questionable, in that many of the latter practices and aims are fulfilled through the mediated technologies of vinyl record, compact disc, and



television. While there is nothing intrinsically regressive about the visual field, mechanical reproducibility, or technological innovation, I would suggest that new forms of instrumentation and media ought to be considered in terms of their diverse possibilities, and not restricted to their present functions. Just as *The Black Atlantic* counterposes the corrosive effects of technological innovation on long-standing black public spheres with the implicit essentialism of the black cultural tradition of 'call and response' as an exemplary communicative mode,<sup>18</sup> *Between Camps* faces a similar dilemma. Without envisaging the multiple possibilities of new modes of cultural production, Gilroy's critique runs the risk of reifying and romanticising previous cultural forms, thereby setting absolute and unattainable standards for the present. Therefore, the question he rightfully advances - why certain forms, especially 'race', are preciously guarded and devoutly conserved - must be extended to other themes and spheres. The advent of cultural racism reminds us that dismantling 'race' and raciology will represent only a partial advance if the discourse of purity is permitted to creep in through the cultural back door.

18. Hutnyk, 'Adorno at Womad', op. cit., pp125-6.

## HUMANIST FUTURES

The project of dismantling raciology is complicated since the replacement of exclusionary forms of racial solidarity with a more inclusive and ethically-based community requires the construction of new, non-reified markers of social identity and belonging. For Gilroy, this non-reified, post-racial identity is found in a rendering of the 'human' predicated on a universal 'species-life'. Species-life, in his elaboration, combines individual particularity and general humanity through the development of a 'strategic universalism' committed to 'imagine democracy and justice in indivisible, nonsectarian forms' (p230). For Gilroy, a key aspect of this strategic universalism is the recovery of histories of suffering that resonate throughout a collective humanity, as opposed to remaining the property of particular groups. He suggests that the involvement of African-American soldiers in the liberation of Jews from the concentration camps places them within the symbolically charged edifice of holocaust memory. For Gilroy the importance of this history is that the soldiers' witnessing of the effects of the Nazi genocide interrupts the raciological representation of this history as 'the property of particular groups and interests for whom it serves important functions of legitimation and solidarity' (p307). This is not intended to intrude on the bereavement and pain of survivors, but seeks to reinscribe a particular tragedy as a universal, human event, whereby

diverse stories of suffering can be recognised as belonging to anyone who dares to possess them and in good faith employ them as interpretative devices through which we may clarify the limits of our selves, the basis of our solidarities, and perhaps pronounce on the value of our values (p230).

The gravity of Gilroy's polemic is apparent in his demands that particularistic claims to the memory of suffering be relinquished. Nevertheless, this grave and perilous undertaking is a compelling humanist move which strips away the comforts of exceptionalism to replace them with human empathy and understanding. Such emotional and imaginative leaps into the unfamiliar risks provoking a level of distress that could disrupt the attempt to fuse abstract ethical values and lived practice. The same tension is palpable in Primo Levi's assertion, acknowledging the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Russian gulags, Cambodian self genocide, the Vietnam war and the murderous campaigns of the Spanish conquistadors, that

the Nazi concentration camp system still remains a *unicum*, both in its extent and quality. In no other place and time has one seen a phenomenon so unexpected and so complex: never were so many human lives extinguished in so short a time, and with so lucid a combination of technological ingenuity, fanaticism and cruelty.<sup>19</sup>

19. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, Raymond Rosenthal (trans), London, Abacus, 1989, pp9-10.

Levi's assertion of the concentration camps as a 'unicum' within genocidal history points to the precariousness of Gilroy's position, since particular testimonies are easily appropriated by an exclusionary solipsism that ruptures the humanistic imagination of an expansive species life. This is especially ironic when one considers the ways in which the Atlantic slave trade and the holocaust have, in certain circles, been counterposed as competing histories of racial subjugation within the dismal frame of hierarchies of suffering.

Gilroy states plainly the dangers of such particularist claims, asking:

What, in the face of the proliferating chronicles of human barbarity, would it mean to seek to contrive a pastoral and permanently innocent ethnic or racial identity? What is at stake in the desire to find an entirely pure mode of particularized being, and to make it the anchor for a unique culture that is not just historically or contingently divorced from the practice of evil but permanently fortified against that very possibility by its essential constitution? (p230)

20. Michèle Barrett, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*, Cambridge, Polity, 1991.

21. I am thinking here of Bill Martin, *Humanism and Its Aftermath: The Shared Fate of Deconstruction and Politics*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1995.

He goes on to raise the chilling possibility that such biologically reinforced claims to innocence could legitimatise a politics that will 'be emancipated from moral constraints' (p231) in the future. Considering that the recovery of humanism has been seen as significant in promoting an ethically responsible politics and in reinvigorating the notion of agency,<sup>20</sup> the potential hazards that Gilroy illuminates point to the necessity of reinforcing a humanist ethics with an engaged political practice that has some concept of social transformation.<sup>21</sup> I am not entirely convinced, therefore, how a post-racial humanist ethics might emerge without the support of a clearly

stipulated, if provisional, political project capable of presenting ideas coherently with the intent to stimulate political activity. Although Gilroy's recent work has been regarded as ambivalent, if not antagonistic, towards Marxism,<sup>22</sup> his assertion that raciology has 'alienated' and 'estranged' us from our common 'species-life' offers a corrective nod to the young Marx's utterly modern concern with 'species-being'. However, in focusing on the idea of 'race', largely within the cultural sphere of Western modernity, Gilroy's analytical frame forgoes a global perspective.<sup>23</sup> In arguably sharing the localised, Eurocentric limitations of twentieth century Marxist humanism and critical theory, Gilroy's 'planetary humanism' is somewhat limited. Obviously, I cannot explore whether or not Gilroy's humanism ought to be supplemented by some form of reconstituted Marxism here. However, Gilroy does appear to need such a reference point in order to address the non-West - and non-Western formations of modernity - as well as the relationship between ethical, humanistic concerns and the material issues of political economy.

The final and positive word is left to the future. Gilroy's book provides an inventory of a post-racial humanism that is necessarily provisional in its desire to avoid the potential tyranny of closed pronouncements. He offers a compelling argument for the need to develop a post-racial future which builds on the temper of anti-racism in an explicitly utopian register, imagining a 'heterocultural, post-anthropological, and cosmopolitan yet-to-come' (p334). Gilroy's political and ethical imagination here resonates with what Gilles Deleuze has identified as the production of active 'intellectually mobile concepts' in an open mode of intellectual engagement, who do not seek to 'win' arguments, but to provide convincing and compelling political claims.<sup>24</sup> *Between Camps* makes a passionate call for us to survey our surroundings for the common resources which reflect our imagination of democracy, to build on them forms of human sociability that will surpass the divisive inequities of 'race' and its false freedoms.

22. Neil Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

23. Ibid.

24. Gilles Deleuze, 'Mediators' in *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, Martin Joughin (trans), New York, Columbia University Press, 1995.

# HISTORICISING (AND OTHER APPROACHES TO) THE ATLANTIC

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Helen Taylor, *Circling Dixie: Contemporary Southern Culture Through a Transatlantic Lens*, New Brunswick and London, Rutgers University Press, 2001, 232pp; £41.50 hardback, £16.95 paperback. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, London and New York, Verso, 2000, 433pp; £19 hardback. James Dunkerley, *Americana: The Americas in the World, around 1850*, London and New York, Verso, 2000, 642pp; £27 hardback.

With the establishment of a 'Center for Transatlantic Studies' in Maastricht in 1998, a new academic discipline or field of study appears to have taken root, complete with inaugural conference, electronic newsgroup, and forthcoming journal. The collection of essays which marks its founding tends to favour the adjectival form, with 'transatlantic' qualifying a range of different perspectives, changes, comparisons, influences and connections.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, in the wake of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), some theorists have preferred the noun, with the Atlantic now available in a variety of different colours: not only black, but also white, red and green.<sup>2</sup>

None of this is entirely new, of course, as generations of maritime and diplomatic historians and students of the conquest of the New World, and of the international slave trade would no doubt insist. More recently, as James Dunkerley points out in his brief introductory survey, the 'Atlantic' figured in attempts by scholars in the 1950s to situate the French Revolution in a broader context, though some radicals found this a worrying counterpart to the political re-alignments of the Cold War (pp50-1). In the 1990s, the term has taken on a more economic and cultural complexion, reflecting the growing interest in the cross-border flow of people, goods and ideas around the world more generally, marked by the popularity of spatial categories such as globalisation, mobility, diaspora, nomadism, and so on.

These three studies cover nearly four centuries, from the wreck of the *Sea Venture* in the Bermudas in 1609 to the visit of Maya Angelou to Scotland on the occasion of the bicentenary of the death of Robert Burns in 1996. Their individual timeframes barely overlap, however, with *The Many-Headed Hydra* taking us up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, *Americana* focusing on the decade 'around 1850', and *Circling Dixie* largely concerned with the post-World War II period. But between them, they illustrate well

1. Will Kaufman and Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson (eds), *Transatlantic Studies*, Lanham, New York, Oxford, University Press of America, 2000. For more information on the Center see <http://www.cmsu.edu/mcts>

2. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, London, Verso, 1993; Peter Linebaugh, 'Green Atlantic, Black Atlantic, Red Atlantic: Ireland in the Atlantic World in the 1790s', lecture delivered at the Keough Institute for Irish Studies, University of Notre Dame, 28 April 2000. In *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Peter Linebaugh credits Kevin Whelan for 'introducing the Green Atlantic' (p414).

the possibilities and limitations of 'Atlantic' as a theme, field and concept.

Helen Taylor offers a series of case studies: of *Gone With the Wind*, Alex Haley's *Roots*, the city of New Orleans, the plays of Tennessee Williams, and the autobiographies of Maya Angelou - exploring how each has figured in a variety of mainly Anglo-American cultural exchanges. Her prologue suggests the novelty of this approach, claiming that the 'transnational formations' of these classic emblems of the American South 'have been critically neglected' (p3). Actually, the problem is not so much neglect; as the opening chapter implies, the South has long been accustomed to viewing itself through a 'transatlantic lens'. It's just that it is usually a racially segregated one, focused either on an African homeland or Celtic forebears, rarely both.

An alternative approach is suggested by Charles Joyner who believes that 'every black Southerner has a European heritage as well as an African one, and every white Southerner has an African heritage as well as a European one' (quoted p25). When Taylor emphasises, for instance, the European literary influences on Angelou, or the British interest that sustains Dixieland jazz, we catch a glimpse of the kind of evidence that would support Charles Joyner's claim. But *Circling Dixie* is not primarily concerned to make such an argument. Taylor prefers exploring ways in which Europe has fashioned the South for domestic consumption: advertising campaigns for Jack Daniel's and Southern Comfort, theatre productions of Tennessee Williams, the various sequels (officially sanctioned or otherwise) of Margaret Mitchell's novel by both British and French authors. These initiatives may occasionally attract surprise, suspicion, even litigation, from the other side of the Atlantic, but these 'dialogues' (if such they are) are hardly the most striking demonstrations of the hybrid character of 'the South' one can imagine.

There is something pleasingly unfashionable about Taylor's choice of examples, few of which have attracted much excitement among literary critics or students of popular culture. And yet this quiet defiance of the conventional does not produce revisionist readings which challenge the prevailing academic orthodoxy. In the case of *Roots*, for example, Taylor does not dispute the charges of historical inaccuracy and plagiarism levelled at the novel (elaborated in much detail), and she agrees that its conservative conception of race in terms of kinship is problematic. She does insist however that through its international popularity, the book and TV series 'gave a global audience a very different South' from the one they were used to, and encouraged interest in 'narratives about black life and culture' from which subsequent African American artists, writers and film-makers would benefit. That we might say the same of slave narratives or *The Color Purple*, Mahalia Jackson or Martin Luther King, Jr, suggests that the particular 'transatlantic lens' used here can reveal nothing very specific about the object in view.

While Taylor eschews the kind of thesis proposed by Joyner in favour of

a more genial 'circling', Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker offer something altogether bolder. For them, the 'Atlantic' denotes less an approach than a coherent object. Written self-consciously in the tradition of the English Marxist historians Christopher Hill and E.P. Thompson, *The Many-Headed Hydra* internationalises the struggles they documented and celebrated, charting a Titanic conflict between the forces of industrial, military and naval discipline and the hybrid maritime proletariat that emerged to challenge it.

Their title is taken from the Greek myth of Hercules and the hydra, commonly invoked during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to convey 'the difficulty of imposing order on increasingly global systems of labour' (p3), the hydra embracing, variously, 'dispossessed commoners, transported felons, indentured servants, religious radicals, pirates, urban labourers, soldiers, sailors, and African slaves' (p4). They read contemporary texts which demonise the hydra from 'above' (Francis Bacon, William Petty) - but only to contrast them with those who celebrate it from 'below', whose beliefs and actions have usually only been preserved in the writings of others.

Linebaugh and Rediker reconstruct the hidden lives of remarkable individuals, such as 'a blackmore maide named Francis', the subject of a text by the elder of the Bristol church to which she belonged in the 1660s, or Will, a slave who came to New York after participating in slave revolts in Danish St John and Antigua in the Caribbean and who played a key role in the Conspiracy of 1741. Will's exploits come down to us from court records studied by the historian Ray A. Kea. But the hydra is perhaps most aptly represented by inter-racial love affairs such as the alliance of the Irishman Colonel Edward Marcus Despard and his African-American wife Catherine, or that of the American slave John Gwin and the 'Newfoundland Irish beauty' called 'Negro Peg', or friendships such as that which - at least for a while - united the African Olaudah Equiano, the Scot Thomas Hardy and his English wife Lydia Priest who shared lodgings in London in the early 1790s.

The narrative, like its many protagonists, is always on the move. Thus the struggle played out at the Putney Debates during the English Revolution in 1647 is shown to have echoes in bloodier confrontations in Naples, Ireland, Barbados, the River Gambia, Virginia, and London itself over the next twenty-five years. Similarly, the New York Conspiracy of 1741 is presented as the culmination of a decade of rebellions across the whole Caribbean basin.

The authors' huge cast of characters and places are held together not only by the overarching hydra myth, which appears repeatedly in quotations by contemporary writers from Walter Raleigh to Percy Bysshe Shelley. Key words and phrases weave in and out of the text, which is strong on politicised etymologies ('proletariat', 'motley crew', 'linchpin'), the power of religious motifs ('jubilee', 'hewers of wood and drawers of water', 'God is no respecter

of persons') and the languages developed by sailors.

Those who are allergic to grand narratives, even to those that tell a determinedly 'people's' story, will no doubt point out that the private and public lives Linebaugh and Rediker seek to reconstruct fulfil an essentially synecdochic role, as if they were different cells in the same body, and from which an identical revolutionary Atlantic could be cloned. It is true that sometimes the characterisations of individuals (about whom often very little is known for certain) are necessarily filled out by speculative attributions, transposing from the general to the particular. In the case of the better documented lives of, say, Despard, or the Jamaican-born sailor, Methodist and pamphleteer Robert Wedderburn, there is something Herculean about the way the narrator tames them to tell a single story. And yet at the level of detail, there is much of interest and surprise; every episode demands further investigation, which this book will surely inspire. Such work, even if more local, or historically specific, will not be able to ignore the connections to the broader intercontinental traditions of protest and hope delineated here, even if they turn out to be more mediated than the authors allow.

Despard was executed in 1803, the same year as Toussaint L'Ouverture, leader of the San Domingo Revolution, and the Irish radical Robert Emmet. As the forces of reaction asserted themselves on both sides of the Atlantic what 'was left behind was national and partial: the *English* working class, the *black* Haitian, the *Irish* diaspora ...' (p286). It is as if the revolutionary hybrid 'red' Atlantic decomposed into its component elements: white, black and green. It is not clear whether the authors are claiming that this decomposition is a figment of the imagination of subsequent historians, or a tragic failure of the proletarian movement itself, or both. Certainly the book ends with a look back to what seems like a golden age of popular - and genuinely international and multi-racial - resistance and revolt, but it is no elegy. The authors recognise what their heroes and heroines were up against. 'Yet,' they conclude (before a final invocation of William Blake's 'Tyger! Tyger!'), 'the planetary wanderers do not forget, and they are ever ready from Africa to the Caribbean to Seattle to resist slavery and restore the commons' (p353).

*Americana* is a vast, unusual book. Its tight (but not rigidly adhered to) chronological frame (1845-55) somehow brings together Marx's 'epistemological break', the Mexican War, the Irish famine, the invention of the telegraph, the discovery of gold in California, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento on North American cuisine, Flora Tristan on that of southern Peru, and much more besides, into something like a coherent whole. Self-consciously adopting the digressory and convoluted style of a nineteenth-century novelist or historian - complete with four pages of 'dramatis personae' - Dunkerley also quotes frequently and at length from texts of the period.

If the mid-nineteenth century saw the increasing standardisation of clock time, the conjuncture is perhaps more important for historians of Europe

than for those of Latin America and the United States - while for those who inhabit 'indigenous time', its significance may be different again. After an introduction which usefully addresses these issues in some detail, the rest of the book consists of six chapters, which adopt two contrasting styles.

Three shorter chapters focus on three separate court cases. First, the trial of John Mitchel in Dublin in 1848 for sedition. Second, a US Supreme Court hearing of 1852 relating to the long-running Myra Clark Gaines case. (Her attempt to establish that she was the legitimate daughter of one Daniel Clark, and thus entitled to his inheritance, takes in evidence relating to activities in Bordeaux, New Orleans and Philadelphia.) Finally, the prosecution in 1850 of a Bolivian official, Mariano Donato Muñoz, for unlawfully releasing a prisoner awaiting trial for the murder of her husband. Each chapter takes the form of a detailed account of the case itself, followed by a longer postscript providing a broader context, including an account of what subsequently happened to the main protagonists. We learn that Mitchel, for instance, was sentenced to 14 years transportation, ending up in Tasmania, where he broke his parole and absconded to the United States, becoming a pro-slavery newspaper editor, only returning to Ireland in 1875 shortly after winning a parliamentary seat as a Home Rule candidate. *Americana* teems with such magical-realist biographies.

Dividing the court cases are three long chapters (divided into smaller sections) which offer freer-ranging reflections on 'Cultures in Contention', 'Political Economies', and 'Empires at War (And Nearly So)'. Overall, the material is organised in a recognisably thematic way, but close up, the links from one section to another, and even within the sections, often seem to follow the logic of word association, or the pleasure in unusual juxtapositions. In a few pages one moves, for instance, from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, via Jorge Luis Borges, Allen Ginsberg, and Pablo Neruda, to the article Karl Marx wrote on Simon Bolivar for the *New American Cyclopaedia* in 1858. Dunkerley's focus constantly switches from primary to secondary sources and back again. Characters reappear unexpectedly. For instance, the narrative of US and British diplomatic interest in Nicaragua is punctuated by an entry from John Mitchel's diary recording his crossing of the country in 1853. A gentle humour is never far from the surface, as in this characteristic aside which interrupts the story of Francisco Burdett O'Connor, an Irishman who became a general in the Bolivian army: 'In 1994 Bolivia was represented at the Miss Universe contest in Manila by Cecilia O'Connor, L'Oréal model, admirer of Fidel Castro and worthy - if red-headed - representative of the country's bustling pulchritude' (p463).

Although the detailed and meandering text well exceeds the requirements of a single over-arching argument, much of the material engages with still-powerful intellectual currents such as 'American exceptionalism' and dependency theory. The arguments, and sheer weight of examples, cumulatively undermine assumptions of Latin American backwardness, reminding us that, despite what we know to have occurred



since 'around 1850', the United States was just another country in the Americas, linked like all the others in complex, uncertain ways to Europe. *Americana*, however, is an infuriating book simply because of its size. Unlike a dictionary or encyclopaedia, which it physically resembles, it works on the basis of gradual accumulation, and the reader's recognition of names and places separated by many pages; it must therefore be read fairly quickly to be appreciated. If the book is to be read away from a desk, a paperback with thinner pages will be essential.

Although there is a short discussion of 'Atlantic space' in the introductory chapter, which accurately captures the scope of the book in terms of the breadth of its primary and secondary sources, this is not a concept that is endowed with any explanatory value here. This is perhaps the great advantage of *Americana* over the other two books under review. In declining to make the Atlantic anything other than a quiet frame of reference, Dunkerley avoids some of the dangers faced by authors who give it more prominence. Self-consciously adopted as a disciplinary approach, on the one hand 'transatlantic studies' runs the risk of lending an artificial coherence and depth to what might be simply a record of discrete and rather unremarkable 'cultural conversations'. Wholeheartedly embraced as an object, on the other, 'the Atlantic' tends to acquire the status of a enduring myth, unfolding in accordance with an inexorable logic. *Americana* neither says too little nor claims too much. The 'conjuncture' it examines reveals the Atlantic as a delicate balance of forces with an uncertain future: the book thereby historicises the ocean in ways that *Circling Dixie* and *The Many-Headed Hydra* do not.

# BECOMING STUART

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*Jeremy Gilbert*

Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg and Angela McRobbie (eds), *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall*, London, Verso, 2000, 433pp; £17 paperback, £45 hardback.

Stuart Hall: the most public and yet the most enigmatic intellectual of the British left in recent decades. Admired far and wide, many things to many people, this man, whose only single-authored book is a relatively overlooked collection of political essays, seems at times to be famous largely just for 'being Stuart'. A leading theorist who has always made explicit his own distaste for theoretical systematisation, he still has not offered us, three years after his retirement from the chair in Sociology at the Open University, any system which bears his name, any coherent way of nailing him down, any hostage to posterity's modish cruelties. A speaker, an essayist, an editor, a mentor - but never a writer of Big Books - it is ironic that his retirement should be the occasion for one of the biggest books to come out of Cultural Studies for some time.

This tributary volume contains no less than thirty-four essays, ranging from one- and-a-half to twenty-three pages in length, and taking many different forms: poetry, personal reflections, essays using Hall's ideas to work through theoretical and empirical topics (including Jamaican post-war politics and struggles over the meaning of globalisation in South Korea). It includes contributions from many of the leading figures of Anglo-American cultural studies and theory, and some from other areas (criminology, social policy) to which Hall's oeuvre remains relevant, as well as from writers that I had not encountered before.

Celebrity is no guarantee of quality, and very often the essays by the better known contributors consist of lyrical but inconsequential rehearsals of well-worn cultural studies themes. From Iain Chambers we learn, for instance, that music culture is, like, all about identity, and identity is, you know *fluid* and, well, you shouldn't go around making rigid distinctions between the cultural and the economic. This is hardly front page news.

Valuable as these contributions may be in their own right, far more interesting at the present moment, and more appropriate to the occasion they mark, are those which challenge the complacencies of mid-Atlantic cultural studies with concrete reminders of what, following Hall, cultural studies was always supposed to be about. For example, John Clarke - once a contributor to *Policing the Crisis*, now Professor of Social Policy at the Open University - offers a fascinating set of reflections on the premise that

Hall's work holds great relevance for his own field. In the process, he reminds us that something has gone desperately wrong with Cultural Studies, that this should be a statement which surprises, indeed which needs to be made at all.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the various pieces is the nature and extent of their engagement with Hall's work. The fact that the book is not, nominally, *about* Stuart Hall but merely *for* him can technically excuse a complete lack of such engagement on the part of the contributors. However, this hardly lessens the embarrassment of noting that Judith Butler's seven-page exposition of her own work demonstrates no direct knowledge of Hall's, apart from one minor essay in which he happens to cite her. Similarly, Gayatri Spivak presents a characteristic deconstructive reading of Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Lucy*, the relevance of which to Hall's projects can best be described as tangential.

This reviewer would emphasise - despite his editor's distaste for such pleasantries - that there are no living intellectuals he holds in greater awe than Butler and Spivak. Nevertheless, it is hard to resist the conclusion that their contributions tell us something about the individualistic culture of American - and to some extent all - academic life which goes some way towards explaining the reverence in which Hall is held.

It is quite obvious that these are figures whose brilliance lies largely in their capacity to fill whole books with their own ideas (often in the form of commentaries on the Great Traditions of literature and philosophy). This is the classical mode of intellectual life, and it is unavoidable for most of us. Hall's genius has always been to avoid it. It is the pithy essay, the concise analysis, the momentary synthesis, the rousing speech, the timely collection, the concern for the popular and the immersion in the contemporary for which he is famous. In other words, it is always - *always* - for the sake of some tactical intervention, in the name of some collective project, at the moment of some precise conjuncture, that Hall has acted, written and spoken.

Perhaps, after all, the very contrast which the work of these quite different scholars provides is a necessary part of any such collection. It is in the nature of Hall's methods that they should be mobile, polysemic, and often unpredictable in their effects. Thought in these terms, we can see that only a collection as rich and varied as this could possibly be a fitting tribute to a man who has always said exactly what needed to be said, and no more.

## PIPE DREAMER

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*Jo Littler*

1. Gerard Genette,  
*Paratexts: Thresholds  
of Interpretation*, Jane  
E. Lewin (trans),  
Cambridge,  
Cambridge  
University Press,  
1997.

2. Doreen Massey,  
'Travelling  
Thoughts' in *Without  
Guarantees: In  
Honour of Stuart  
Hall*, London, Verso,  
2000 and *Space,  
Place and Gender*,  
Cambridge, Polity,  
1994.

3. Benedict  
Seymour,  
'Nationalize This!  
What Next For Anti-  
Globalisation  
Protests' and Simon  
Bromley, 'The  
Golden  
Straightjacket:  
Moving on From  
Seattle' in *Radical  
Philosophy*, 107 May/  
June 2001, pp10

José Bové and François Dufour (interviewed by Gilles Luneau), *The World is Not for Sale: Farmers Against Junk Food*, trans. Anna de Casparis, London, Verso, 2001; 222 pp; £16 hardback.

As Gerard Genette pointed out, we know a book is a book because of the liminal devices and conventions that are used to mediate it as such to the reader, including its physical framing (its dustjacket, its foreword, its index) and its 'epitextual' framing (its book reviews, advertisements, the more diffuse cultural discussion around it). The foreword of a book acts as a favourable book review-within-the book, a stamp of cultural authority by a famous name, an indication of its identity and marketing orientation.<sup>1</sup> *The World is not for Sale*, an extended interview with the French farmers José Bové and François Dufour by the journalist Gilles Luneau, carries a foreword by the goddess of anti-globalisation, Naomi Klein. This, together with the title and Bové's sudden prominence in the British media, has meant that *The World is Not For Sale* can be positioned beyond the shelves on agricultural methods and food hygiene to feature prominently in the 'current affairs' and 'contemporary politics' sections of newspaper reviews and bookshops. Like Klein's *No Logo*, Noreena Hertz's *The Silent Takeover*, Kalle Lasn's *Culture Jam* and George Monbiot's *The Captive State*, this is a book which has reached out to and appears to be succeeding in gaining a relatively large readership. The difference is that these other books take as their subject the power of multinational corporations within neo-liberalism, whereas *The World is Not for Sale* examines this phenomenon through the prism of a more particular activity: farming. Both Bové and Dufour belong to the French Farmer's Confederation: Bové is its most famous member, Dufour its president.

Bové is most famous for organising (and being imprisoned for) the painstaking dismantling of a McDonald's restaurant being erected in his home town, Millau in south-west France. This was in part a protest against a one hundred per cent increase in American import duties on the locally-produced speciality, Roquefort cheese (an increase interpreted as American retaliation for a European ban on importing hormone-treated beef). An account of this food war forms the first of the book's three sections. The second part chronicles 'The Damaging Effects of Intensive Farming' by surveying changes in agricultural methods, mainly in the latter part of the twentieth century, and by eloquently relating these changes to broader cultural histories and political geographies. The final part, 'We Can Change The World', discusses alternative models of farming and trading, and makes

suggestions for implementing reform. And, as the rallying cry suggests, it also details the links between the Farmer's Confederation and wider anti-capitalist movements and impulses - to Seattle, to Subcommandante Marcos (with whom Bové has swapped pipes) and beyond.

There are a number of reasons why the actions of Bové, Dufour and the Farmer's Confederation might be viewed suspiciously from a progressive perspective. For whilst widening out involvement in anti-corporate action is all very good, isn't such multinational-bashing taking place merely in the protectionist interests of farmers who are liasing with anti-capitalist movements only to safeguard their own capitalist livelihoods? Such suspicions may be especially pronounced for a British audience for whom farmers in general are often taken to be the very embodiment of rural conservatism. This stretches back to the alliance between aristocratic and bourgeois land-grabbing capitalism and the acts of enclosure between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries: as the aristocracy and the emergent bourgeoisie turned themselves into agribusinesses, forcibly demolishing communal farming and swathes of common land, thousands of workers were removed from the countryside and propelled into the overcrowded poverty of nineteenth-century cities. The modern farmer is often not only a metaphorical but frequently an actual descendant of the victors of this war on the poor.

The type of farming in which Bové and Dufour participate, however, is less open to charges of protectionism and hereditary privilege, being co-operative and communal, with land divided up between those who want to work on it, with profits either equally shared, ploughed back into the farm or used to support anti-globalisation causes. The Farmer's Confederation encourages non-hereditary farmers to become involved with farming, and Bové himself has impeccable radical credentials, having acquired land by squatting it in the 1960s in order to protest at a nearby military site. Not only is their ethos non-exclusive, but they seek to extend this sense of ownership beyond the immediate workers, emphasising that the land does not just belong to those who work on it but those who live near it, as well as to city-dwellers who want to come to the country. It is this inclusive populism which has made Bové the acceptable face of anti-capitalism to Middle France. At the time of Bové's trial for the McDonald's incident, 100,000 people gathered to protest, a physical body of support four times that of the crowd at Seattle. Advocating not a feudal system but a co-operative sustainable system of agriculture, not 'rustic authenticity or a cardboard cut-out countryside' but an integrated method of agriculture which recognises the multifaceted links between land, food and people, the Farmers Confederation approach these issues through coalition-building, by persuading particular groups that they share interests and can work together in their defence.

Given the nationalist sentiment and symbolism circulating around Bové - the trademark pipe, the handlebar moustache, the Rocquefort cheese - it

might also be expected that this anti-globalisation stance offers a retrenched nationalism which reductively conceives of a pure space before or outside the global. As Doreen Massey among others has pointed out, we cannot conceive neatly embedded localities within 'the global', as the relationship between places are always dynamic and interactive; the idea that a locality can be fixed, grounded, with hermetic borders, emerges from a colonial tradition of positivist mapping.<sup>2</sup> However, such fears are not borne out, as the communitarian ethics practised by the Confederation is also manifest in their very self-conscious internationalism. The book describes anti-globalisation as specifically meaning anti-*neo-liberal* globalisation, suggesting that it doesn't have to imply a retreat into what it describes as the 'selfish, frightened and irrational response' of nationalism (p159). Bové and Dufour call for a 'new internationalism' which recognises the interaction and mutual dependence between nations. Arguing, for example, for British farmers to be as protected as French farmers against BSE, and for an end to the export subsidies used to legitimate European and American over-production which flood the markets of poorer countries in the south (in the process destroying local livelihoods, leaving these countries' own exports at the mercy of multinationals who pay a pittance), they convincingly describe their alliances with farmers around the world and their suggestions for sustainable internationalism. The Farmer's Confederation has therefore managed successfully to unite the consumer and green lobby while simultaneously lobbying for subsidies to enable new farmers to enter agriculture, and uniting with Indian farmers against GM crops. In the process, they move way beyond forms of activism which campaign solely for the needs of white middle-class consumers. These were more than the Rocquefort Riots.

In many respects, *The World is Not For Sale* does for food what Klein's *No Logo* does for clothes. It argues for increased transparency on how food travels from the field to the plate, for a shift from the intensive monocultural farming of the 1960s into sustainable multifunctionalism. But what is interesting is the strong links created here between anti-capitalist actions and future alternatives. For all *No Logo's* strengths as a beautifully written, well-researched and passionate clarion call offering inspirational encouragement, Klein tends to over-dramatise the scale of the poetic resistance of the anti-sweatshop demonstrations at the expense of any reflection on the ways such resistance might be channelled into change. Such elaborations are badly needed; while the widely reported slogans of recent anti-capitalist demonstrations, replacing capitalism 'with something nicer' and 'many things not just one' might be well-intentioned and beautifully multiple, they also conjure vague, amateurish and (like the protests) unreassuring images of the future. *The World is Not For Sale* elaborates and highlights alternative ways of life, moving beyond negative campaigning, as well as using it.

Bové and Dufour, then, provide a range of suggestions of what to do next, as well as an impressively anti-elitist approach and an ability both to

protest against and to work within existing structures in order to transform them. Both have protested against the World Trade Organisation and have been accredited to appear there by the French government (suggesting that the WTO should adopt the UN Charter of Human Rights which would subject it to an international court of appeal). The French government has also adopted some of the policy suggestions of the Farmer's Confederation. While this serves to highlight the potential value of a French socialist government in these neo-liberal times, it also illustrates the importance of a multi-faceted, effectively hegemonic approach to the fight against neo-liberalism.

A recent issue of *Radical Philosophy* presented two views on anti-capitalist protests. Simon Bromley argued that anti-globalist spokespersons were wrong to reject multilateral forms such as the IMF, GATT and NAFTA, because, if not here, then 'where is the social and democratic re-regulation of neo-liberal capitalism to be located?' Benedict Seymour, on the other hand, emphasised that anti-capitalist action should not merely be reformist, and he quoted Negri: 'the problem is not to try to make these institutions democratic, but to construct democracy otherwise'.<sup>3</sup> *The World is Not For Sale* does not toe a liberal line between these positions, but rather takes the insights of both to produce a programme which might best be described as a new strain of deconstructive revolutionary reformism, which uses what is already there and reworks its meanings. This is to think a different kind of unthinkable from the neo-liberal project, and simultaneously to think about how to get such difference implemented.