

THE THREAT OF RACE

**REFLECTIONS
ON RACIAL
NEOLIBERALISM**

**DAVID THEO
GOLDBERG**

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The Threat of Race

Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This is a book about race and its exclusionary, humiliating, and violent expressions, historically produced and contemporarily articulated, yet so often in denial. About the transformational grammars of race and racisms as neoliberal political economy has assumed a more or less firm grip on different societies, across varying regions. I am concerned with what is unique to those geo-regional expressions, and what can be generalized across them.

The numbers are notorious, almost numbing.

Ten million enslaved Africans perished in Middle Passage, on reasonable estimates. Death en passant to a life more often than not worse than death. Starved, worked, beaten, suffocated, diseased to death. Numbers as large again prematurely killed in new world slavery. Systemically, brutally worked, beaten, saddened or maddened into death. Seven million aboriginal inhabitants of Australia wiped out by European colonization and modernization. A lynching every other day in the southern states of the US throughout the 1890s. Ten million battered into death by Leopold's vicious regime in the Congo between 1885 and 1908, half of the population of the area castrated and delimbed and diseased in a brutality matched only by the six million Jews and nameless others gassed and shot and tortured to death by Aryan superiority in the 1940s, for which the Congolese experience served as a pre-cursive laboratory. Each death exceptional in transnational processes of violence and violation all too sadly not. One million people murdered in 1994 in Rwanda in the ethnoracial name of not belonging. In one month. More than 70 percent of the more than two million people rotting in US prisons (up from 200,000 less than 40 years ago) people of color. A percentage eclipsed perhaps only in (post-)apartheid South Africa. Countless lives foreshortened by segregation and apartheid, urban

decay and globalized labor conditions, smart bombs and stupid politicians.

All in the name or wake - explicitly or implicitly, structurally or analogically - of ethnoracial configurations and their legacies. People reduced to the abstraction of a group, groups classified as abstracted numbers, belittled, rationalized as animals, treated as beasts by those whose actions would make them better candidates for the designation.

What do these sorts of numbing numbers (repeatable ad nauseam, if one is not already nauseated) say about race and how we have come to think about racial ordering and racial theorizing? About racial futures and their connections with what counts as history? About an ordering, valuing, ways of being and thinking that enable and allow the cults of death and violence, that threaten the wellbeing of so many? And later ignores their legacies. So how are the mentalities of racial being and seeing made, manifested, managed over time, at different times, to different social or governmental purpose? What are their products and productivity, their currency and the value they create, sell, and purchase? What fates does this order(ing) of images and ideas, values and virtues seal, and seal off?

What indeed about color-consciousness and colorblindness, about conscience and connectedness, about community and collectivity? And what about racial cultures and resistance, domination and representation? About racial memory and forgetting, apology, apologetics, and forgiving? About grief and grievance, identity and injury? About racial resonance and suggestibility, refusal and possibility? What, in other words, of that question first asked critically by the likes of Fanon, about the connection between race and culture? What, as Said asks in *Culture and Imperialism*, is culture both productive and reflective of the historical moment(s) in which it is produced? Is there something

systematic about the cult(ure)s of race across time so that one can conjure, as Said argues about imperial culture at once more generally and more specifically, a “structure of attitude and reference”?

The set of reflections that follows across the pages of *The Threat of Race*, then, is about retrospectivity and prospectivity, legacy and latency, pasts as horizons of futures. It is about race in structure and representation, order and rationalization, arrangement and narration. It is then also about what race does about itself, how it represents itself and what it does around and in the name of such representation and extension. About the suffocation of history’s weight but also about living through and beyond, because and in spite of it. It is, one might say, to pause between, to reflect on the stains and strains of history, of histories. But the book is also about standing up and brushing off. About digging out, and picking up.

In this, my concern is to mold a critical analytics and a critical analytic vocabulary towards comprehending racially driven neoliberalisms and neoliberally fueled racisms: racial regionalizations and critical regionalisms, born again racisms and social prophylaxis, enduring occupations and permanently temporary states, euro-mimesis and Muslimania, mixture and violent duress, political theology of race and racial secularization, racial compulsions and their resistances, socialities of the skin and racial evaporations, racisms without racism and neo-neoliberalism, homogenizing and heterogenizing dispositions.

How, then, to write in the name of and against a title? A title fraught with prospect and promise, with the ambiguities of racial erosion and erasure, on one side, and antagonisms, violence, death, and their charges, on the other? A title in the shadow of which histories are taken to be over, past, evaporated and in denial, yet the conditions of which, as

they are buried, misremembered, mis-membered, remain very much alive.

A book of this sort, it may already be evident, conjures if it doesn't emphatically call for a different kind of writing. I have composed a work in which I have tried to retain passion rather than purge it for the preference of a neutral disposition, whatever that might mean, preferring to wed passion to a critical analyticity, commitment(s), and to theoretical reflectivity. I have tried to write with writing in mind. Which is to say with speaking to colleagues and those unknown, shouting at claims from which leave is taken, which leave one not so much cold as furious. How to write with passion and yet remain coolly critical, cutting, incisive? About pressing matters cutting today as deep to the bone as any moment in my lifetime. How to write about complex and difficult matters, but clearly? How to resist and insist, through argument? These are my challenges.

This is a text, accordingly, free of footnotes or explicitly referenced intra-textual citations. Which is different than saying there are no references, or better yet reference points, allusions, conversational interjections. The book is conceived in conversation, with many texts, multiple voices, various expressions of opinion. A bibliography of works consulted, conspired with or against, critically taken up or cast aside, follows each chapter. Where I suggest in passing within the flow of a chapter's argument that so-and-so says such-and-such the general reference will be included in the chapter's bibliography.

We are often in denial about just how collaboratively produced single-authored monographs are. I owe enormous debts of gratitude, from the detailed and definitive to the deep and comprehensive, from the institutional to the invested, the abstract to the personal. The abstract first. The writing was driven in good part by the music in the presence of which it was so often composed. Philip Tabane

and the Malombo Jazzmen, Feya Faku, McCoy Mrubata, Greg Georgiades, Paul Hanmer, Wessel van Resburg, Madala Kunene, Tlokwe Sehume, Sibongile Khumalo, Gilad Atzmon, Max Roach and Abdullah Ibrahim, Jack De Johnette and Foday Musa Suso, no doubt among many more. Above all Zim Ngqawana and Gonzalo Rubalcaba. I can only hope the rhythm of the writing resonates with something of their timbre and timing, their inimitable spirit.

Bits of argument and versions of chapters were read in public fora far and wide – across the University of California and the United States, repeatedly in the Netherlands, Britain, Sweden, Ireland, and France, as well as in South Africa, China, Singapore, Australia, and Canada. I learned in other ways from workshops in Costa Rica and Mexico. I am grateful to my generous hosts in each instance and to the critical comments, insights, and thoughtful provocations following from these interlocutions that more often than not prompted me to think anew, to revise and reformulate. If the book took longer as a result to complete, it is inordinately the better for it.

The earlier chapters were much improved also by their reading and commentary from my colleagues in the Critical Theory Institute, Irvine. An insight here or revision there found its way into the book prompted by impromptu conversations often in unlikely settings with friends and colleagues Etienne Balibar, Gayatri Spivak, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Judith Butler, and Ackbar Abbas. Close friends read or listened, often repeatedly, to my rantings, gently setting me straight and saving me from embarrassment on matters major and minor. The book would be so much the worse but for Ana Paula Ferreira, Michael Hanchard, Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Geraldine Heng, John and Jean Comaroff, Lisa Lowe, Gabriele Schwab, Saree Makdisi, Ronit Lentin, John Solomos, Michael Keith, and Barnor Hesse. A public conversation with Paul Gilroy organized at the University of

Manchester by Virinder Kalra
(www.archive.org/details/Goldberg_Gilroy) not only happily renewed an old friendship but led me to rethink a couple of points I had thought settled in my mind.

Sadly, our dear friend Tanya Reinhart passed away suddenly before I could share the chapter on racial palestinianization with her. I learned more casually about matters in that troubled region from Tanya and her partner, the inimitable Israeli poet Aharon Shabtai, than from most all else combined. We miss her immensely.

My day job throughout the conception and composition of this book has been administering a research institute serving all ten campuses of the University of California. The incomparable staff not only invariably lightens the sometime tedium of the day-to-day administrative detail and the everyday challenges of fundraising. They have protected my time from the inevitable intrusions of daily demand, without which the manuscript still would not be complete. An unqualified pleasure to work with, knowing that things will be so well done despite my distractions.

In similar vein, the distractions have often been a consequence of matters unrelated to *The Threat of Race*. Through it all I have worked closely with Cathy Davidson, running a national network promoting work at the interface of the humanities and digital technology, and overseeing a series of grants. Cathy, too, has occasionally suffered my writing distractions when I owed her a response or a proposal draft, despite which she was always one to cheer me to completion, sending me relevant articles or urls pertinent to my argument which proved only all the more distracting from our work together. I have long been fortunate to have fabulous research assistants. Kim Furumoto for the earlier parts of the book and Stefka Hristova more recently have been the best of the best. Both have been more interlocutors than assistants. Stefka has

been instrumental in making it possible for me to draw on accompanying images and to design the website to accompany the text (see www.threatofrace.org). Muriam Haleh Davis has repeatedly posed probing questions about the argument and conceptual apparatus, prompting me to be clearer than I otherwise might.

Jayne Fagnoli, editor extraordinaire, left me alone when most others would long have called in the chips, prodded me gently along when others might have chided in frustration, cheered me to the finish line when others might have turned out the light. She exchanged reflections about Shaq and Miami's demise, the Knicks implosion, and the Celtics' ascendancy, just the distraction for an author struggling to find his direction. Or found other Blackwell projects to which I might contribute so as to keep her bosses at bay. When I requested Brigitte Lee Messenger to copy-edit the manuscript, the deed was done. Laboring under her own trying conditions, Brigitte as always lived up to the expectation, and then some.

Throughout I have engaged in spirited conversations with a small group of close confidantes. I have burdened them with drafts of chapters and half-baked ideas, troubled them over details disturbing their own time with halfhearted arguments, often while collaborating on something else entirely. Always they have laughed me through my knots, angling me in corrected and renewed directions. Donald Moore has borne all of this burdened by the enormous challenges of his own situation, drawing my attention to points overlooked, a nuance by-passed, inevitably to a reference about which I was unaware. Saba Mahmood and Charles Hirschkind gave me a hearing no matter what part of the world to or from which they were rushing. Conversations with my sometimes skeptical son, Gabe, just leaving his teenage years, occasionally kept me from

making claims for which my evidence was less than compelling.

Susan Searl Giroux read and taught the manuscript repeatedly, drew my ideas out in an extraordinary interview, found insights in my work I had not known were there.

Over the past number of years now and throughout the book's formulation I have been engaged in a conversation with my dear friend Achille Mbembe ranging across politics and culture, the postcolonial and post-South Africa, conviction and compulsion. It was out of one such critical conversation before students in a graduate course that I thought to write about the political theology of race. These engagements with Achille, teaching and working together in California and Johannesburg, continuing to be moved by his generative writing and probing thought, have conjured ideas that could have come to me in no other way.

And finally, Philomena Essed has listened to me thinking aloud on these issues on a literally daily basis. Always thinking *with* me, she has more often than not offered me the gift of ideas discovered and uncovered, prompted and polished, helping invariably to deepen insight or abandon thoughts with no nuance and less future. The book's title came together only after months of fretting across meals and travels and conversations over an appropriate characterization. As also many a critical turn or subtle twist, a way of looking or a line of argument. Without her boundless care, support, and generosity, this would be a much lesser book, if one at all.

Amsterdam and Irvine

January 2008

Author's Note

We have created a website to accompany *The Threat of Race*:

www.threatofrace.org

While intended as a stand-alone site, it includes images and links to images informing and embellishing the text, in a sense an essay next to and in conversation with the argument in the book. Somewhat experimental in form, it will incorporate also a forum for commentary and ongoing conversation. We hope you consult it and find it an engaging presence.

I am grateful to Stefka Hristova, Erik Loyer, Shane Depner, and Khai Tang without whom it would still be struggling to see the light of day.

In the following pages I include a critical account of the Royal Belgian Museum for Central Africa in the context of discussing colonialism, racial europeanization, and cultural memory (see pp. 169–75). My analysis was composed on the basis of a visit to the Museum and institutional catalogues and materials predating 2007. The Museum has since signaled a comprehensive commitment to renovate the building and reconceive its exhibits. As an announcement greeting visitors to the Museum today declares, “The aim of the restoration and renovation [due to be completed by 2013] is to bring the Museum in tune with the needs and requirements of the 21th [*sic*] century, but without affecting its charm.” Finally realizing that the Museum could no longer continue as an unapologetically colonial institution, the permanent and temporary exhibits already seek to indicate that its leaders are grappling with its troubled past. These developments came about too late to incorporate into the pages of this book. Instead, I have composed a brief supplementary reflection on the anxious, ambivalent attempts now being initiated to save the

Museum's troubling "charm." The posting appears on the website accompanying this book (see www.threatofrace.org).

1

Buried, Alive

I find theory exasperating. And I find a confident theory even more exasperating.

Derek Walcott

There is an esteemed tradition of working to end racial configuration in societies long marked by it. This tradition emerged out of resistance movements to racial slavery, subordination, suppression, and segregation both in colonial societies and in postcolonizing social arrangements. Commitments to do away with race, consequently, have long been associated with social movements to end racism. Indeed, a primary prompt to end racial classification and configuration is tied to antiracism.

The connection between antiracial conception and antiracist commitment suggests a complexity I am concerned here to explore. For I shall be suggesting that there are crucial moments when the necessity and complexity of this connection are lost sight of, and antiracism reduces primarily, principally, or completely to antiracial commitment, to antiracialism. At these moments, the end of racism is confused with no more than being against race, the end of race substituting to varying degrees for the commitment to – the struggles for – ending racism. The refusal of racism reduces to racial refusal; and racial refusal is thought to exhaust antiracism.

Now, what is refused in this collapse, what buried, what buried alive? What residues of racist arrangement and subordination – social, economic, cultural, psychological, legal, and political – linger unaddressed and repressed in

singularly stressing racial demise? What doors are thus closed to coming to terms with historical horrors racially inscribed, and what attendant expressions of racial grief and group melancholia, on one side, and racial self-assertion and triumphalism, on the other, are left unrecognized? What are the implications of this delinking of race from racism, especially under the contemporary spur of neoliberal socio-economic impetus, for a critical account of the character of the racial state and a critical transformation of racist culture?

Histories

The history of race as an ordering mechanism for modern social arrangement has been widely retold. There is some controversy about the place of race – its conceptual presence, its role, its effects – in what have come to be called the Middle Ages. In the latter part of this period race was emergent rather than fully formed, incipiently invoked to fashion nation formation in the early moments of national elaboration as racial consciousness began to emerge out of – and later can be said to have taken over if not to have replaced – the mix of public religious constitution, the symbolics and architectonics of blood, the naturalizing dispositions – the metaphysics – of hierarchical chains of being, and the ontological order-ings in terms of supposedly heritable rationalities. Under medievalism religion was the dominant discourse of public order and intellectual life, while the romantic legends revealed the ways in which public forces got played out in private lives and the imaginary narratives of personal adventure reflected shifting social forces. The sweep from the medieval to the modern, in this sense, can be said to be reflected in the shifts from religion as dominant public frame for structuring and interpreting social life to the civic religion of race as

prevailing fabric of public arrangement and imaginative hermeneutics.

Stated thus, it becomes easier to see how much the very notion of the Middle Ages – of an age of darkness caught between the light of classical antiquity and the resurrection of the Renaissance and the learning of the Enlightenment – is so deeply predicated on the presumptive dominance of European historicities, of Euro-dominated temporalities and modernities. And this, in turn, reveals both the centrality of race to the expansive and extensional global order(ing) of European modernity and the (late) modernity of medieval categories of disposition and dominance, imposition and order once racially conceived. To put the latter point another way, as Geraldine Heng has done in her marvelous book, *Empire of Magic*, it could be said that there is much to be learned from medieval narrations about the crusading character of our own all too “medieval” politics of domination, disorder, and cultures of control - without at the same time insisting that the modern is no more than medieval (though in moments of deep despair about our present I am more than tempted by that counter-evolutionist reductionism).

The notion of race, then, was put to work from the fifteenth century on in the Mediterranean countries, especially Iberian. Race quickly came to mark Europe and its worldly extensions in the colonizing and imperializing societies over the next couple of centuries, especially in the drive to state sovereignty and the subsequent centralizing of the war function under state mandate elaborated so provocatively by Michel Foucault in his 1976 lectures on race and modern state formation, *Society Must Be Defended*. Race acquired a more formal codification and consequently socio-intellectual authority from the eighteenth century onwards, as Foucault remarks,

increasingly coming to order centralizing state definition and function, institutionalization and practice.

By the late nineteenth century race had assumed throughout the European orbit a sense of naturalness and commitment, a more or less taken-for-granted marking of social arrangements and possibilities, an assumed givenness and inevitability in the ascription of superiority and inferiority, sameness and difference, civilization and vulgar lack. This supposed naturalness meant the ease of racial reference for the relatively powerful and privileged. This easiness of racial ascription served to hide from view – to hide from and for the more racially powerful themselves – exactly the hard work, conceptually and materially, socially and politically, legally and forcefully, it took to set up and reproduce racial arrangements. Science and literature, scripture and law, culture and political rhetoric all worked in subtle and blunt ways to establish the presumption of white supremacy, to naturalize the status of white entitlement and black disenfranchisement, of European belonging wherever the claim might be staked and of non-European servitude and servility.

European expansion accordingly rationalized its global spread in racial terms. Rationalization through race obviously assumed the form of legitimation, of claiming to render this expansion acceptable, even desirable or necessary, to the perpetrators. But it served also effectively to maximize both the grip on power globally – in the colonies or within the European theater of relations – and relatedly the extraction of profit and accumulation of wealth. By extension, this global colonial spread, commercial interaction, and cultural intertwining prompted conceptual seepage into (former) imperial powers. European engagement and enforcement through race, in other words, encouraged the adoption and adaptation of racial conceptualization to give sense to and to rationalize long-

existing ethno-class and caste relations and tensions in the likes of China, Japan, and India. In these cases of conceptual assumption, race was pressed into work in new ways on the basis of local ecologies encompassing thick histories of excluding those considered alien, ethnoculturally different, and so racially tainted. In these instances race clearly came to be invested with new, if connected, significance. This can be characterized as networks of racial conception and meaning, of racial value and power.

Thus the *labor of race* is the work for which the category and its assumptions are employed to effect and rationalize social arrangements of power and exploitation, violence and expropriation. Race was turned into a foundational code. But as with all foundations (conceptual and material), it had to be cemented in place. Racial thinkers, those seeking to advance racial representation - scientists and philosophers, writers and literary critics, public intellectuals and artists, journalists and clergy, politicians and bureaucrats - for all intents and purposes became the day-laborers, the bricklayers, of racial foundations.

Conceptions

Like many other commentators on racial matters, I am insisting that there is a conceptual distinction to be acknowledged between racial conception and racism. Racial conception, or what some such as Anthony Appiah have called racialism, is the view that groups of people are marked by certain generalizable visible and heritable traits. These generalized traits may be physical or psychological, cultural or culturally inscribed on the body, and the physical and psychological, bodily and cultural traits are usually thought somehow indelibly connected. Thus racialists more often than not think that racial group members share not only these traits but also behavioral dispositions and

tendencies to think in certain ways those not so marked do not share. Appiah argues that such views about racial groups – that they share such characteristics, tendencies or traits not shared by non-members – if unaccompanied by consequential claims of inherent inequality or hierarchy do not amount to racism. Such views, while presumptively mistaken, are not as such necessarily dangerous or immoral. What would further mark racial(ist) beliefs as racist, Appiah insists, would be the added claim to inequality or inferiority as a consequence of being so marked.

In his useful little book, *Racism: A Short History*, George Fredrickson suggests that racism necessarily requires the presumption of inequality or inferiority on the part of those whose assumed difference is deemed intrinsic or unchangeable. But does it?

Consider the racial paternalism of those claiming that others who are supposedly (still) racially immature should be subject to the education and governance of those who take themselves to be racially elevated (a view I have characterized as “racial historicism” in *The Racial State*). The increasingly widespread adoption of racial historicism from the mid-nineteenth century on and its discursive dominance in the latter half of the twentieth century regarding racial matters should serve to qualify the claim that racism necessarily requires a belief in intrinsic or unchangeable inferiority (the view I have called, by contrast, “racial naturalism”). That black or Asian people, as a people, may be thought by racial historicists to be educated ultimately to govern themselves suggests what Ann Stoler calls the “motil-ity” – the shifting meanings and significance – of both racial and racist conception.

The mark of racist expression or belief, then, is not simply the claim of inferiority of the racially different. It is more broadly that racial difference warrants exclusion of those so characterized from elevation into the realm of protection,

privilege, property, or profit. Racism, in short, is about exclusion through depreciation, intrinsic or instrumental, timeless or time-bound.

If race (or, ideologically, racialism) is about the manufacture of homo geneities, racisms police their boundaries. Race has historically concerned the fabrication of social homogeneities, their making and their embroidery, arrangement and order, management and commerce. Racism concerns the maintenance of homogeneities' contours, militarizing their borders, patrolling their places of possible transgression.

Underlying racialism, not unlike nationalism, is an abstract presumption of familialism. As Nadia Abu El-Haj remarks in her revealing interrogation of genealogy in the wake of the human genome project, membership criteria "in family, nation and political society are always entangled." The traits or characteristics I take myself to share with those I consider like me conjure an abstract familial connectivity. That I am like them, or they like me, *must* mean that we are familially connected, so to speak. But familiarity, by extension, is necessarily conceived, if often silently, by the negation of (racial) otherness, of the differentiated and disconnected, the unlikened and unrelated. Note here the paradoxical relatedness of the racially denied, the constitutive connectedness of the disconnected, the manufactured fabric of familial distinction.

Abstract familial connection – loosely sharing some traits or characteristics or bordered disposition – becomes the basis in turn for an abstracted familiarity. This connection is well captured in the extraordinary body of *Casta* painting spanning eighteenth-century Mexico, those elaborations of early racial classification schemes predicated on miscegenation I discuss in the chapter on "racial latinamericanization" below, some of which explicitly linked racial types to behavioral, emotional, and moral

characterizations. That we are alike in physically predicated ways is thought to entail that we are alike in other ways also. We share benefits, and no doubt burdens too, in ways family members are presumed to do. And perhaps we share more than this, an intuitive set of sensibilities and sentiments, sensitivities and resentments, likes and dislikes. The hint of concrete connectivity, however slight, becomes invested with value well beyond what the concrete bonds of connectivity alone can sustain. I can presume to know you because your somehow looking like me on supposedly crucial markers (skin color, hair texture, facial shape, mannerisms, ways of speaking, even dress and the like) suggests also social dispositions and perhaps even beliefs. If intuition is nothing more than educated and habituated guess predicated on a degree of familiarity, I can claim to know you intuitively on the basis of presupposing peculiarly to be like you. Affiliation, however flimsy its social basis or status, conjures in such cases presumptive filiation. Race and nation, racism and nationalism run together in just these bonded ways. Familiarity, no matter how abstract and imagined, is supposed, it seems, to conjure familiarity.

But familiarity, the idiom would have it, similarly breeds contempt. Contempt in this case, we might ask, for whom? And to what end(s)? For those thrown together with one in some way by circumstance – by the very demands of social constitution, if I am right – and whom one accordingly presumes to know, in character and habit, condition and behavior, prospect and limit. In short, ethnoracially. It is the presumption of knowledge, the fabrication of character for those one knows at best partially, in both senses of the term, which both bears and bares the stigma of race in these instances. The end(s), of course, are varied – exploitation or extermination, use and abuse, assertion and order. In short, violence and property, profit, and power, instrumentally but also for their own sakes. Race feeds,

fuels, and funnels violence, property, profit, and power, but can also be their modes of expression, the forms in which they manifest.

It is revealing in this sense to read race conceptually as a term of social geography. I mean this not in the disciplinary but in a normative sense. Race is taken historically as (or in terms of) identifying people geomorphically by their supposed phenotypes in terms of their imputed or implied geographic origins and the cultural characteristics considered to be associated with those geographic identifications, those landscapes and their associated characteristics. A Florida-based company, DNA Printgenomics, is one among a growing industry offering “ancestry testing.” This is, as they put it, a “Biogeographical Ancestry analysis,” a purported DNA test to establish one’s racial ancestry or, in the case of mixed race, ancestral proportions. For a mere \$158 you can learn “your percentage” of “African-Indo European-Native American-East Asian” (*sic*). A new biopolitical technology meets an older regime of biopower. Race is defined in reified and presumptive terms of “the five major” continental “races” which its website (www.dnaprint.com) characterizes as “Native American, East Asian, South Asian, European, sub-Saharan, etc.” It’s the “etc.” which is the embezzling genomic insurance policy at work here, for in the additive, as Feyerabend once may have put it, anything goes.

When read as mapping social geography in this way, race is taken both to complement and to counter national formation and character. Those whose “racial origins” are considered geographically somehow to coincide with national territory (or its colonial extension) are deemed to belong to the nation; those whose geo-phenotypes obviously place them originally (from) elsewhere are all too often considered to pollute or potentially to terrorize the national space, with debilitating and even deadly effect. But

those belonging racio-nationally also share an extra-national raciality, a super-whiteness, as Etienne Balibar has pointed out, complementing the supraracial nationality. Race figures the national even as it transcends it; and in transcending race gives the nation its transcendental character, its larger, ultimately globally extensionalist imperative. Fashioned in the expansive colonial and imperial laboratories of euro-modernities, there's a sense too in which the logical reach of race was inherently extra-national, was drawn inevitably to fulfill itself colonially, imperialistically.

Counters

If this is the historical logic of racial dominance, it suggests too a feature of racial resistance. On the other side then, it is the refusal of living with contempt-- and, relatedly, with self-contempt- that gives rise, at least initially, to the impetus for antiracist movements. "The other side," otherness, othering are hardly natural categories, as critical intellectual movements of the past 25 years have shown. Resistance and response are necessarily products of the artifice of alterity, of its making and remaking. If I am different - *that* I am different - in just the ways racially marked may well dispose me in a society taking those markers seriously as much to act against the stereotyping ascriptions as to act on them, to act them out. No transgression without (in this case) racially fashioned normativ-ity. I am racially characterized, therefore I (am presumed, expected, in fact seen to) think (or not) and act accordingly. And perhaps I do, self consciously or not.

"I have incisors to bare," Fanon remarks cuttingly, in response to a white French child exclaiming as he might at the zoo, "Look, Mama, a Negro!" Fanon's incisive response - "I bite" - signals acting on, and out, the reifying stereotype, here both racial and racist, and undercutting it, bringing the

reader up short, raising the stakes not just of visiting but of creating the zoo or zoo-like environment. If you think there are animals here, the animals bite back.

The weight of race

These tensions between cutting and biting back, alterity and counter, distanciation and embrace – existential as much as analytic, perhaps analytic because existential – reveal what I want to characterize as *the weight of race*. Race is heavy. But the heaviness is layered, volume piled upon mass, the layers or strata composed of varying substances and differentially born. “White man’s burden” was the racially historicist rationalization common in the nineteenth century for both the effort and profit of colonial rule. European settlers and colonial rulers were exhorted to sacrifice in the name of empire, just as they were encouraged to educate the less civilized and immature with the view to eventual self-rule (once the cost-benefit calculus of colonial rule tipped precariously away from metropolitan advantage). The weight here was taken to be borne exclusively upon those sagging shoulders of Charles Atlas.

The abolitionist movements, slaves uniting in resistance with white conscience and longer-term self-interest, were the first to reveal in a public way how the load of race weighed so much more heavily upon its targeted populations. Bodies beaten and broken, spirits sagged, life-spans artificially and dramatically limited, whatever prospects for whatever slither of prosperity sliding from grasp because of the racial weights pulling one back. Fingers clawing at the soft sand to pull one onto the bank, to a resting place, a restful place, as the cement about ankles or sand bags upon backs drag one into water already so dark with the bodies of those made kin through race.

The weight of race, as Bourdieu might have put it. That weight borne, as I say, differentially, borne by some for

others, killing many for the sake of some, for the salvage and resource and supposed security of those whose weight is borne upon the backs of others. Sometimes a dead weight, one made heavier because the breath has been squeezed out of its subjects, shifting the bearing from those whose fingers have let go, too broken to grab on, to those left clinging, scratched and scarred, half ashore. The weight shifted to those etched with the grief of witness and memory, but also to those forced to grapple with the burden of tasks for which they have been left or left themselves unprepared. The weight of race lingering between the scales of justice bound by a past, present, and future, distributed and redistributed between those marked indelibly by history and those seeking incurably to remake themselves outside of history's cast, untouched by the shadow of their past.

I think here of the differential effects of racial weights taking their toll on blacks and whites respectively in the wake of the vicious murder of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas in 1998, as reflected in the revealing documentary, *Two Towns of Jasper* (2002). Or even more recently of the differentiated weights distributed across targets of the "war on terrorism" and the "clash of fundamentalisms" falling overwhelmingly on Muslims or those mistaken for or identified with them. How in these tensions of racial burden to shed the weight of race?

Though there is a clear conceptual distinction we must mark between race and racism, they are deeply connected conceptually and politically. It may be impossible always - ever? - to sustain the distinction historically and politically. The weight of race is at once a racist weight. A different, if related, metaphor may be equally revealing. Race is the glove in which the titanic, the weighty, hand of racism fits. The cloth may be velvet but it is studded with spikes and soaked in blood. Antiracism, it seems, is at once antiracialism, at least to the degree of de-spiking the glove.