1. The Wake of Colonialism

> Hopeless was voyaging round the Cape of Good Hope in a little boat. It was early in the morning, a strong wind was blowing. Hopeless hoisted a little sail and leaned back tranquilly. What should he fear in the little boat, which with its tiny draft glided over the reefs in those dangerous waters with the nimbleness of a living being?
>
> —Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*

As Kafka penned this sketch the gathering storm of the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic was about to break at the Cape of Good Hope, colonial mother city, place of global strategic importance, and index of modernity. The Cape has been a slave colony, a Royal Navy base since 1814, and is second only to Egypt and the Suez Canal for English maritime access to the Far East.[1]

Kafka's imaginary pilot might have glimpsed the penal colony of Robben Island where in 1821 Makanda Nxele, the prophet of the 1819 Cape frontier war, died when his boat capsized trying to escape the island prison. Thereafter the Xhosa awaited his return to finish the fight against the colonisers. As Nelson Mandela put it: 'The memory of that loss is woven into the language of my people who speak of a "forlorn hope" by the phrase "*Ukuza kuka Nxele*"' (2013: 325). The sense of hopelessness permeating post-apartheid South Africa was condensed in the conspiracy theory that the real Nelson Mandela died in 1985 and a look-a-like by the name of Gibson Makanda was installed by the apartheid government to negotiate the historic settlement (see Shoki 2020).

The Cape of Good Hope was named *Cabo das Tormentas* by Bartholomew Dias. Mr John Maxwell explained to The Royal Society that the name *Cabo das Tormentas* was changed by Dias's patron John II, King of Portugal, because 'when that Cape was doubled, he had good hopes of finding out a way by Sea to the *East Indies*, about which he was then very solicitous' (1707: 2424). Kafka's snapshot of the hopeless helmsman plays on the fact that often the word 'hope' is dropped and 'the Cape' suffices. Never, it seems, simply 'Cape Hope,' perhaps so as not to overplay a necessarily fragile optimism when confronted with the unpredictability of nature.[2] It is no accident that the vantage point from the Western Cape has often been taken as exemplary and

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enigmatic, at once opening up perspective and clarification while threatening disorientation; as Maxwell described it, 'seeing it is a shred of Land stetch'd out into a vast Ocean on each side' (2424).[3]

Kafka's textual voyager could hardly have missed sea-emerging Table Mountain, the Roman Rock Lighthouse at Simon's Town, and across False Bay the enfolding Hottentots Holland Mountains. Simon's Town is named after Simon van der Stel, employee of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and first Governor of the Cape Dutch Colony. Outside of South Africa, Van der Stel is best known today for featuring in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755). In the notes to part two Rousseau recounts the following 'well-attested example, which I submit to the scrutiny of admirers of European political order:'

> All the efforts of the Dutch missionaries at the Cape of Good Hope have never been able to convert a single Hottentot. Van der Stel, Governor of the Cape, having taken one in as a baby, had him reared in the principles of the Christian religion and the practice of European customs. He was richly dressed, taught several languages, and his progress matched the care taken in his upbringing. The Governor, full of high hopes based on the boy's intelligence, sent him to India with a commissioner-general who employed the boy usefully in the company business. He returned to the Cape on the commissioner's death. A few days after his return, while he was visiting some of his Hottentot kinsmen, he decided to strip off his European finery and clothe himself in a sheepskin. He returned to the fort in this new garb, carrying a package which contained his former clothes, and presenting them to the Governor, he made the following speech: "Kindly observe, sir, that I disown this apparel for good. I also disown the Christian religion for the rest of my life. My resolution is to live and die in the religion, customs, and usages of my ancestors. The one favour I ask of you is to allow me to keep the necklace and the cutlass I am wearing. I shall keep them for the love of you." Immediately, without waiting for Van der Stel's reply, he took to his heels to escape and was never seen again at the Cape. (Rousseau 1994: 118)[4]

Home to the Khoe Khoe (Hottentot) and the Khoisan (Bushmen), the Cape is bound up with the paradigm of primitivism and the dynamic tension between rejuvenating origin and threatening recidivism.[5] It is historically inseparable from questions of development and progress, justice and equality. For example, the Cape features in the first volume of Harriet Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832) that fed into Marx's critique of political economy.[6]

Here at the Atlantic peninsula of Africa, gateway to the East and byway to Europe, lurk the reefs and dangerous waters of the world system. Linchpin of European commercial development and cornerstone of the whole British colonial system, one of the prime sources of mineral riches and key link in the global financial system, the African promontory was a vital part of what has been described as the first modern age of globalisation (1870-1914). It is worth noting at the outset that, as Yuk Hui has recently underlined, the idea of globalisation is nothing new. Indeed, the idea of world as reciprocally connected whole—cause and effect of itself—is familiar from Plato's conception of the world soul in *Timaeus* and the Kant's analysis of the interconnected purposiveness of nature in §64 of *Critique of Judgement* (see Hui 2019: 62).

We might say that we are here in the presence of a literary—that is to say, an aesthetic and imaginative—landscape, knowing that such a topology or image begs the question of what it is to *be* in such a context. As much a question of awareness as of judgment, how does one orient oneself in such an all-encompassing representation? From which vantage-point can one represent such a representation, one that must include this very act of representing?

Kafka's craftsman can serve as a useful guide regarding this legacy. Whether purposively or by chance (fortuitously), the little boat gliding with the metaphorical 'nimbleness of a living being' depicts one of the key conceptions of metaphor itself; as transport, the analogical passage of qualities based on perceived similarity. Most important for what follows is the tethering of the exemplary image of the boat or ship to thinking about politics. Plato has Socrates explain to Alcibiades the link between personal virtue and the good politician:

> SOC. Again, in a ship, if a man were at liberty to do what he chose, but were devoid of mind and excellence in navigation [*aretes kybernetikes*], do you perceive what must happen to him and his fellow-sailors?
>
> ALC. I do: they must all perish.
>
> SOC . And in just the same way, if a state, or any office or authority, is lacking in excellence or virtue, it will be overtaken by failure? (1964: 135c, 219)[7]

The one in charge, at sea and at home, must be good at steering (*kybernetikos*) for the safety of himself and his craft depend on such skill. Governance, self-regulation—what today is often called social cohesion or sovereignty, independence, freedom—is a matter of control and communication. Hence

our use of *cybernetics* to denote communication or feedback systems in which cause and effect form a loop, or control and communication in the animal and the machine. Survival depends upon the functioning of the system, the interactive relation of parts and whole in the purposive system.

When Aristotle explains the various kind of rule he underlines that '[t]he trainer or the helmsman considers the good of those committed to his care' (*Politics*, 1279a, 2029).[8] (Aristotle is arguing against the assumption on the part of citizens that they, like the helmsman who is also a sailor, can govern because they have been governed.) This is part of the recapitulation of the central argument *Politics* 'that man is by nature a political animal' that lays out the basis of community:

> And therefore, men, even when they do not require one another's help, desire to live together; not but that they are also brought together by their common interests in proportion as they severally attain to any measure of well-being. This is certainly the chief end, both of individuals and of states.

It would be difficult find, in the western tradition at least, a more consequential set of propositions concerning the importance of speech or language in the development of man and society away from (or towards the fulfilment of) their natural state. We shall see this bedrock of concepts and narratives, with its contradictory teleology and evaluative discrimination, return again and again in what follows.

Amid what Antonio Guterres has called 'a tsunami of hate' (2020) traceable concepts, narratives, rhetorical strategies, and imagery inform interpretation of whether we are witnessing the unique window of opportunity for liberty and security or more global carpet-bagging.[9] Poised between failure of imagination and overactive imagination, reason is once again at stake. Are we confronting the master plan of globalist takeover or clumsy attempts to hide an increasingly familiar 'blind panic' (Streeck 2014: 10)? Others are more positive: ""The pandemic represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine and reset our world"" (Schwab 2020a).[10]

Those who have benefitted from the system that now needs reforming see themselves as most able to guide us to a true global civilisation. What is required is trust: 'we face a terrible lack of trust' (UN 2017: 2). The moral critique of capitalism folds into a case for protective world government (or federation of nations) built on that system in the interest of humanity. Somewhere between necessity and obligation, we have a choice. The work of Kant, the aporias of political and moral thinking that distinguish his writings,

and the humanist self-righteousness he is often accused of embodying, are as essential today as they were to understanding the first modern era of globalisation.[11] Besieged by information warfare and waves of fear, the end of the road might be the graveyard of freedom. What is striking is the prevalence of Kantian schemas in public discourse.

Howard Caygill (1989) has shown the intersection of moral philosophy and political economy that underlies the discourse of progress emphatically directed by practical efficiency and the common good. The realm of the harmony of private and public interests involves the interplay between imagination and understanding. This is what Kant called 'the aesthetic power of judgement' and it 'constitutes enlightenment proper' (1790: 161 §40, note). Holding judgement up to reason and putting oneself 'in the position of everyone else' is 'a relation between understanding and imagination' (162). It is linked to the moral point of view, human development and world history. As much as the call to decision embraces what is economic, technological, philosophical and moral, it is also ineradicably aesthetic: 'an art of political soothsaying about future changes in states' (Kant 1784: 119; see Gottschalk 1963: vi). Man cannot conceive of himself without a goal, the determination of his ends by reason, and it is here that we try to orient ourselves amidst 'a narrative of dehumanisation' (Dodsworth 2021: 64).

Appropriating the language of emancipation is an indispensable step in response to what the authors of *The Great Reset* describe as 'this unprecedented opportunity to reimagine our world' (Schwab and Malleret 2020: 17).[12] On 'a terrain propitious for conspiracy theories and the propagation of rumours, fake news, mistruths and other pernicious ideas' (182), all else is dismissed as paranoia shielding itself behind fearmongering. Selfish individuals who, given the existential crisis, are not selfish enough. As Schwab and Malleret put it, when 'narratives drive our behaviour' and 'our collective imaginations' (207) are at stake, judgement can 'be reframed as an ethical choice, reflecting that, in almost all cases, human practices labour under moral considerations' (189).[13] Resistance is recoded as failing to act in a way that we sanction: 'Doing nothing, or too little, is to sleepwalk to ever-more social inequality, economic imbalances, injustice and environmental degradation' (244).[14]

Modernity as techno-economic progress associated with capitalism meets the necessity of progress grounded in technological development associated with Marx's dialectical materialism. When the only remaining question boils down to one of authority—who will be at the helm?—the question of

personnel will be adjudicated by those already in charge. The solution to 'the organized global conquest of the earth' (Heidegger 1991: 248) is to guide the process. In a global state of emergency, steering a course through environmental catastrophe and/or economic catastrophe, it is not the truth that matters but whether it is considered harmful. Suffocated by an idiocy that cannot see its own limitations—that takes its own foreshortening for progress—, the prospect of returning to nature as a consequence of poisoning nature looms. Build back better, or destroy to replace?

The necessary circularity of the responsible demand for a responsible response (agreement), as programmed and predictable, is not only rhetorical in pre-dicting an essential excluded antagonist. The closure of imminent disaster is open to a choice that submits to measures for halting the inevitable—which is then not inevitable, or rather its inevitability must (inevitably) be invoked to forestall it. On the one hand, we have the element of choice (a great opportunity), while on the other hand the exclusion of choice (there is no alternative). You are free to make this (non)choice. Either the precondition of freedom (life) is gone, or freedom is given up to preserve life.

Perhaps one should just submit to the irresistible tide of propaganda? As Kant put it: 'Brooding over one and the same idea when there is no possible point to it … is dumb *madness*' (Kant 1798: 309-10). Or, faced with such incessant fixation, does one have an obligation to refuse compliance?

What you believe might just influence the way things turn out.[15] Are we looking at a rear-guard effort to shore up corporate capitalism or a transformative impulse for improvement? Reading the causal connections and motivations at work involves negotiating the sophistical snares and aporetics of public debate, amid the fog of censorship. Who benefits from the current crisis intensifying "'chains of suspicion, and the technological explosion'" (Cixin 2016: 7)?[16] To be baffled at paranoia is itself baffling with so many coincidences lining up as if by chance.

So far the ongoing crisis does not appear to have delivered on the hoped for 'widening of dialogic communities' and 'more inclusive communication communities' (Linklater 1998: 5), but rather the opposite. Reactions to the first modern age of globalisation feel relevant as echoes of the appeal for 'a concerted world-wide effort to sustain and continue the progress of the past two centuries' (Wells 1932: 782) resound.[17] Suspicion of the promised 'post-nation state, worldwide, universalizing-without-colonizing redress of most of the wrongs of history' (Brown 2009: 122; see Derrida 2005: 57) is as prevalent

today as it was then, and the public use of reason curtailed. Fear of global enslavement under the boot of corporate masters excites hopelessness and imagination: "'It wasn't an alien invasion, but it was like an alien invasion'" (Hayes 2021).

In such a context, the worst possible outcome would be a state weakened, for example, by corruption and/or incompetence. International agencies would then be seen as means of disciplining the ruling party who would attempt to use that lever to assert their hegemony. Working at one and the same time to shore up national sovereignty and abandon the nation state they hope to save themselves by ascending to the safe haven of global governance. Leaving behind a weakened state, the national bourgeoisie would present themselves as defenders of the remains of national sovereignty and loyal intermediaries hammering out a necessary compromise with strategic intelligence (see WEF 2020; and Wecke 2021).[18]

Is the colonialist trick—proffer oneself as the solution to the problems one has created—to be repeated at the national and global level by way of a surveillance and control system? Or is there a genuine attempt 'to build a new social contract that honours the dignity of every human being' (Schwab 2020b)?

With humanity again at stake, the prospect of a developmental world state spawning a state of dependency summons up the nightmare of colonialism with the globe as occupied territory. Whether we are confronting a global pro-slavery rebellion is the problem that this study seeks to address. One searches for precedents, parallels, and presentiments that might orientate thinking and interpretation. And since these coordinates are also the product of interpretation, and 'the foundational intersection of aesthetics and politics' (Kazanjian 2003: 141), judgement confronts an abyss.

Recall Kafka's hunter Gracchus—himself victim of an inattentive helmsman—telling his woke interlocutor about an image from the South African headland:

> "On the wall opposite me is a little picture, evidently of a bushman [Buschmann] who is aiming his spear at me and taking cover as best he can behind a beautifully painted shield. On shipboard one often comes across silly pictures, but that is the silliest of them all." (Kafka 1917: 229)

Notes

[1] 'Despite the growing importance of the Suez Canal [opened 1869] for British trade with Asia, the Cape remained a military base of "immense importance for England" (Chamberlain) for the simple reason that the Canal might be vulnerable to closure in a major European war. It remained, in the Colonial Secretary's view, "the cornerstone of the whole British colonial system".' (Ferguson 2003: 207)

[2] Joseph Conrad wondered whether because 'men are shy of confessing their good hopes, it has become the nameless cape—the Cape *tout court*' (1906: 121). Kafka's traveller follows in the wake of Eudoxus, navigator for Ptolemaic Egypt, as does another literary precursor, Robinson Crusoe, who made his 'way directly over the Atlantic Sea, to the Cape de bon Esperance, or as we call it, The Cape of Good Hope' (Defoe 1719: 203). See Immanuel Kant on the dream of happily spending one's life 'on some island unknown to the rest of the world—all of which novelists and writers of Robinsonades use so cleverly' (1790: 137, §29). To say nothing of the unlikely hypothesis that the great fish carried Jonah round the Cape of Good Hope to the Persian Gulf (see Fraser 1909: 218); and the theological-political importance of the figure of Leviathan (see chapter 1 of Schmitt 1938).

[3] As Olive Schreiner observed, looking out seaward from the top of the Kloof behind Cape Town, 'to your right is Table Mountain, one of the sublimest masses of solid matter in the world, below is the town,' and '[a]s you turn, behind you is the blue South Atlantic as far as the eye can reach' (1891: 32).

[4] This incident is depicted in the engraving by Charles Dominique Joseph Eisen that forms the frontispiece to the first edition of Rousseau's text (see Klausen 2014: 216). Rousseau's source was Abbé Prévost's *General History of Voyages* (1746) which reproduces volume 1 of Peter Kolben's *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope* (1742). John Maxwell also relays this story: 'There was a Hottentot, who had liv'd for some considerable time in Holland and the and had learned to speak Dutch and Portugeze very well, whom, upon his return home, his Wife, Children, or Friends, could not endure, nor would they converse with him, till upon returning his Ancient Habit, Diet, and Customs, he had returned to their way of Living' (1707: 2427). It seems that Maxwell met Kolben, who was also known as Kolbe and Kolb: 'When I was at the Cape of Good Hope, I met with one Mr. Kolbe, who was sent thither by a Prussian Lord, the Baron Krosik' (2432). See also Govier (1999) on the involvement of The Royal Society in the slave trade; Schoeman (2207: 375-384) on Van der Stel; and Penn (1997) on Kolben.

[5] According to Wensel Heemra, speaking in 1830, 'the cause of the Hottentots was like a ship in a storm, rolling from side to side, every moment expecting to sink or be wrecked' (in Ross 2017: 9). As one the earliest novels in English about South Africa and Makanda Nxele (referred to above by Mandela) opens with the phrase: 'THE turbulence of the storm was past, but its power remained' (Anonymous 1834: 1).

[6] 'That was where they landed, back in the seventeenth century. That was where it all started. This life of endless warring; of massacres; of detentions without access to the law; of maiming and death in detention; this railroad to prison; this denial of millions of people, guilty of only one 'crime'— the pigmentation of their skins.' (Matshoba 1979: 11)

[7] Such skill is not the monopoly of the good leader: 'A really good ship's doctor or captain, for example, can distinguish in the exercise of his skill between what is feasible and what is not feasible. He attempts what is feasible, and avoids what is not feasible. What is more, if he makes a false move somewhere, he is capable of correcting it. That is how it can be with our unjust man' (Plato 2003: 360e-361, 41).

[8] 'With Mandela at the helm, we were on the move. It was a time of embracing, of grand gestures, of style and the possibility of everyday freedom, whatever the structural and historical constraints. For those of us who had lived under the stop-watch of race, whose fathers and mothers knew only stigmatization, our lives compressed into tight racial corners, we too it seemed were released from long-term imprisonment.' (Desai 2014) See Kant (1783: 58-59).

[9] Invoking H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, Slavoj Žižek sees an opportunity in the current crisis that signals 'the urgent need for a reorganization of the global economy which will no longer be at the mercy of the world market' (2020: 44).To understand what he means by the opportunity to reinvent Communism, Žižek quotes with approval WHO chief Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and concludes: 'The coronavirus epidemic does not signal just the limit of the market globalization, it also signals the even more fatal limit of nationalist populism which insists on full state sovereignty' (68). According to Al Gore, the current crisis has the potential "'to move the world in the right direction'" (quoted in Goode and Rogers 2020). The Managing Director of the IMF has also seen 'some tremendous opportunities' (Georgieva 2020). See also see Horn (2018); and Fleming (2021).

[10] 'It was eventually revealed, thanks to a review and report carried out by the Swiss authorities and a man named Peter Hug, that Sulzer Escher-Wyss began secretly procuring and building key parts for nuclear weapons during the 1960s. The company, while Schwab was on the board, also began playing a critical key role in the development of South Africa's illegal nuclear weapons programme during the darkest years of the apartheid regime. Klaus Schwab was a leading figure in the founding of a company culture which helped Pretoria build six nuclear weapons and partially assemble a seventh.' (Vedmore 2021) See Kries (2007: 381).

[11] 'Human rights discourse, which has been dominant since the end of the Second World War, is a discourse that stems fairly directly from Kant's moral philosophy.' (Vial 2016: 24; see Brennan 1997). 'President Bush may be severely criticized for assigning himself far too grandiose a role in the shaping of human destiny, but he has tried to shape this destiny in accordance with the noble ideals that unplifted the mind of the Abbe St. Pierre, the Marquis de Condorcet, and Immanuel Kant.' (Harris 2007: 49) Stone (2016) identifies Kant with the emergent the New World Order and self-imposed slavery. See also Vine (2020); Project for the New American Century (2000); and Pilger (2020).

[12] Shareholder value is to be turned into stakeholder value (see Denning 2020). Terence Corcoran (2002) attempts to defend the market system by comparing current moves to institute stakeholder capitalism with the Nazi corporate law. However, it seems that the Nazis boosted corporate profit in Germany and reduced employment: election promises were honoured (see Kessler 1938: 661; and Bel 2010). See also Rickards (2016) on economics before neoliberalism; and Rogan (2017), Deer (2019), Mason (2019), Joubert (2020), and Goldstone and Hoffman (2021) for interpretations of the current system. Who would want to enslave humanity and destroy the world economy by way of what H.G. Wells in *The New World Order* described as: 'A sort of massacre of small and independent businesses' (1940: 78)?

[13] 'Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which humans impact on the environment.' (UNCED 1992) 'There is a growing consensus that the world is experiencing a "third wave of autocratization." For the first time in nearly 20 years, autocracies outstrip democracies: 92 countries or 54 percent of the world's population currently live under authoritarian rule. Researchers from V-Dem estimate that 2.6 billion people, or 35 percent of the world's population, are living through autocratization, a process inverse to democratization in which political rights and freedoms are increasingly limited.' (Feldstein 2021: 2-3)

[14] The Great Analysis is called for because 'things are coming to a breaking-point:' 'Capitalism is everywhere caricaturing itself; most of all in America, where the grab-bag is richer' (Archer 1912: 11, 108). 'But is there one to whom we can look with the faintest gleam of hope for a world-shaping, world-redeeming thought? Is there one who has shown any sense of the new conditions of planetary life, the vast new issues opening out before the human race?' (95-96)

[15] "'First we've got population. The world today has 6.8 billion people—that's headed up to about 9 billion. Now if we do a really great job on new vaccines, health care, reproductive health services we could lower that by perhaps ten or fifteen per cent.'" (Gates 2010: 443–449) It seems that Gates may have had in mind the reduction in the reproduction of children that appears to follow from improved health. Skouras (2020) offers an alternative interpretation. See also Weinstein (2021); and Hindmarsh (2021).

[16] 'One area of real success [Of China's COVID policy], and that may have application in other countries, is the rapid development of an online "health code" system (健康码). This innovative app tracks an individual's travel, contact history, and biometric data (for example, body temperature) directly through one's smartphone.' (Tan 2020)

[17] "'We have been born and brought up in a social order that is now obviously a failure in quite primary respects. Our social order is bankrupt. It is not delivering the goods. It is defaulting and breaking up. War, pervading and increasing brutality, lack of any liberty, economic mismanagement, frightful insufficiency in the midst of possible super-abundance—am I overstating the indictment?'" (Wells 1937: 164-165) See Desmet (2021) on mass formation; and Goldberg (2021). For an example of the ecology of the disinformation industry see *Revolver News* (2022); and High Court of South Africa (2021) for the operation of the law.

[18] 'More fundamentally, our basic narrative has lost its credibility and appeal ... We need a new narrative to shape the next stage of globalization. The more thoughtful that new narrative, the healthier our economies will be.' (Rodrik 2011: xiii) See Toussaint (1999) and Campe (2002: 271). See also Koehler (1995); Bond (2004); Barnard-Naudé (2017: 119) and Slobodian (2018: 87–88). Assuredly, 'the dominant views of an economic epoch are distinctive and as important as the technological and epochal innovation that characterizes it' (Kuznets 1960: 12). See Okonta (2020: 26).

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This Vanishing Race

The South African Khoisan Bushmen are entangled in the idea of the origin and destination of the human race. At once vanished indigenes and resisters of colonialism, bearers of mitochondrial DNA linking them to the earliest humans, they represent a lost past and the inexorability of change. The motto on the South African coat of arms, '!ke e: ǀxarra ǁke,' is Khoisan for 'diverse people unite.'

Once a threat to the colonial settlers and African pastoralists alike, the fate of the Bushmen is both a warning from the past and a possible scenario about our future. As one of the colonial children in Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, set in 1862, remarks

> "It was one of them, one of these old wild Bushmen, that painted those," said the boy, nodding towards the pictures ... "Now the Boers have shot them all, so that we never see a little yellow face peeping out among the stones." He paused, a dreamy look coming over his face. "And the wild bucks have gone, and those days, and we are here. But we will be gone soon, and only the stones will lie on here, looking at everything like they look now." (Schreiner 1883: 17-18)

Commemorating the victims of colonialism and development is part of the baggage of colonial melancholy.[1]

Like indigenes elsewhere, the Khoisan were exterminated, enslaved, and assimilated as they became a portion of an established system, which left absolute power in the hands of the very people who most benefitted from their oppression. Those sacrificed to the juggernaut of historical progress serve as a proxy for the nervous contemplation of the fate that may lie in store for the current victors:

> Little is now known of the final struggle of the clans that once occupied the present Cape Colony. The actors therein have with few exceptions passed away, and the only remembrance preserved is that in every instance they maintained the hopeless conflict with an unconquerable spirit, fighting 'without conscience' to the very last against the men who had predetermined to destroy them utterly. (Stow 1905: 216)

Narcissism transmutes history into nature, and the invisible hand of fate becomes the final arbiter of primitive times. Those who fall behind in the race are destined to become a detail of history.

John Philip, Superintendent of the London Missionary Society at the Cape and follower of Adam Smith's political economy, witnessed the resistance of the Bushmen. He concluded: 'The spirit which animated the Spartans who fell at Thermopylae, contending for their political rights, was not more resolute and determined than that which actuates the roving Bushmen when they have no alternative but *personal* slavery or death" (1828 II: 320). Invoking the slave-owning Spartans confirms a law of nature: "[s]elf-preservation is the first law of nature" (5).[2]

Philip linked the nineteenth century oppression of the natives to 'the change which has taken place in their relative value as labourers, by the abolition of the slave-trade in 1807:'

> While slaves could be got for a trifle, by the vessels engaged in this trade touching at the Cape, the natives were not of much importance to the colonists, and many of them in those districts in which slaves were numerous were allowed to live after their ancient manner. In the more remote and thinly-inhabited districts of the colony, in which there were few slaves, and in which the restraints of law and government were scarcely felt, the natives were more dreaded, and, therefore, more hated and oppressed. (1828 I: xvii)

Philip campaigned tirelessly for the benefits of free labour and equality before the law along the lines of the morality preached to the British working class.[3]

Abolitionism bore fruit in Ordinance 50 of 1828 that freed the Hottentots and Bushmen from legal discrimination, releasing them to own land and sell their labour on the open market. Slavery was abolished in the British empire

in 1834, and 1838 saw the end of 'apprenticeship' at the Cape. However, the Masters and Servants Act of 1841 repealed Ordinance 50 of 1828, giving employers a firmer hold over their servants. This was the first labour law to include workers of all races, and the Masters and Servants Act of 1856 was even more ruthless (Simons and Simons 1969). A free labour regime did not suit the conditions of colonial development.

When in the mid-nineteenth century philologist Wilhelm Bleek explored the language and folklore of the Bushmen he thought he had found living traces of the origin of humanity. For Bleek the language and culture of '"this dying out race"' (quoted in Thornton 1983: 8) held clues to the nature of human development. With the publication of *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore* (1911), edited by his daughter-in-law Lucy Lloyd, the Bushmen as symbols of a common past and victims of the attrition of history were monumentalised.

The influence of Bleek and Lloyd's South African archive can be found in Philip K. Dick's 1964 science-fiction novel *Martian Time-Slip*. Set in 1994, Dick explores colonialism and racism in the context of the destruction of the small businessman by corporate capitalism. Colonists on Mars consumed with property speculation on the arid Red Planet employ indigenous house-servants. Connected to the land and telepathic, the dispossessed indigenes are called 'Bleekmen' and still wander over the desolate landscape they call home, occasionally firing poisoned arrows in self-defence (a capital offense) at the Martian prospectors. Gifted with presentiment of the future pollution (development) of their planet by the mega-corporation AM-WEB (*Alle Menschen werden Brüder*: All men become brothers), a group of Bleekmen retreat ahead of the impending planetary destruction into the desert.

The Bleekmen are joined by a psychotic boy, Manfred, who, like the indigenes, has seen the future: he 'did not understand the words [of the Bleekmen], but he got their thoughts: cautious and friendly, with no undertones of hate. He sensed inside them no desire to hurt him, and that was pleasant' (Dick 1964: 225). Manfred and the Bleekmen see that in the future the vast dormitory to be built for immigrants to Mars will become a home for the aged, the infirm, and the poor who cannot return to earth. The surplus useless eaters will be consigned to a medicalized version of the fate meted out to the Bleekmen. The colony will become a dumping ground for those considered no longer economically productive on earth and on Mars.

The Bleekmen's curse on the land the settlers took from them sows a bitter harvest that confronts the dedicated work of the 'business-like and competent

and patient' (Dick 2005: 231) colonists. For Manfred, freed by imagination and insight from the settler mentality of acquisition and destruction, resistance involves siding with the oppressed: 'I will not have to live in AM-WEB, Manfred said to himself as he kept up with the Bleekmen. Through these dark shadows I will escape' (226).

At the end of the novel Manfred reappears from the future, a paralysed old man kept alive by machinery, in the company of his Bleekmen friends. He has come to say an overdue (for him) goodbye to his mother. She covers her eyes and cannot bear to look at her now decrepit child. The future, like the past, appears to offer no escape from dependency on technology. Fredric Jameson reads this ending as cautiously utopian, holding up the value of 'the collective, the primitive community of the aboriginals' (2005: 383) in the face of voracious capitalism. One can also read it in terms of the naturalisation of colonialism, dependency on technology, and subjection to corporate power.[4]

Today the Khoisan have become the focus of research into the human genome and the origin of humanity. Scientists report that the image of the '[s]tone age hunter-gatherers who have lived in splendid isolation since the dawn of humankind can, without any doubt, be put to rest' (Pakendorf and Stoneking 2021: 53). Far from being an originary genetically homogeneous people, the Khoisan exhibit striking genetic diversity and have been the largest population throughout most of modern human history. Shaped by migration and climate, they are less likely to be candidates for the aura of vanishing organic community with its racial undertones.[5] One lesson from the first people is that you do not have to be a vulnerable minority in order to be enslaved and extirpated.

Notes

[1] 'In 1824 there were men still living who could remember this state of things in the Cape Colony, and in 1876 there were voortrakkers [sic] who could recollect when the hunting parties that first crossed the 'Nu 'Gariep … were [welcomed and] when the men of the old hunter race hailed their advent as visitors bringing in their train days of plenty and rejoicing. Depredations commenced on the one hand, commandos on the other, retaliation followed, and commandos, until they became a portion of an established system, which left absolute power in the hands of the very men who most benefited by their continuance. The grown people were therefore shot down without mercy, and the children were dragged into a state of perpetual servitude; injuries were inflicted on both sides, and mutual hatred, as a natural consequence, increased in intensity.' (Stow 1905: 217)

[2] 'We are all born savages, whether we are brought into the world in the populous city or in the lonely desert. It is the discipline of education, and the circumstances under which we are placed, which create the difference between the rude barbarian and the polished citizen—the listless savage and the man of commercial enterprise—the man of the woods and the literary recluse. Take a number of children from the nursery, place them apart, and allow them to grow up without instruction or discipline, the first state of society into which they would naturally form would be the hunter's state ... And we may see what our ancestors were at the time Julius Caesar invaded Britain, by the present condition of the Caffer tribes of South Africa. It is here we see, as in a mirror, the features of our progenitors, and, by our own history, we may learn the pitch to which such tribes may be elevated, by means favourable to their improvement.' (Philip 1828 II: 216-217)

[3] Stanley Trapido argues that 'Philip, an egalitarian as well as a Smithian, drew from his own experience in the late eighteenth-century Scottish lowlands' (1990: 98). He was the beneficiary of the new capitalism which gave those from artisan backgrounds education and opportunity. Philip recruited Gottlob Schreiner, Olive's father, who arrived at the Cape in 1838.

[4] Jameson elides the temporal quarantine at work in colonial poetics: 'In other words, indigenous peoples are located outside temporality and presence, even in the face of the very present and ongoing colonization of indigenous lands, resources, and lives' (Byrd 2011: 6). Dick's literal portrayal of this is liberatory only if one accepts the compensatory logic of the fictional representation, thereby swallowing the ideological hook.

[5] As exemplary indigenes, the Bushmen are entangled in the idea of 'the blood kinship of "the same people living in the same place"' (Eliot 1934: 18). The political and aesthetic demand that '[s]tability is obviously necessary, and '[t]he population should be homogeneous' (p.19), is linked to the discourse of race. The cave painting we have just reproduced is related to the work of the Paleolithic Magdalenian draftsmen referred to in Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). See Moran (2009). We will return to the fear of being 'invaded by foreign races' (Eliot 1934: 16).

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