

Black Marxism

The Making of the Black Radical Tradition

Cedric J. Robinson

For Leonard and Gary
for whom there was not enough time.



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Contents

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Cedric J. Robinson

Preface

It is always necessary to know what a book is about, not just what has been written in it but what was intended when it was written.

This work is about our people's struggle, the historical Black struggle. It takes as a first premise that for a people to survive in struggle it must be on its own terms: the collective wisdom which is a synthesis of culture and the experience of that struggle. The shared past is precious not for itself but because it is the basis of consciousness, of knowing, of being. It cannot be traded in exchange for expedient alliances or traduced by convenient abstractions or dogma. It contains philosophy, theories of history and social prescriptions native to it. It is a construct possessing its own terms, exacting its own truths. I have attempted here to demonstrate its authority. More particularly, I have investigated the failed efforts to render the historical being of Black peoples into a construct of historical materialism, to signify our existence as merely an opposition to capitalist organization. We are that (because we must be) but much more. For the younger brothers and sisters, and for those who identify with the Black struggle who are tempted by the transubstantiation of Black history to European radical theory, this book is a challenge. I humbly submit this work to you — and to the others with whom the project had its beginnings: Mary Agnes Lewis, Margot Dashiel, Frederick Douglas Lewis, Welton Smith, Sherman Williams, Nebby-Lou Crawford, Jim Lacy, Gopalan Shyamala, Jay Wright, J. Herman Blake, Don Hopkins, Henry Ramsey, Donald Warden . . . and the others I met along the way.

Cedric J. Robinson
Binghamton, Santa Barbara, Radwinter

Introduction

This study attempts to map the historical and intellectual contours of the encounter of Marxism and Black radicalism, two programmes for revolutionary change. I have undertaken this effort in the belief that in its way each represents a significant and immanent mode of social resolution, but that each is a particular and critically different realization of a history. The point is that they may be so distinct as to be incommensurable. At issue here is whether this is so. If it is, judgements must be made, choices taken. The inquiry required that both Marxism and Black radicalism be subjected to interrogations of unusual form: the first, Marxism, because few of its adherents have striven hard enough to recognize its profound but ambiguous indebtedness to Western civilization; the second, Black radicalism, because the very circumstance of its appearance has required that it be misinterpreted and diminished. I have hoped to contribute to the correction of these errors by challenging in both instances the displacement of history by aetiform theory and self-serving legend. Whether I have succeeded is for the reader to judge. But first it may prove useful to outline the construction of the study.

In Western societies for the better part of the past two centuries, the active and intellectual opposition of the Left to class rule has been vitalized by the vision of a socialist order: an arrangement of human relations grounded on the shared responsibility and authority over the means of social production and reproduction. The variations on the vision have been many, but over the years of struggle the hardest tradition has proven to be that identified with the work and writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and V.I. Lenin. Obviously here the term 'tradition' is used rather loosely since the divergencies of opinion and deed between Marx, Engels, and Lenin have been demonstrated by history to be as significant as their correspondence. Nevertheless, in common as well as in academic parlance, these three activist-intellectuals are taken to be the principal figures of Marxist or Marxist-Leninist socialism. Marxism was founded on the study of the capitalist expropriation and exploitation of labour as first taken up by Engels, then elaborated by Marx's 'material theory of history', his recognition of the evolving systems of capitalist production and the inevitability of class struggle, and later augmented by Lenin's conceptions of imperialism, the State, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and the role of the revolutionary party. It has provided the

ideological, historical and political vocabulary for much of the radical and revolutionary presence emergent in modern Western societies. Elsewhere, in lands economically parasitized by the capitalist world-system, or in those rare instances where its penetration has been quarantined by competing historical formations, some sorts of Marxism have again translated a concern with fundamental social change.

However, it is still fair to say that at base, that is at its epistemological substratum, Marxism is a Western construction – a conceptualization of human affairs and historical development which is emergent from the historical experiences of European peoples mediated, in turn, through their civilization, their social orders, and their cultures. Certainly its philosophical origins are indisputably Western. But the same must be said of its analytical presumptions, its historical perspectives, its points of view. This most natural consequence though has assumed a rather ominous significance since European Marxists have presumed more frequently than not that their project is identical with world-historical development. Confounded it would seem by the cultural zeal which accompanies ascendant civilizations, they have mistaken for universal verities the structures and social dynamics retrieved from their own distant and more immediate pasts. Even more significantly, the deepest structures of historical materialism, the foreknowledge for its comprehension of historical movement, have tended to relieve European Marxists from the obligation of investigating the profound effects of culture and historical experience on their science. The ordering ideas which have persisted in Western civilization (and Marx himself as we shall see was driven to admit such phenomena), reappearing in successive 'stages' of its development to dominate arenas of social ideology, have little or no *theoretical* justification in Marxism for their existence. One such recurring idea is racialism: the legitimization and corroboration of social organization as natural by reference to the 'racial' components of its elements. Though hardly unique to European peoples, its appearance and codification, during the feudal period, into Western conceptions of society was to have important and enduring consequences.

In the first part of this study, I have devoted three chapters to explicating the appearance and formulation of racial sensibility in Western civilization and its social and ideological consequences. Chapter One reconstructs the history of the emergence of racial order in feudal Europe and delineates its subsequent impact on the organization of labour under capitalism. Racism, I maintain, was not simply a convention for ordering the relations of European to non-European peoples but has its genesis in the 'internal' relations of European peoples. As part of the inventory of Western civilization it would reverberate within and without, transferring its toll from the past to the present. In contradistinction to Marx's and Engels' expectations that bourgeois society would rationalize social relations and demystify social consciousness, the obverse occurred. The development, organization and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology. As a material force, then, it could be expected that

racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism. I have used the term 'racial capitalism' to refer to this development and to the subsequent structure as an historical agency. The second chapter, as it rehearses the formation of the working classes in England, looks precisely at this phenomenon. Since the English working classes were the social basis for Engels' conceptualization of the modern proletariat, and conjoined with the *sans-culotte* of the French Revolution to occupy a similar place in Marx's thought, their evolving political and ideological character is of signal importance in reckoning the objective basis for Marxist theory. Of particular interest is the extent to which racialism (and subsequently nationalism) both as ideology and actuality affected the class-consciousness of workers in England. In the intensely racial social order of England's industrializing era, the phenomenology of the relations of production bred no objective basis for the extrication of the universality of class from the particularisms of race. Working-class discourse and politics remained marked by the architectonic possibilities previously embedded in the culture.

But the appearance of European socialism and its development into a tradition was, as well, somewhat at odds with socialism's subsequent historiography and orthodoxies. The third chapter pursues among the middle classes the obscured origins of socialism and the contradictions which weakened its political and ideological expressions. It was indeed nationalism, a second 'bourgeois' accretion, which most subverted the socialist creation. Nationalism, as a mix of racial sensibility and the economic interests of the national bourgeoisie, was as powerful an ideological impulse as any spawned from these strata. As an acquired temper and as a historical force met on the fields of social and political revolution, nationalism bemused the founders of historical materialism and those who followed them. It was to overtake both the direction of capitalist development and eventually the formative structures of socialist societies as they appeared in the present century. The historical trajectories of those developments, again, were almost entirely unexpected in a theoretical universe from which it had been discerned that ideology and false consciousness were supposedly being expelled. When in its time Black radicalism became manifest within Western society as well as at the other junctures between European and African peoples, one might correctly expect that Western radicalism was no more receptive to it than were the apologists of power.

Part Two takes up this other radical tradition, Black radicalism, the conditions of its historical emergence, its forms and its nature. This exposition begins in Chapter Four with the reinvestigation of the past relations between Europeans and Africans, a past which has been transformed by Europeans and for Europeans into a grotesque parody, a series of legends as monstrously proportioned as Pliny's *Blemyiae* 'whose heads/Do grow beneath their shoulders'. The obscuring of the Black radical tradition is seated in the West's suppression of Europe's previous knowledge of the African (and its own) past. The denial of history to African peoples took time – several hundreds of years – beginning with the emergence of Western

Europeans from the shadow of Muslim domination and paternalism. It was also a process which was to transport the image of Africa across separate planes of dehumanization latticed by the emerging modalities of Western culture. In England, at first gripped by a combative and often hysterical Christianity – complements of the crusades, the ‘reconquests’, and the rise of Italian capitalism – medieval English devotees recorded dreams in which the devil appeared as ‘a blacke moore’, ‘an Ethiope’. This was part of the grammar of the Church, the almost singular repository of knowledge in Europe. Centuries later the Satanic gave way to the representation of Africans as a different sort of beast: dumb, animal labour, the benighted recipient of the benefits of slavery. Thus the ‘Negro’ was conceived. The Negro – whose precedents could be found in the racial fabrications concealing the Slavs (*the slaves*), the Irish and others – substantially eradicated in Western historical consciousness the necessity of remembering the significance of Nubia for Egypt’s formation, of Egypt in the development of Greek civilisation, of Africa for imperial Rome, and more pointedly of Islam’s influence on Europe’s economic, political and intellectual history. From such a creature not even the suspicion of tradition needed to be entertained. In its stead there was the Black slave, a consequence masqueraded as an anthropology and a history.

The creation of the Negro was obviously at the cost of immense expenditures of psychic and intellectual energies in the West. The exercise was obligatory. It was an effort commensurate with the importance Black labour power possessed for the world economy sculpted and dominated by the ruling and mercantile classes of Western Europe. As Chapter Five indicates, the Atlantic slave trade and the slavery of the New World were integral to the modern world economy. Their relationship to capitalism was historical and organic rather than adventitious or synthetic. The Italian financiers and merchants whose capital subsidized Iberian exploration of the Atlantic and Indian oceans were also masters of (largely ‘European’) slave colonies in the Mediterranean. Certainly slave labour was one of their bases for what Marx termed ‘primitive accumulation’. But it would be an error to arrest the relationship there, assigning slave labour to some ‘pre-capitalist’ stage of history. For more than 300 years slave labour persisted beyond the beginnings of modern capitalism, complementing wage labour, peonage, serfdom and other methods of labour coercion. Ultimately, this meant that the interpretation of history in terms of the dialectic of capitalist class struggles would prove inadequate, a mistake ordained by the preoccupation of Marxism with the industrial and manufacturing centres of capitalism; a mistake founded on the presumptions that Europe itself had produced, that the motive and material forces which generated the capitalist system were to be wholly located in what was a fictive historical entity. From its very foundations capitalism had never been – any more than Europe – a ‘closed system’.

Necessarily then, Marx’s and Engels’ theory of revolution was insufficient in scope: the European proletariat and its social allies did not constitute *the*

revolutionary subject of history, nor was working-class consciousness necessarily *the* negation of bourgeois culture. Out of what was in reality a rather more complex capitalist world-system (and one to which Marx in his last decade paid closer attention), other revolutionary forces emerged as well. Informed as they were by the ideas and cultures drawn from their own historical experiences, these movements assumed forms only vaguely anticipated in the radical traditions of the West. In the terms of capitalist society they were its negation, but that was hardly the source of their being. And among them was the persistent and continuously evolving resistance of African peoples to oppression. The sixth chapter rehearses the history of this Black radical tradition in the African Diaspora and to some extent in the African continent itself. As both this and the seventh chapter attempt to demonstrate, the record of resistance for four centuries or more, from Nueva Espana to Nyasaland, leaves in no doubt the specifically African character of those struggles. Resistances were formed through the meanings which Africans brought to the New World as their cultural possession; meanings sufficiently distinct from the foundations of Western ideas as to be remarked upon over and over by the European witnesses of their manifestations; meanings enduring and powerful enough to survive slavery to become the basis of an opposition to it. With Western society as a condition, that tradition almost naturally assumed a theoretical aspect as well.

The third and final section of this study traces the social and intellectual backgrounds of the processes which led to the theoretical articulation of Black radicalism. The conditions for modern Black theory were present first in the African Diaspora. Far from Africa and physically enveloped by hostile communities, Black opposition acquired a penetrative comprehension. But it was a social and political as well as a historical process which nurtured theory. In the pursuit of that process I have identified three seminal Black radical intellectuals: William Edward Burkhardt DuBois, Cyril Lionel Robert James, and Richard Naftaniel Wright. They have been chosen for detailed treatment not only because they made substantial contributions to the theoretical text, but because their lives and circumstances were prisms of the events impending on and emanating from the Black radical tradition. Their reactions to their confrontation with Black resistance, the very means used for their expression were distinct but related, characterized by circumstance, temperament and training. Though their lives were very dissimilar – only Wright could be said to have been directly produced by the Black peasant and working classes – they all came to that tradition late (and hesitantly, as I will argue with respect to DuBois and James). For all three, though, Marxism had been the prior commitment, the first encompassing and conscious experience of organized opposition to racism, exploitation and domination. As Marxists, their apprenticeships proved to be significant but ultimately unsatisfactory. In time, events and experience drew them towards Black radicalism and the discovery of a collective Black resistance inspired by an enduring cultural complex of historical apprehension. In these concluding chapters I have attempted to demonstrate how and why this was so. Taken

together the efforts of DuBois, James, and Wright consisted of a first step towards the creation of an intellectual legacy which would complement the historical force of Black struggle. Their destiny, I suggest, was not to create the idea of that struggle so much as to articulate it. Regardless, the Black opposition to domination has continued to acquire new forms. In a very real sense then, the present study follows.

PART I: **The Emergence and** **Limitations of** **European** **Radicalism**

1. Racial Capitalism: The Non-Objective Character of Capitalist Development

The historical development of world capitalism was influenced in a most fundamental way by the particularistic forces of racism and nationalism. This could only be true if the social, psychological and cultural origins of racism and nationalism both anticipated capitalism in time and formed a piece with those events which contributed directly to its organization of production and exchange. Feudal society is the key. More particularly, the antagonistic commitments, structures and ambitions which feudal society encompassed are better conceptualized as those of a developing civilization than as elements of a unified tradition.

The processes through which the world system emerged contained an opposition between the rationalistic thrusts of an economic world-view and the political momenta of collectivist logic. The feudal state, an instrument of signal importance to the bourgeoisie, was to prove to be as consistently antithetical to the commercial integration represented by a world system as it had to the idea of Christendom. Neither the state nor later the nation could slough off the particularistic psychologies and interests which served as contradictions to a global community. A primary consequence of the conflict between those two social tendencies was that capitalists, as the architects of this system, never achieved the coherence of structure and organization which had been the promise of capitalism as an objective system.¹ On the contrary, the history of capitalism has in no way distinguished itself from earlier eras with respect to wars, material crises and social conflicts. A secondary consequence is that the critique of capitalism, to the extent that its protagonists have based their analyses upon the presumption of a determinant economic rationality in the development and expansion of capitalism, has been characterized by an incapacity to come to terms with the world system's direction of developments. Marxism, the dominant form that the critique of capitalism has assumed in Western thought, incorporated theoretical and ideological weaknesses which stemmed from the same social forces which provided the bases of capitalist formation.

The creation of capitalism was much more than a matter of the displacement of feudal modes and relations of production by capitalist ones.² Certainly, the transformation of the economic structures of non-capitalist Europe (specifically the Mediterranean and western European market, trade

and production systems) into capitalist forms of production and exchange was a major part of this process. Still, the first appearance of capitalism in the 15th Century³ involved other dynamics as well. The social, cultural, political and ideological complexes of European feudalisms contributed more to capitalism than the social 'fetters'⁴ which precipitated the bourgeoisie into social and political revolutions. No class was its own creation. Indeed, capitalism was less a catastrophic revolution (negation) of feudalist social orders than the extension of these social relations into the larger tapestry of the modern world's political and economic relations. Historically, the civilization evolving in the western extremities of the Asian/European continent, and whose first signification is medieval Europe,⁵ passed with few disjunctions from feudalism as the dominant mode of production to capitalism as the dominant mode of production. And from its very beginnings, this European civilization, containing racial, tribal, linguistic and regional particularities, was constructed on antagonistic differences.

Europe's Formation

The social basis of European civilization was 'among those whom the Romans called the "barbarians".'⁶ Prior to the 11th or 12th Centuries, the use of the collective sense of the term barbarian was primarily a function of exclusion rather than a reflection of any significant consolidation among those peoples. The term signified that the 'barbarians' had their historical origins beyond the civilizing reach of Roman law and the old Roman imperial social order. The 'Europe' of the 9th Century for which the Carolingian family and its minions claimed paternity was rather limited geopolitically,⁷ and had a rather short and unhappy existence. Interestingly, for several centuries following the deaths of Charlemagne and his immediate heirs (the last being Arnulf, d.899), both the Emperor and Europe were more the stuff of popular legend and clerical rhetoric than manifestations of social reality.⁸ The idea of Europe, no longer a realistic project, was transferred from one of a terrestrial social order to that of a spiritual kingdom: Christendom.

In fact, those peoples to whom the Greeks and the Romans referred collectively as barbarians were of diverse races with widely differing cultures.⁹ The diversity of their languages is, perhaps, one measure of their differences. But in using this measure, we must be cautious of the schemes of classification of those languages which reduce the reality of their numbers to simple groupings like the Celtic, the Italic, the Germanic, the Balto-Slavonic and Albanian languages.¹⁰

Direct and indirect evidence indicates that a more authentic mapping of the languages of the proto-Europeans would be much more complex. For instance, H. Munro Chadwick, as late as 1945, could locate extant descendants of those several languages among the Gaelic, Welsh and Breton

languages of Great Britain and France; the Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Provençal, French, Italian, Sardinian, Alpine and Rumanian languages and dialects of southern and western Europe; the English, Frisian, Dutch, German, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Icelandic languages of England, Scotland, the Netherlands, Germany and Scandinavia; the Russian, Bulgarian, Yugoslavian, Slovenian, Slovakian, Czech, Polish and Lusitanian languages and dialects of central and eastern Europe; and the Latvian and Lithuanian languages of northern Europe.¹¹ But even Chadwick's list was of merely those languages which had survived 'the millennium of Europe'. The list would lengthen considerably if one were to consider the languages which existed in this area at the beginning of this era and are no longer spoken (for example, Latin, Cornish, Prusian), along with those languages of peoples who preceded the migrations from the north and east of Rome's barbarians (for example, Basque, Etruscan, Oscan, Umbrian).¹²

The Ostrogoth, Visigoth, Vandal, Suevi, Burgundi, Alamanii, and Frank peoples – that is the barbarians – whose impact on the fortunes of the Late Roman Empire from the 5th Century was quick and dramatic,¹³ were in fact a small minority of thousands among the millions of the decaying State. Henri Pirenne, relying on the estimates of Emile-Felix Gautier and L. Schmidt, reports that the Ostrogoths and Visigoths may have numbered 100,000 each, the Vandals 80,000, and the Burgundi 25,000.¹⁴ Moreover, the warrior strata of each kingdom are consistently estimated at about 20% of their populations. On the other hand, the Empire which they invaded contained as many as 50-70 million persons.¹⁵ Pirenne cautiously concludes:

All this is conjecture. Our estimate would doubtless be in excess of the truth if, for the Western provinces beyond the *limes*, we reckoned the Germanic element as constituting 5 percent of the population.¹⁶

More importantly, the vast majority of the barbarians 'came not as conquerors, but exactly as, in our own day, North Africans, Italians, Poles cross into Metropolitan France to look for work'.¹⁷ In a relatively short time, in the southern-most European lands which were bounded by the Western Roman Empire, these peoples were entirely assimilated by the indigenous peoples as a primarily slave labour force.¹⁸ The pattern was already a familiar one within the dying civilization of the Mediterranean,¹⁹ with which they desired and desperately needed to join.²⁰ It is also important to realize that with respect to the emerging European civilization whose beginnings coincide with the arrivals of these same barbarians, slave labour as a critical basis of production would continue without any significant interruption into the 20th Century.²¹ From the *familia rustica* which characterized Roman and even earlier Greek (*doulos*) rural production within vast estates, through the *municipia* of the *coloniae* and *mansi* landholdings of Merovingian (481-752) and Carolingian eras, the feudal villains of western medieval Europe and England, and the *slavi* of the Genoese and Venetian merchants who dominated commercial trade in the

Mediterranean from the 13th to the 16th Century, slave labour persisted as an aspect of European agrarian production up to the modern era.²² Neither feudal serfdom, nor capitalism had as their result the elimination or curtailment of slavery.²³ At the very most (it is argued by some), their organization served to relocate it.²⁴

Despite the 'Romanization' of the southern Goths, or seen differently because of it, the Germanic tribes did establish the general administrative boundaries which were to mark the nations of modern western Europe. The kingdoms which they established, mainly under the rules of Roman *hospititius* and in accordance with Roman administration,²⁵ were in large measure the predecessors of France, Germany, Spain and Italy.

Still, we must not forget that in historical reconstruction, a medieval age is to be intervened between these two ages. Medieval Europe, though still agricultural in economy, was a much cruder existence for slave, peasant, farmer, artisan, land-owner, cleric and nobility alike than had been the circumstance for their predecessors in the Empire. Urban life declined, leaving the old cities in ruins,²⁶ long-distance trade, especially by sea routes, decayed dramatically.²⁷ Latouche summarizes:

The balance-sheet of the Merovingian economy is singularly disappointing. The now fashionable, if unpleasant, word 'rot' describes it to perfection. Whether in the sphere of town life, commerce, barter, currency, public works, shipping, we find everywhere the same policy of neglect, the same selfish refusal to initiate reform. From this disastrous, drifting *laissez-faire* which left men and things as they had always been, pursuing unchanged their traditional way of life, there sprang the illusion that the ancient world still lingered on; it was, in fact, no more than a facade.²⁸

The Carolingian Empire did little to repair the 'rot' which anticipated the restructuring of Europe in feudal terms. The Muslim conquests of the Mediterranean in the 7th and 8th Centuries had deprived the European economies of the urban, commercial, productive and cultural vitality they required for their reconstruction. Pirenne put it boldly:

The ports and the cities were deserted. The link with the Orient was severed, and there was no communication with the Saracen coasts. There was nothing but death. The Carolingian Empire presented the most striking contrast with the Byzantine. It was purely an inland power, for it had no outlets. The Mediterranean territories, formerly the most active portions of the Empire, which supported the life of the whole, were now the poorest, the most desolate, the most constantly menaced. For the first time in history the axis of Occidental civilization was displaced towards the North, and for many centuries it remained between the Seine and the Rhine. And the Germanic peoples, which had hitherto played only the negative part of destroyers, were now called

upon to play a positive part in the reconstruction of European civilization.²⁹

Latouche, though he differed with Pirenne on many of the particulars of the Carolingian response to the loss of the Mediterranean, finally concurred:

... the Empire broke up less than half a century after its creation, and Charlemagne did nothing to prevent, and did not even attempt to delay, the development of feudal institutions, so heavy with menace for the future... a world in which there were no great business concerns, no industries, and in which agricultural activity was predominant.³⁰

Urban life, trade and market systems incorporating the goods of long-distance trade did not return to Europe until the end of the 11th Century at the earliest, and most probably during the 12th Century.³¹ By then, the depth to which the degradation of European life had fallen is perhaps best expressed by the appearance of commercialized cannibalism.³²

The First Bourgeoisie

Into this depressed land where few were free of the authority of an intellectually backward and commercially unimaginative ruling class, where famine and epidemics were the natural order of things, and where the sciences of the Ancient World had long been displaced as the basis of intellectual development by theological fables and demonology,³³ appeared the figure to which European social theorists, Liberal and Marxist, attribute the generation of Western civilization: the bourgeoisie. The merchant was as alien to feudal society as the barbarian invaders had been to the Empire. Unlike the Mediterranean tradesmen,³⁴ the origins of the western European bourgeoisie are obscured. No doubt this is largely due to the fact that historical documentation is inevitably sparse where civilization in the formal sense of urban culture has largely disappeared, and where life is recorded by an elite of land and Church largely preoccupied with its own experience while hostile to commerce.³⁵ Nevertheless, it is clear that the western European merchant class — 'a class of deracines'³⁶ — crystallized within a social order for which it was an extrinsic phenomena.

The economic organization of demesne production was characterized by Pirenne as a 'closed domestic economy one which we might call, with more exactitude, the economy of no markets'.³⁷ In fact, there were markets, local ones, but their function and existence had no part in the development of the markets of long-distance trades which were the basis of the merchant class' development. The *mercatti*, whose existence predates the bourgeoisie, dealt not in trade but foodstuffs at the retail level.³⁸ The one factor 'internal' to the feudal order which did contribute to the rise of the bourgeoisie was the 11th Century's population growth. This increase had ultimately

placed significant strains on feudal production:

It had as a result the detaching from the land an increasingly important number of individuals and committing them to that roving and hazardous existence which, in every agricultural civilization, is the lot of those who no longer find themselves with their roots in the soil.

It multiplied the crowd of vagabonds . . . Energetic characters, tempered by the experience of a life full of the unexpected, must have abounded among them. Many knew foreign languages and were conversant with the customs and needs of diverse lands. Let a lucky chance present itself . . . they were remarkably well equipped to profit thereby. . . . Famine was multiplied throughout Europe, sometimes in one province and sometimes in another, by that inadequate system of communications, and increased still more the opportunities, for those who knew how to make use of them, of getting rich. A few timely sacks of wheat, transported to the right spot, sufficed for the realizing of huge profits. . . . It was certainly not long before nouveau riches made their appearance in the midst of this miserable crowd of impoverished, bare-foot wanderers in the world.³⁹

In the beginning, before they could properly be described as bourgeoisie, these merchants travelled from region to region, their survival a matter of their mobility and their ability to capitalize on the frequent ruptures and breakdowns of the reproduction of populations sunk into the manorial soil. Their mobility may have also been occasioned by the fact that many of them were not free-born and thus sought respite from their social condition by flight from their lords: 'By virtue of the wandering existence they led, they were everywhere regarded as foreigners.'⁴⁰ For security they often travelled in small bands — a habit which would continue into their more sedentary period. It was not long before they began to establish *porti* (storehouses or transfer points for merchandise) outside the *burgs* (the fortresses of the Germanic nobles) bishoprics and towns which straddled the main routes of war, communications, and later, international trade. It was these *porti*, or merchant colonies, which founded, in the main, the medieval cities of Europe's hinterland. It was at this point that the merchants of Europe became bourgeoisie (*burgenses*). By the beginnings of the 12th Century, these bourgeoisie had already begun the transformation of European life so necessary for the emergence of capitalism as the dominant organization of European production.

The western European bourgeoisie re-established the urban centres by basing them upon exchange between the Mediterranean, the East and northern Europe:

[in the 10th Century] there appears in Anglo-Saxon texts the word 'port', employed as a synonym for the Latin words *urbs* and *civitas*, and even at the present day the term 'port' is commonly met with in

the names of cities of every land of English speech.

Nothing shows more clearly the close connection that existed between the economic revival of the Middle Ages and the beginnings of city life. They were so intimately related that the same word which designated a commercial settlement served in one of the great idioms of Europe to designate the town itself.⁴¹

Elsewhere, Pirenne puts it more succinctly: 'Europe "colonized" herself, thanks to the increase of her inhabitants.'⁴² Flanders — geographically situated to service the commerce of the northern seas, and economically critical because of the Flemish cloth industry — was the first of the major European merchant centres. Close behind Flanders came Bruges, Ghent, Ypres, Lille, Douai, Arras, Tournai, Cambrai, Valenciennes, Liege, Huy, Dinant, Cologne, Mainz, Rouen, Bordeaux and Bayonne.⁴³ Cloth, which both Pirenne⁴⁴ and Karl Polanyi⁴⁵ identify as the basis of European trade, originally a rural industry, was transformed by the bourgeoisie in Flanders into an urban manufacture 'organized on the capitalistic basis of wage labour'.⁴⁶ The urban concentration of industry was thus initiated:

The increase of the population naturally favoured industrial concentration. Numbers of the poor poured into the towns where cloth-making, the activity of which trade grew proportionately with the development of commerce, guaranteed them their daily bread. . . .

The old rural industry very quickly disappeared. It could not compete with that of the town, abundantly supplied with the raw material of commerce, operating at lower prices, and enjoying more advanced methods. . . .

. . . whatever might be the nature of industry in other respects, everywhere it obeyed that law of concentration which was operative at such an early date in Flanders. Everywhere the city groups, thanks to commerce, drew rural industry to them.⁴⁷

It is also true that the bourgeoisie, in so doing, came to free some portions of the serfs⁴⁸ only to re-enslave them through wage labour. For with urban industry came the successful attack on feudal and seigniorial servitude:

Freedom, of old, used to be the monopoly of a privileged class. By means of the cities it again took its place in society as a natural attribute of the citizen. Hereafter it was enough to reside on city soil to acquire it. Every serf who had lived for a year and a day within the city limits had it by definite right; the statute of limitations abolished all rights which his lord exercised over his person and chattels. Birth meant little. Whatever might be the mark with which it had stigmatized the infant in his cradle, it vanished in the atmosphere of the city.⁴⁹

With the flourishing of long-distance trade and the development of urban

centres in western Europe came some specializations in rural production. Though open-field agriculture dominated Europe as a whole in the 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries, specialized grain production could be found in Prussia (corn), Tuscany and Lombardy (cereals), England (wheat) and north Germany (rye). By the late 15th Century, viticulture had appeared in Italy, Spain, France, and south-west Germany. In the Baltic and North Seas, fishing and salt made up a significant part of the cargoes of Hanseatic shippers. And in England and Spain, meat production for export had begun to emerge.⁵⁰

In northern Europe, these exports joined wool and woollen cloth as the major bases of international trade. In southern Europe — more precisely the Mediterranean — the long-distance trade in cloth (wool, silk, and later cotton), grains and wines came to complement a significant trade in luxury goods:

The precious stuffs from the east found their way into every rich household, and so did the specialities of various European regions: amber and furs from the countries bordering on the Baltic; objects d'art such as paintings from Flanders, embroidery from England, enamels from Limoges; manuscript books for church, boudoir or library; fine armour and weapons from Milan and glass from Venice.⁵¹

Still, according to Iris Origo, the most precious cargo of the Mediterranean tradesmen was slaves:

... European and Levantine traders sold Grecian wines and Ligurian figs, and the linen and woolen stuffs of Champagne and Lombardy, and purchased precious silks from China, carpets from Bokhara and Samarkand, furs from the Ural Mountains, and Indian spices, as well as the produce of the rich black fields and forests of the Crimea. But the most flourishing trade of all was that in slaves — for Caffa was the chief slave-market of the Levant.⁵²

Tartar, Greek, Armenian, Russian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Circassian, Slavonic, Cretan, Arab, African (*Moor*) and occasionally Chinese (*Cathay*) slaves⁵³ — two-thirds of whom were female⁵⁴ — were to be found in the households of wealthy and 'even relatively modest Catalan and Italian families'.⁵⁵

From the 13th Century to the beginnings of the 15th Century, the primary function of these predominantly European slaves in the economics of southern Europe was domestic service.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, in Spain (Catalan and Castile) and in the Italian colonies on Cyprus, Crete, and in Asia Minor (Phocaea) and Palestine, Genoese and Venetian masters used both European and African slaves in agriculture on sugar plantations, in industry, and for work in mines:

This variety of uses to which slaves were put illustrates clearly the degree to which medieval colonial slavery served as a model for Atlantic

colonial slavery. Slave man-power had been employed in the Italian colonies in the Mediterranean for all the kinds of work it would be burdened with in the Atlantic colonies. The only important change was that the white victims of slavery were replaced by a much greater number of African Negroes, captured in raids or bought by traders.⁵⁷

In an unexpected way, this trade in slaves would prove to be the salvation of the Mediterranean bourgeoisie. In the 13th and early 14th Centuries, however, it appeared that the merchants of the European hinterland would inevitably overshadow those of Italy's city-states. They, unlike the Italians, were undeterred, as Giuliano Procacci points out, by the peninsula's small but densely-packed populations; the increasingly unfavourable ratios of townsmen to countrymen (Florence could only survive on the produce of its countryside for five months of the year, Venice and Genoa had to be almost entirely supplied by sea); and the rapid deforestation of the countryside which aggravated the destruction of the autumn and spring floods.⁵⁸

However, it was the fate of this nascent bourgeoisie not to thrive. Indeed, for one historical moment, even the further development of capitalism might be said to have been in question. The events of the 14th and 15th Centuries intervened in the processes through which feudalism was ultimately displaced by the several forms of capitalism.⁵⁹ The consequence of those events were to determine the species of the modern world: the identities of the bourgeoisie which transformed capitalism into a world system; the sequences of this development; the relative vitalities of the several European economies; and the sources of labour from which each economy would draw.

The momentous events of which we speak were: the periodic famines which struck Europe in this period, the Black Death of the mid-14th Century and subsequent years, the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), and the rebellions of peasants and artisans.⁶⁰ Together they had a devastating impact on western Europe and the Mediterranean — decimating the populations of cities and countryside alike, disrupting trade, collapsing industry and agricultural production — levelling, as it were, the bulk of the most developed regions of western European bourgeois activity. Denys Hay has summed it up quite well:

The result of prolonged scarcity, endemic and pandemic plague, the intermittent but catastrophic invasions of ruthless armies, and the constant threat in many areas from well-organized robber bands, was seen not only in a dwindling population but in roads abandoned to brambles and briars, in arable land out of cultivation and in deserted villages. Contraction in the area of cultivation in its turn made dearth the more likely. There was in every sense a vicious circle. A sober estimate suggests that 'in 1470 the number of households was halved in most European villages compared with the start of the fourteenth

'century' - the reconquest of forest and waste of the arable is 'an episode equal in importance to the drama of the earlier clearings'.⁶¹

This general economic decline in Europe of the 14th and 15th Centuries was marked in a final and visible way by social disorders much more profound than the territorial wars. Such wars, after all had been in character with feudal society. The appearance of peasant movements was not:

In the boom condition of the 13th Century there had been in rural areas, a degree of over-population which made many peasants - day labourers, poor serfs - very vulnerable. Now the countryside was more sparsely occupied and a better living was possible for those who remained. . . . What was new in the slump conditions of the 14th Century was a bitterness in the lord's relations with the villagers.⁶²

As Hay indicates, the most intense of the peasant rebellions occurred in Flanders (1325-28), northern France (the Jacquerie of 1358), and England (1381). But such movements erupted over much of western Europe during the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries. In France, and especially Normandy (precipitated surely by the final savaging of the peasants by the forces of the Hundred Years War), in Catalonia (1409-13 and later), in Jutland (1411), in Finland (1438) and in Germany (1524), peasants arose, seizing land, executing lords, clergy and even lawyers, demanding an end to manorial dues, petitioning for the establishment of wage-labour, and insisting on the dissolution of restrictions on free buying and selling.⁶³

Within the vortex of these disturbances, long-distance trade declined drastically. In England, the export of wool and cloth, and subsequently their production, fell well below 13th Century levels.⁶⁴ In France (Gascony), the export of wine was similarly affected.⁶⁵ Hay remarks that 'Florentine bankruptcies in the first half of the 14th Century are paralleled by similar troubles in Florence at the end of the 15th Century',⁶⁶ while P. Ramsey notes the precipitous fall of 'the great merchant bankers of southern Germany'.⁶⁷ Further north, the Hansa League disintegrated,⁶⁸ while to the west, the Flemish cloth industry collapsed.⁶⁹ Finally, even the northern Italian city-states found their bourgeoisie in decline. The rise of the Ottoman Empire, at first disruptive to the Italian merchant houses, would dictate new accommodations to Islam and commerce, eventually persuading some of the Italians to relocate as capitalist colonists in the Iberian peninsula.⁷⁰ For the moment, however, the foundations of the European civilization, still figuratively embryonic, appeared to be crumbling.

The Modern World Bourgeoisie

Henri Pirenne, however, provided a key to one of the mysteries of the emergence of the modern era in the 16th Century from the chaos and desperation

of the 14th and 15th Centuries: the 'survival' of the bourgeoisie. Pirenne also anticipated the somewhat rhetorical question put by K.G. Davies in the heat of the debate revolving around the historical authenticity of the phrase: the rise of the middle class. Davies queried:

What, after all, is wrong with the suggestion that the *bourgeoisie*, not steadily but by fits and starts, improved its status over many centuries, a process that began with the appearance of towns and has not yet been finally consummated?⁷¹

Forty years earlier, Pirenne had already replied:

I believe that, for each period into which our economic history may be divided, there is a distinct and separate class of capitalists. In other words, the group of capitalists of a given epoch does not spring from the capitalist group of the preceding epoch. At every change in economic organization we find a breach of continuity. It is as if the capitalists who have up to then been active recognize that they are incapable of adapting themselves to conditions which are evoked by needs hitherto unknown and which call for methods hitherto unemployed.⁷²

Both Pirenne and Davies understood that the biological metaphor of a bourgeoisie emerging out of the Middle Ages, nurturing itself on the 'mercantilisms' and administrations of the Absolute Monarchies of the traditional period between feudalism and the capitalism, and on the lands and titles of impoverished nobilities, then finally achieving political and economic maturity and thus constituting industrial capitalism, is largely unsupported by historical evidence. Rather it is an historical *impression*, a phantom representation largely constructed from the late 18th Century to the present by the notional activity of a bourgeoisie as a dominant class. This history of 'the rise of the middle class' is an amalgam of bourgeois political and economic power, the self-serving ideology of the bourgeoisie as the ruling class and thus an intellectual and political preoccupation - mediated through the constructs of evolutionary theory:

From Darwin has descended the language of error, a language that has locked up historical thinking and imposed slovenly and imprecise conclusions even upon scholarly and sensible researchers. Words like 'growth', 'decline', 'development', 'evolution', 'decay', may have started as servants but they have ended as masters: they have brought us to the edge of historical inevitability.⁷³

Hegel's dialectic of *Aufhebung*, Marx's dialectic of class struggle and the contradictions between the mode and relations of production, Darwin's evolution of the species and Spencer's survival of the fittest are all forged from the same metaphysical conventions. The declining European

bourgeoisies of the 14th and 15th Centuries were not, for the most part, the lineal antecedents of those which appeared in the 16th Century. The universality of capitalism is less an historical reality than a construct of this 'language of error'.⁷⁴ These 'distant and separate class[es] of capitalists' were less the representatives of an immanent, rational, commercial order than extensions of particular historical dynamics and cultures. They were not the 'germ' of a new order dialectically posited in an increasingly confining host – feudalism – but an opportunistic strata, wilfully adaptive to the new conditions and possibilities offered by the times. Not only did different western European bourgeoisies appear in the 16th Century, but these new bourgeoisie were implicated in structures, institutions and organizations which were substantively undeveloped in the Middle Ages.

For one, the focus of long-distance trade in Europe gravitated from the Mediterranean and Scania areas to the Atlantic. The most familiar forms of this extension of trade to the south and west of the European peninsula were merchant voyages and colonization. Secondly, 'expanded bureaucratic state structures'⁷⁵ became the major conduits of capitalist expansion: determining the direction of investment, establishing political security for such investments, encouraging certain commercial networks and relations while discouraging others:

In these conditions, in fact, may be seen the matrix of modern capitalism: like nationalism, less the creator than the creation of the modern State. It had many antecedents, but its full emergence required a conjunction of political and moral as well as strictly economic factors. This emergence could take place within the intricate framework of one type of western State then evolving; it may be doubted whether it could have done so under any other circumstances that we know of in history; at any rate it never did.⁷⁶

The city, the point of departure for the earlier bourgeoisies and their networks of long-distance trade and productive organization, proved to be incapable of sustaining the economic recovery of those bourgeoisies situated where the merchant town had reached its highest development: northern Italy, western Germany, the Netherlands and the Baltic.⁷⁷ The Absolutist State, under the hegemony of western European aristocracies, brought forth a new bourgeoisie. The territories of Castile (Spain), the Ile de France, the Home Counties and London (England), the expansionist and colonial ambitions and policies of their administrations, and the structures of their political economies organized for repression and exploitation, these constituted the basis of this bourgeois formation.

The bourgeoisies of the 16th Century accumulated in the interstices of the State. And as the State acquired the machinery of rule – bureaucracies of administrative, regulatory and extractive concerns, and armies of wars of colonial pacification, international competition, and domestic repression⁷⁸ – those who would soon constitute a class, settled into the proliferating roles

of political, economic and juridical agents for the State. And as the State necessarily expanded its fiscal and economic activities,⁷⁹ a new merchant and banking class parasitized its host: State loans, state monopolies, state business became the vital centres of its construction.

So while the territorial states and empires acquired lands in plenty, they were unable to exploit unaided the resultant huge economic units. This incapacity again opened the door to the towns and the merchants. It was they, who, behind the facade of subordination were making their fortunes. And even where the states could most easily become masters, in their own territory with their own subjects, they were often obliged to make shifts and compromises.⁸⁰

It is still debatable whether this was a result of what Adam Smith and Eli Heckscher after him termed the 'system' of *mercantilism*,⁸¹ or the consequence of what other historians describe as the ideology of *statism*.⁸² Nevertheless, it is clear that by the 17th Century the new bourgeoisies were identified with political attitudes and a trend in economic thought which was pure mercantilism:

... implicit in the 'tragedy of mercantilism' was the belief that what was one man's or country's gain was another's loss. . . . It was, after all, a world in which population remained remarkably static; in which trade and production usually grew only very gradually; in which the limits of the known world were expanded slowly and with great difficulty; in which economic horizons were narrowly limited; and in which man approximated more closely than today to Hobbes' vision of his natural state: for most men most of the time, life was 'poor, nasty, brutish and short'.⁸³

The parochialism of the town, which had so much characterized the perspective of the bourgeoisie of the Middle Ages, was matched in this second era of Western civilization by a parochialism of the State. Heckscher commented that:

The collective entity to [peoples of the 16th and 17th Centuries] was not a nation unified by common race, speech, and customs: the only decisive factor for them was *the state*. . . . Mercantilism was the exponent of the prevailing conception of the relationship between the state and nation in the period before the advent of romanticism. It was the state and not the nation which absorbed its attention.⁸⁴

Again, the particularistic character of the formations of these bourgeoisies⁸⁵ withheld, from what would be called capitalism, a systemic structure. The class which is so consistently identified with the appearance of industrial capitalism was inextricably associated with specific 'national' structures – a

relationship which profoundly influenced bourgeois imaginations and realizations. Political economies,⁸⁶ that is national economies, enclosed them, and thus the bourgeoisie perceived what later analysis argues in retrospect is the beginnings of a world system as something quite different: an international system.⁸⁷ The bourgeoisies of early modern capitalism were attempting to destroy or dominate each other.

The Lower Orders

Just as the western European middle classes were suspended in webs of State parochialisms, so too was that vast majority of European peoples: the lower orders. The class that ruled, the nobility, by its orchestration of the instrumentalities of the State, imprinted its character on the whole of European society. And since much of that character had to do with violence,⁸⁸ the lower orders were woven into the tapestry of a violent social order. By the nature of hierarchical societies, the integration of the lower classes – wage labourers, peasants, serfs, slaves, vagabonds and beggars – into the social, political and economic orders of the Absolute State was on the terms of the clients of the latter. The function of the labouring classes was to provide the State and its privileged classes with the material and human resources needed for their maintenance and further accumulations of power and wealth. This was not, however, a simple question of the dominance of a ruling class over the masses. The masses did not exist as such. As earlier, Greek and Roman thinkers had created the totalizing construct of the barbarians, the feudal nobilities of western Europe had inspired and authored a similar myth: Friedrich Hertz has reported that:

In the Middle Ages and later, the nobility, as a rule, considered themselves of better blood than the common people, whom they utterly despised. The peasants were supposed to be descended from Ham, who, for lack of filial piety, was known to have been condemned by Noah to slavery. The knightly classes of many lands, on the other hand, believed themselves to be the descendants of the Trojan heroes, who after the fall of Troy were said to have settled in England, France and Germany. This theory was seriously maintained not only in numerous songs and tales of knightly deeds, but also in many scholarly works.⁸⁹

It was a form of this notion that Count Gobineau revived in the mid-19th Century, extending its conceptualization of superiority so as to include elements of the bourgeoisie.⁹⁰ The nobilities of the 16th Century, however, proved to be more circumspect about ‘the masses’ than their genealogical legends might imply. They did not become victims of their own mythic creations. When it came to the structures of the State, their knowledge of the social, cultural and historical compositions of the masses was exquisitely

refined. Perhaps this is no more clearly demonstrated than in one of the most critical areas of State activity: the monopolization of force.

The Absolutist State was a cause and effect of war. Its economy was a war economy, its foreign trade was combative,⁹¹ its bureaucracy administered the preparations and prosecutions of war.⁹² Such a state required standing armies (and, eventually, navies). But for certain political and sometimes economic reasons, soldiers could not be recruited easily from, in V.G. Kiernan’s phrase, ‘the mass of ordinary peasants and burghers’. Kiernan puts the situation most simply for France, though it was the same all over Europe: ‘Frenchmen were seldom eager to serve their king, and their king was not eager to employ Frenchmen.’⁹³ Loyalty to the state of the monarchy from the exploited ranks of the lower classes was rare. In any case, not one state of the 16th or 17th Century was reliant on such an identification between the masses and their rulers. The soldiers of the armies of France, Spain, England, Holland, Prussia, Poland, Sweden, and at first Russia, were either alien to the states for which they fought and policed or very marginal to them:

European governments . . . relied very largely on foreign mercenaries. One of the employments for which they were particularly well suited was the suppression of rebellious subjects, and in the 16th Century, that age of endemic revolution, they were often called upon for this purpose. . . . Governments . . . had to look either to backward areas for honest, simple-minded fellows untainted by political ideas . . . or to foreigners.⁹⁴

Depending then on changing fortunes, the ‘identities’ of the combatants, the geo-politics of wars, and the mission, mercenaries were drawn from among the Swiss, the Scots, Picardians, Bretons, Flemings, Welsh, Basques, Mavarrese, Gallowsians, Dalmatians, Corsicans, Burgundians, Guelphians, the Irish, Czechs, Croatians, Magyars, and from Gascony, Allgaeu, Norway and Albania. Since one function and result of the work of these mercenaries was the suppression of subject peoples, the degree of their success is directly indicated by their own absence, for the most part, from the political geography of modern Europe. The Absolute State (or its direct successors), the instrument which propelled them into prominence in the 16th and 17th Centuries (for France, into the late 18th Century), ultimately absorbed the autonomous sectors from which the mercenaries originated.

In the armies of the 16th Century, native recruits distributed among the foreign mercenaries were also chosen with an eye to minimizing the political and social risks of the monarchy and its allied nobility. In France, the army ‘drew its volunteers from the least “national”, most nondescript types, the dregs of the poorest classes’, Kiernan informs us.⁹⁵ In Spain, the hills of Aragon and the Basque provinces served a similar function. In Britain, until the mid-18th Century, the Scottish Highlands were the most frequent sites of recruitment; and the Welsh soldier’s skills became legendary.⁹⁶

Important as the formation of these armies was for the construction of the states which dominated Europe for more than 200 years, we must not be diverted from their more historical importance by the romantic richness of the social and political drama to which they contributed. Louis XI's innovation in 1474, of organizing a 'French infantry without Frenchmen'⁹⁸ was revolutionary in scale, not in character.⁹⁹ The tactic of composing armies from mercenaries and from marginal peoples and social strata extended back into the Middle Ages and earlier. Imperial armies, republican armies, bandit armies, invading armies and defending armies, the armies of rebellious slaves, of nobles and even of the chauvinist medieval cities, all laid claim to, or incorporated to some extent, souls for whom they had at best few considerations in less intense times.¹⁰⁰ More significantly, in reviewing this phenomenon for the 16th and later centuries, the point is not that mercenaries were recruited from the outside and from among those least secure internally; this is simply the best documented form of a more generalized pattern of structural formation and social integration.

The important meaning is that this form of enlisting human reserves was not peculiar to military apparatus but extended throughout Europe to domestic service, handicrafts, industrial labour, the ship- and dock-workers of merchant capitalism, and the field labourers of agrarian capitalism. There has never been a moment in modern European history (if before) that migratory and/or immigrant labour was not a significant aspect of European economies.¹⁰¹ That this is not more widely understood seems to be a consequence of conceptual analysis and analysis: the mistaken use of the *nation* as a social, historical and economic category; a resultant and persistent reference to national labour 'ools' (e.g. 'the English working class'); and a subsequent failure of historical investigation. Wallerstein, in his otherwise quite detailed study of the origins of the capitalist world system, can devote a mere page to this phenomenon, including a single paragraph on the ethnic divisions of 16th Century immigrant labour. And though compelled to acknowledge that 'not much research seems to have been done on the ethnic distribution of the urban working class of early modern Europe', he goes on to speculate that Kazimierz Tyminecki's description of systematic ethnic distinctions of rank within the working class 'in the towns of 16th Century East Elba . . . [is] typical of the whole of the world economy'.¹⁰² Despite the paucity of studies there are historical records which tend to confirm this view. We discover in them Flemish cloth workers in early 16th Century London; and later in the 16th and in the 17th Century, Huguenot refugees (40–80,000 of them), many of them handloom weavers, fleeing France and settling in Spitalfields in London's East End and thus, establishing England's silk industry.¹⁰³ In the 18th and 19th Centuries, Irish workers 'formed the core of the floating armies of labourers who built canals, the docks, the railways and transformed the face of England'.¹⁰⁴ And again on the European Continent, as German farm workers and peasants were drawn to urban and industrial sectors of central and western Germany, Polish labour was used to fill the vacuum in eastern Germany.¹⁰⁵ France and Switzerland also recruited

heavily from Poland, Italy, and Spain.¹⁰⁶ And of course, the formation of industrial cores in the U.S. before the Civil War located immigrant workers from northern Italy, Germany, Scotland and Ireland; and after the Civil War from southern Italy, and the lands of eastern, northern and central Europe: Russia, Finland, Poland, Greece, and the Balkans.¹⁰⁷ (Perhaps the only unique aspect of north American industrial recruitment was the appearance of Asian workers beginning in the late 19th Century, from China, Japan and the Philippines.)¹⁰⁸

We begin to perceive that the nation is not a unit of analysis for the social history of Europe. The State is a bureaucratic structure, and the 'nation', for which it administers is more a convenient construct than the historical, racial, cultural and linguistic entity that the term nation signifies.¹⁰⁹ The truer character of European history resides beneath the phenomenology of nation and state. With respect to the construction of modern capitalism, one must not forget the particular identities, the particular social movements and societal structures which have persisted and/or have profoundly influenced European life:

Altogether western Europe had acquired a greater richness of forms, of corporate life, a greater crystallization of habits into institutions, than any known elsewhere. It had a remarkable ability to forge societies, more tenacious than almost any others apart from those of the family and its extensions, clan or caste; ties that could survive from one epoch to another, and be built into more elaborate combinations. But along with fixity of particular relationships went a no less radical instability of the system as a whole.¹¹⁰

European civilization is not the product of capitalism. On the contrary, the character of capitalism can only be understood in the social and historical context of its appearance.

The Effects of Western Civilization on Capitalism

The development of capitalism can thus be seen as having been determined in form by the social and ideological composition of a civilization which had assumed its fundamental perspectives during feudalism. The patterns of recruitment for slave and mercenary we have reviewed held true for bourgeoisies and proletariats. According to Robert Lopez, in the Carolingian Empire long-distance trade was dominated by Jews and Italians.¹¹¹ In medieval Europe, Lopez and Irving Raymond have documented the importance of Mediterranean traders at international fairs, and the development of foreign merchant houses in the towns of the hinterland.¹¹² Fernand Braudel amplifies:

. . . many financial centres, *piaze*, sprang up in Europe in towns that were of recent origin. But if we look more closely at these sudden, and

quite considerable developments, we shall find that they were in fact ramifications of Italian banking which had by then become traditional. In the days of the fairs of Champagne it was already the bankers from Sienna, Lucca, Florence, or Genoa who held the moneychanger's scales; it was they who made the fortune of Geneva in the fifteenth century and later those of Antwerp, Lyons, and Medina del Campo. . . .

In short, throughout Europe a small group of well-informed men, kept in touch by an active correspondence, controlled the entire network of exchanges in bills or specie, thus dominating the field of commercial speculation. So we should not be too taken in by the apparent spread of 'finance'.¹¹²

For Spain under Charles V (1516-56) and Philip II (1556-98), the German Fuggers, the Genoese and other 'international merchant firms' organized the state revenues, exploited mines, and administered many of the most important estates.¹¹³ And at Constantinople, Genoese, Venetian and Ragusan bankers and merchants shepherded the trade and financial relations between Europe and the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁴ For the Mediterranean towns of the 16th Century, Braudel has observed the functions of the 'indispensable immigrant'. To Salonica, Constantinople and Valona, Italian and Spanish Jews, as merchants and artisans, brought new trades to further broaden an already multi-cultured bourgeoisie.

There were other valuable immigrants, itinerant artists for instance attracted by expanding towns which were extending their public buildings; or merchants, particularly the Italian merchants and bankers, who activated and indeed created such cities as Lisbon, Seville, Medina del Campo, Lyons and Antwerp.¹¹⁵ And in Venice:

A long report by the *Cinque Savii*, in January, 1607, indicates that all 'capitalist' activity, as we should call it, was in the hands of the Florentines, who owned houses in the city, and the Genoese, who provided silver, between them controlling all exchanges.¹¹⁶

Just as Nuremberg had ravaged Bohemia, Saxony and Silesia, Braudel asserts, it was the Genoese who 'blocked the development of Spanish capitalism'.¹¹⁷ It was, too, the 'indispensable immigrant' who complemented the urban proletariat incapable of maintaining itself 'let alone increasing] without the help of continuous immigration'.¹¹⁸ In Ragusa it was the *Morlachii*; in Marseilles, the Corsicans; in Seville, the Moriscos of Andalusia; in Algiers, the Aragonese and the Berbers; in Lisbon, Black slaves; and in Venice, the immigrant proletariat was augmented by *Romagnoli*, *Marchiani*, Greeks, Persians, Armenians and Portuguese Jews.¹¹⁹ The bourgeoisie which led the development of capitalism were drawn from

particular ethnic and cultural groups; the European proletariats and the mercenaries of the leading States from others; its peasants from still other cultures; and its slaves from entirely different worlds. The tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate — to exaggerate regional, subcultural, dialectical differences into 'racial' ones. As the Slavs became the natural slaves, the racially inferior stock for domination and exploitation during the early Middle Ages, as the Tartars came to occupy a similar position in the Italian cities of the late Middle Ages, so at the systemic interlocking of capitalism in the 16th Century, the peoples of the Third World began to fill this expanding category of a civilization reproduced by capitalism.¹²⁰

As a civilization of free and equal beings, Europe was as much a fiction in the 19th Century (and later) as its very unity had been during the Merovingian and Carolingian eras. Both the Church and the more powerful nobilities of the Holy Roman Empire and its predecessor had been the source of the illusion in those earlier periods. From the 12th Century forward, it was the bourgeoisie and the administrators of State power who initiated and nurtured myths of egalitarianism while seizing every occasion to divide peoples for the purpose of their domination.¹²¹ The carnage of wars and revolutions precipitated by the bourgeoisie of Europe to sanctify their masques was enormous.

Eventually, however, the old instruments gave way to newer ones, not because they were old but because the ending of feudalism and the expansion of capitalism and its world system — that is the increasingly uneven character of development among European peoples themselves and between Europeans and the world beyond — precipitated new oppositions while providing new opportunities and demanding new 'historical' agents. The Reformation in western Europe and then England which destroyed the last practical vestiges of a transcendent, unified Christendom, were one manifestation of this process of disequilibrium.

In England, as an instance, representatives of the great landowners and agrarian capitalism, in pursuit of their own social and financial destinies disciplined first the Church and then the monarchy and finally 'the masses' through enclosures, the Poor Laws, debtors' prisons, 'transportation' (forced emigration), and the like.¹²² The contrasts of wealth and power between labour, capital and the middle classes had become too stark to sustain the continued maintenance of privileged classes at home and the support of the engines of capitalist domination abroad. New mystifications, more appropriate to the times, were required, authorized by new lights. The delusions of medieval citizenship, which had been expanded into shared patrimony and had persisted for five centuries in western Europe as the single great levelling principle, were to be supplanted by race and (to use the German phrase) *Herrenvolk*, in the 17th and 18th Centuries.¹²³ The functions of these latter ideological constructions were related but different. Race became largely the rationalization for the domination, exploitation and/or extermination of non-'Europeans' (including Slavs and Jews). And we shall

have occasion in Part II to explore its applications beyond Europe and particularly to African peoples more closely. But while we remain on European soil, it is *Herrenvolk* that matters. In 18th Century England, Reginald Horsman sees its beginnings in the 'mythical' Anglo-Saxonism which was flown as an ideological pennant by the Whig intelligentsia.¹²⁴ In France (for examples, Paul de Rapin-Thoyras and Montesquieu, and before them Francois Hotman and Count Henri de Bougainvilliers), in Germany (Herder, Fichte, Schleiermacher and Hegel), in north America (John Adams and Thomas Jefferson), 'bourgeois' ideologists displayed the idea of the heroic Germanic race.¹²⁵ And the idea swept through 19th Century Europe, gathering momentum and artifice through such effects as Sir Walter Scott's historical novels and Friedrich von Schlegel's philological fables. Inevitably, of course, the idea was dressed in the accountrement of 19th Century European science. *Herrenvolk* explained the inevitability and the naturalness of the domination of some Europeans by other Europeans. Though he reconstructed the pieces back to front, Louis Snyder, for one, recognized the effect.

Racists, not satisfied with merely proclaiming the superiority of the white over the coloured race, also felt it necessary to erect a hierarchy within the white race itself. To meet this need they developed the myth of the Aryan, or Nordic, superiority. The Aryan myth in turn became the source of other secondary myths such as Teutonism (Germany), Anglo-Saxonism (England and the United States), and Celicism (France).¹²⁶

Then, in the 19th Century, modern nationalism appeared.

The emergence of nationalism¹²⁷ was again neither accidental nor unrelated to the character that European capitalism had assumed historically. Again, the bourgeoisie of particular cultures and political structures refused to acknowledge their logical and systemic identity as a class. Instead, international capitalism persisted in competitive anarchy – each national bourgeoisie opposing the others as 'natural' enemies. But as powerful as the bourgeoisie and its allies in the aristocracy and bureaucracy might be in some ways, they still required the co-optation of their 'national' proletariat in order to destroy their competitors. Nationalism mobilized the armed might they required to either destroy the productive capacities of those whom they opposed, or to secure new markets, new labour and productive resources.¹²⁸ Ultimately, the uneven developments of national capitalisms would have horrifying consequences for both Europe and the peoples under European dominations.

In Germany and Italy, where national bourgeoisies were relatively late in their formation, the marshalling of national social forces (peasants, farmers, workers, clerics, professional classes, the aristocracy, and the State) was accomplished by the ideological phantasmas of race, *Herrenvolk* and nationalism. This compost of violence, in its time, became known under the name of fascism.¹²⁹ With the creation of fascism, the bourgeoisie retained

the full range of its social, political and economic prerogatives. It had the cake of the total control of its national society, an efficient instrument for expanding its domination and expropriation to the Third World, and the ultimate means for redressing the injuries and humiliations of the past. Again, not unexpectedly, slavery as a form of labour would reappear in Europe.¹³⁰ But this goes far beyond our immediate purposes. What concerns us is that we understand that racism and its permutations persisted, rooted not in a particular era but in the civilization itself. And though our era might seem a particularly fitting one for depositing the origins of racism, that judgement merely reflects how resistant the idea is to examination and how powerful and natural its specifications have become. Our confusions, however, are not unique. As an enduring principle of European social order, the effects of racism were bound to appear in the social expression of every strata of every European society no matter the structures upon which they were formed. None was immune. And as we shall observe in the next two chapters, this proved to be true for the rebellious proletariat as well as the radical intelligentsias. It was again, a quite natural occurrence in both instances. But to the latter – the radical intelligentsias – it was also an unacceptable one, one subsequently denied. Nevertheless, it insinuated itself into their thought and their theories. And thus, in the quest for a radical social force, an active historical subject, it compelled certain blindnesses, bennusments which in turn systematically subverted their analytical constructions and their revolutionary project. But this is still to be shown. To that end we will now turn to the history of the English working classes. Since these workers were one of the centrepieces for the development by radical intelligentsias of the notion of the proletariat as a revolutionary class, an inquiry into the effects of racism on their consciousness forms the next step in the demonstration of the limits of European radicalism.

Notes

1. One of the most extraordinary expressions of the expectations associated with the appearance of capitalism, was Marx's caustic appraisal of the bourgeoisie's world-historical significance: 'The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the money-fetish ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment"'.
The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured. . . . The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil. . . . The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. . . . The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world-market, given cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country.' Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in Robert Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, W.W. Norton, New York 1972, pp. 337-8. A more recent version of this vision of

- capitalism – reflecting both its authors' views and those of directors of multinational (or global) corporations – is much less poetic but still as certain. 'The power of the global corporation derives from its unique capacity to use finance, technology, and advanced marketing skills to integrate production on a worldwide scale and thus to realize the ancient capitalist dream of One Great Market.' Richard Barnet and Ronald Muller, *Global Reach*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1974, p. 18.
2. Paul Sweezy, et al., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, New Left Books, London, 1976; and Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, International Publishers, New York, 1965.
 3. Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400–1800*, Harper & Row, New York, 1973, pp. xiii–xv.
 4. Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, in Robert Tucker, *op. cit.*, pp. 158–61.
 5. Robert Latouche, *The Birth of Western Economy*, Barnes & Noble Inc., New York, 1961, p. 309.
 6. Petr Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, Extending Horizon Books, Boston undated, pp. 117–18; Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, Unwin University Books, London, 1968, pp. 17–19, pp. 184–5; and William C. Bark, *Origins of the Medieval World*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1958, pp. 26–7. Denys Hay reminds us: '... for neither Greeks nor Romans did Europe mean much. Fear of Persia lent colour to the Greek attitude to the continents, but the empire of Alexander the Great was in Asia, not Europe, while the remnants of this were conquered by a Rome which made its greatest advances in the north and west of Europe. What cemented together the Greek world, and after it the world of Rome, was the inland sea, which linked all but the most remote provinces, which was literally the cradle of Greek civilization and which even the Romans, averse as they were to maritime adventure, annexed as '*Mare nostrum*'. Beyond the serenity of the Mediterranean (as later ages were to call it) and the outposts of order carried outwards by the Mediterranean conquerors, Greek or Roman, lay barbarism. Barbarians, as the Romans knew well enough, were confined to no particular continent, and were particularly troublesome in Europe itself.' Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1958, p. 4.
 7. Oscar Halecki, *The Millennium of Europe*, Notre Dame University Press, 1963, p. 50.
 8. Denis de Rougemont, *The Idea of Europe*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1966, pp. 47–9, 53; and Duncan McMillan, 'Charlemagne Legend', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 5, William Benton, Chicago, 1965, pp. 291–2.
 9. H. Monroe Chadwick, *The Nationalities of Europe and the Growth of National Ideologies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1945, pp. 50–75.
 10. Along with the Italic, the Hellenic, the Indian, the Iranian and Armenian, these are said sometimes to constitute the Indo-European languages; see G. L. Brook, *A History of the English Language*, W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., New York, 1958, pp. 30–60.
 11. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–49.
 12. According to Chadwick, Basque presumably 'represents the language, or one of the languages, of the ancient Iberians', *Ibid.*, p. 49. Brook argues that there is evidence going back to the 6th Century, B.C. of Etruscan, Oscan and Umbrian being spoken in Italy; Brook, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–7.
 13. Henri Pirenne, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–71.
 14. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.
 15. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–32.
 16. *Ibid.*, p. 37. Pirenne reports that Gautier put the number of Roman Africans at seven to eight millions in the 5th Century, and that Doren, for the same century, estimates that Italy's population ranged between five and six millions; *Ibid.*, p. 70.
 17. Latouche, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
 18. *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60, 71; Pirenne, *op. cit.*, pp. 75–9.
 19. Frank Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 170–1.
 20. Both Pirenne and Latouche argue that long before the mounting of political pressures on the Germanic tribes by subsequent 'barbarian' peoples – the Franks, Mongols, Slavs and Hungarians – the Goths were motivated by essentially economic reasons to integrate with the more productive peoples of the Empire. Pirenne, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–9; Latouche, *op. cit.*, pp. 42–5.
 21. David Brion Davis, *The Problems of Slavery in Western Civilization*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1966, pp. 29–61. The break in historical and cultural continuity which took place between the disintegration of Greco-Roman civilization and the rise of Germanic civilization had at one time immense significance to western European intelligentsias. Following *Germania*, written by the 1st Century Roman historian Tacitus which contrasted the decadence of Rome to the martial virility of the Germanic tribes, they constructed myths of origin which distinguished superior cultures and races from inferior ones. At the latest, from the 16th Century and well into the 20th Century, English, German and French scholars generally distinguished 'their' own Germanic cultural, racial and philological roots from earlier (e.g. Celtic, Greco-Roman) and putatively later (the Normans) peoples. See Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 9–42. George Mosse reminds us that excerpts from *Germania* were a part of the standard curriculum 'for the teaching of English constitutional history until well after the Second World War'. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, J. M. Dent & Sons, London, 1973, p. 48.
 22. For Greek and Roman slavery, see William L. Westermann, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1955, and Snowden, *op. cit.*; for the feudal period, see R. Weldon Finn, *An Introduction to Domesday Book*, Longmans, London 1963, pp. 118–21 as cited by Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–9, and Iris Origo, 'The Domestic Enemy: the Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *Speculum*, XXX, No. 3, July 1955, pp. 321–66, and Latouche, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–5; for Genoese and Venetian trades, see Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1937, pp. 16–20 Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 52; and Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Harper & Row, New York, 1976, Vol. I, pp. 290–3 and Vol. II pp. 754–5 – both Davis and Braudel are largely based upon the work of Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, Vol. I, Peninsula Iberique, Brugge, 1955; and for the modern era see Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Capricorn Books, New York, 1966.
 23. Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, 37.
 24. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, Academic Press, New York, 1974, pp. 86–90. Wallerstein wishes to distinguish between the economic and legal-political conditions of New World slavery and a capitalist 'serfdom' ('coerced cash-crop labour') in eastern Europe and among 'natives' of the New World (the *encomienda*) of the 16th Century. His definition of 'coerced cash-crop labour' ('a system of agricultural labour control wherein peasants are required by some legal process enforced by the state to labour at least part of the time on a large domain producing some product for sale on the world market', p. 91) would appear to serve as well as a description of slavery. The point is that alone it does not distinguish the presumably distinct forms of forced labour. David Brion Davis observes that for at least the medieval era, the distinctions were not as clear-cut in daily life as modern scholars would suggest. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
 25. Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, *op. cit.*, p. 140. In a note to the text, Pirenne observes: 'These things were retained: the language, the currency, writing (papyrus) weights and measures, the kinds of foodstuffs in common use, the social classes, the religion – the role of Arianism has been exaggerated – art, the law, the administration, the taxes, the economic organization.' *Ibid.*
 26. Latouche, *op. cit.*, pp. 97–116; Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–40.

27. Dirk Jelkema, 'Visian Trade in the Dark Ages', *Spectulum*, XXX, No.1 January 1955, pp.15-36; and Latouche, *op.cit.*, pp.20-3. The decline of trade in Merovingian Europe is an important aspect of the attempt to challenge Henri Pirenne's 'thesis' that the Muslim invasion of Europe by ending the European-Mediterranean trade with its social and cultural concomitants precipitated the beginnings of a 'new' European civilization inaugurated by Charlemagne's empire. See Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, *op.cit.*, pp.162-85; Latouche, *op.cit.*, pp.117-88; Bark, *op.cit.*, pp.6-28; and Alfred Havighurst (ed.), *The Pirenne Thesis*, D.C. Heath & Co., Boston, 1958.
28. Latouche, *op.cit.*, p.139.
29. Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, *op.cit.*, pp.184-5; Braudel, *op.cit.*, p.222.
30. Latouche, *op.cit.*, pp.173-4.
31. *Ibid.*, pp.297-8. Even by the late 16th Century, the contrast in urban life was still great between the European hinterland and the Mediterranean. Braudel writes: '... the Mediterranean region in the 16th Century (and it must be extended to its maximum when we are talking of towns) was unique in its immensity. In the 16th Century no other region in the world had such a developed urban network. Paris and London were just on the threshold of their modern careers. The towns of the Low Countries and southern Germany (the latter bathed in the reflected glory of the Mediterranean, the former stimulated economically by merchants and sailors from the South), further north the industrious but small towns of the Hanseatic League, all of these towns, thriving and beautiful though they might be, did not make up a network as closely knit and complex as that of the Mediterranean, where town followed town in endless strings, punctuated by great cities: Venice, Genoa, Florence, Milan, Barcelona, Seville, Algiers, Naples, Constantinople, Cairo, Brandel, *The Mediterranean* ...', *op.cit.*, pp.277-8.
32. Raoul Glaber has described with an insistence verging on sadism the appalling famine which preceded the year 1033. He notes for instance that at the fair at Tournus in Burgundy, a man was offering human flesh for sale, ready cooked on a butcher's stall.'Latouche, *op.cit.*, p.298.
33. Bark, *op.cit.*, pp.70-82.
34. Pirenne, *The Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, *op.cit.*, pp.44-9; and Lopez and Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1955, pp.87-104.
35. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities, Their Origins and the Revival of Trade*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1948, p.140.
36. Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, *op.cit.*, p.44.
37. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities* ... *op.cit.*, p.46.
38. Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, *op.cit.*, p.40.
39. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities* ... *op.cit.*, pp.114-15. Denys Hay, though in disagreement with Pirenne's interpretation of the origins of these merchants, does not specifically cite the evidential basis of his view, *Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Longman, London, 1966, p.71.
40. *Ibid.*, p.126. Elsewhere Pirenne has explained: '... it is uncontrollable that commerce and industry were originally recruited from among landless men, who lived, so to speak, on the margin of a society where land alone was the basis of existence'.
41. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities* ... *op.cit.*, pp.143-4. In eastern Europe, it was a quite different story since the political and economic powers of the towns were quixotic and short lived: '... the towns were compelled to surrender their ancient rights of harbouring serfs; they were compelled to abandon leagues with other towns; and the lords were even able to avoid using the towns as markets for their grain by selling it direct to exporters.' Hay, *op.cit.*, p.41.
42. Pirenne, *op.cit.*, p.81.
43. *Ibid.*, pp.100-101.
44. *Ibid.*, p.155, and Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, *op.cit.*, pp.35-6.
45. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1957, p.64.
46. *Ibid.*, and Pirenne, *The Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, *op.cit.*, pp.160-66;
47. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities* ... *op.cit.*, pp.154-6.
48. Pirenne, *The Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, *op.cit.*, pp.57-8; and Hay, *op.cit.*, p.77.
49. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities* ... *op.cit.*, p.193. See also Michael Tigar and Madeleine Levy, *Law and the Rise of Capitalism*, Monthly Review Press, 1977, pp.80-96; elsewhere, Tigar and Levy summarize their review of the earliest thrusts of the bourgeoisie against the feudal order: 'The great achievement of the bourgeoisie in this period [1000 to 1200] was to wrest from seigneurs in hundreds of separate localities the recognition of an independent status within the feudal hierarchy. The urban movement ... demanded one major concession from the seigneur: a charter ... the status of *bourgeois*, *burgher*, or *burgesses* ... (p.111).
50. Hay, *op.cit.*, pp.39, 370.
51. *Ibid.*, pp.373-4. + Inalok
52. Origo, *op.cit.*, p.326.
53. Origo, *op.cit.*, pp.328, 336; Davis, *op.cit.*, p.43; and Hay, *op.cit.*, pp.75-6.
54. Origo, *op.cit.*, p.336.
55. Hay, *op.cit.*, p.76. Hay observes that: 'In these slave-owning communities of the Christian Mediterranean there is not much evidence that slaves were used in agriculture. (*Ibid.*) Charles Verlinden does not agree: 'In Spain female slaves were generally cheaper than males, although the opposite was true in most of Italy. This was because much of the slave manpower in Spain was used in agriculture and in industry, whereas in Italy the domestic slave predominated in the cities and therefore more female workers were required.' Charles Verlinden, 'The Transfer of Colonial Techniques from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic,' in *The Beginnings of Modern Colonization*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1970, p.29.
56. Charles Verlinden notes: 'The Latin word *scutus*, the common source of the words *esclave*, *esclavo*, *esclavo*, *Sklavos*, and *slave*, did not take root during that initial period [pre-Middle Ages] when slavery was common to the whole of Europe ... It was only when slaves were recruited from entirely new sources that other terms appeared to indicate the nonfree, and among these were *scutus*, derived from the ethnic name of the Slav people and popularized. It appeared first in its Latin form in tenth-century Germany.' Medieval Slavery in Europe and Colonial Slavery in America,' Verlinden, *op.cit.*, pp.35-6.
57. Charles Verlinden, 'The Transfer of Colonial Techniques ...', *op.cit.*, pp.31-2.
58. Giuliano Procacci, *The History of the Italian People*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1970, pp.44-5.
59. R.H. Tawney has commented on the several forms of capitalism in European history. The occasion for his remarks was the review of Maurice Dobb's *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (Routledge, London, 1946): Mr. Dobb's limitation of the term capitalism to a particular system of production, under which labour is employed on the basis of a wage-contract to produce surplus value for the owner of capital, might seem, at first sight, to escape some of the ambiguities inherent in less restricted interpretations; but it raises problems of its own. It is not merely that, as he would agree, financial and commercial capitalism have been highly developed in circumstances when the institution, as interpreted by him, has been a feeble plant, and that to exclude these varieties on the ground that they do not fall within the four corners of the 19th Century definition is to beg the question. It is that, as his work shows, the origins and growth of the industrial species require for their elucidation to be considered in relation to the history of other members of the family, some of which have been among its progenitors. Obviously the capitalism of our day rests predominantly on a wage-system, and the latter is so familiar that it is tempting to treat it as historically a constant.' Tawney, *A History of Capitalism*,

- state.' Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, p.146; see also Kiernan, *op.cit.*, pp.29-30.
85. See Cotteran, *op.cit.*, p.21.
86. Heckscher, *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.18.
87. *Ibid.*, pp.18-23; see also Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, pp.196-7.
88. Fernand Braudel: 'Beginning in the 16th Century and with more eclat in this century of renewal, the States – at least those who would live, prosper and especially resist the exhausting expenses of land and sea warfare – the States dominate, deform economic life, subject it to a network of constraints; they capture it in their net ... the part of economic life that was at that point most modern, that which we would readily designate as operating within the framework of large-scale merchant capitalism was linked to these financial ups and downs of the State...' Quoted by Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, p.138 note.
89. Friedrich Hertz, *Race and Civilization*, KTAV, (no place), 1970, p.4; see also Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Meridian Books, Cleveland, 1958, pp.161-5; and Henri Peyre, *Historical and Critical Essays*, University of Nebraska, (no place), 1968, pp.29-30 (Peyre acknowledges his debt to Jacques Barzun, see *The French Race*, Kennikat, New York, 1966 Ons. 1432, and *Race*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1932). One should also mention that with respect to the Ham Winthrop Jordan in his highly regarded study *White Over Black* (North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1968), in company with most American scholars, has virtually ignored the phenomenon of racist attitudes among Europeans toward other Europeans – this despite his claim to be familiar with the relevant literature (see his appendix, 'Essay on Sources').
90. Hertz, *op.cit.*, p.6.
91. Heckscher, *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.18.
92. V.B. Kiernan, 'Foreign Mercenaries and Absolute Monarchy', *Past and Present*, No.11, April 1957, pp.76-7.
93. *Ibid.*, p.68; see also Braudel, *The Mediterranean . . . op.cit.*, Vol.III, pp.739-43.
94. *Ibid.*, p.74.
95. *Ibid.*, p.78.
96. *Ibid.*, p.69.
97. *Ibid.*, p.72.
98. That there were several other sides to the relation of the State to mercenaries is attested to by Braudel (*The Mediterranean . . . op.cit.*, Vol.II): 'Sea-pirates were aided and abetted by powerful towns and cities. Pirates on land, bandits, received regular backing from nobles. Robber bands were often led, or more or less closely directed, by some genuine noblemen . . .' (p.749); ' . . . bandity had other origins besides the crisis in noble fortunes: it issued from peasantry and populace alike. This was a groundswell – "a flood tide" as an 18th Century historian called it, which stirred up a variety of waters. As a political and social (though not religious) reaction, it had both aristocratic and popular components (the "mountain kings" in the Roman Campagna and around Naples were more often than not peasants and humble folk)' (p.751).
99. The 19th Century armies of imperialist Europe continued the tradition of relying on substantial recruitment among ethnic minorities, 'riff-raff', outcasts, aliens and the peasantry: to the million serfs of the Russian Army were added the Asiatic Bashkirs and Kalnucks, Ingush and Ossietin; the Corsicans and Bretons of the French Army were augmented by the Legion founded on Kabyle swordsmen, Swiss and other European mercenaries, but by mid-century the Army itself had come to be dominated by West Africans; in the Philippines, the Spanish Army was native, as was the Dutch Army of the East Indies. In India, the East India Company and the Bengal army (1842) employed between them upwards of 70,000 natives in their sepoys regiments. In Britain itself, in 1852, the Irish accounted for 42% of the army. See V.G. Kiernan, *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1982, pp.17-32.

100. Bucher, *op.cit.*, p.346; Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, p.117; see also Stephen Castles and Godula Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe*, Oxford University Press, London, 1973, pp.15-25; Braudel says it best: 'These indispensable immigrants were not always unskilled labourers or men of little aptitude. They often brought with them new techniques that were as indispensable as their persons to urban life. The Jews, driven out by their religious beliefs not their poverty, played an exceptional role in these transfers of technology... There were other valuable immigrants, itinerant artists for instance attracted by expanding towns which were extending their public buildings; or merchants, particularly the Italian merchants and bankers, who activated and indeed created such cities as Lisbon, Seville, Medina del Campo, Lyons and Antwerp. An urban community needs all sorts and conditions of men, not least rich men. Towns attracted the wealthy just as they attracted the proletariat, though for very different reasons.' *The Mediterranean*... *op.cit.*, Vol.1, pp.336-7.
101. Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, pp.118-19; Bucher makes a similar comment, *op.cit.*, p.353.
102. Chain Berman, *London's East End*, Macmillan Publishing, New York, 1975, pp.30-31.
103. *Ibid.*, p.45; see also E.P. Thompson, *op.cit.*, pp.469-85; and Stephen Castles and Godula Kosack, *op.cit.*, pp.16-17.
104. See Paul Lazarsfeld and Anthony Oberschall, 'Max Weber and Empirical Social Research', *American Sociological Review*, Vol.30, No.2, April 1965, pp.185-8.
105. See Stephen Castles and Godula Kosack, 'The Function of Labour Immigration in Western European Capitalism', *New Left Review*, No.73, May-June 1972, p.6; and Bucher, *op.cit.*, pp.367-8.
106. See David Brody, *Steelworkers in America*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1969, pp.96-9.
107. See Howard Brett Melendy, *The Oriental Americans*, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1972; Mary R. Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration*, Arno Press, New York, 1969 (orig. 1909); and Stuart Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969.
108. 'A "nation" is etymologically a "birth", or a "being born", and hence a race, a kin or kind having a common origin or, more loosely, a common language and other institutions.... There is not only an original and individual birth for each system but a continual birth of new institutions within it, a continual transformation of old institutions, and even a rebirth of the nation after death', Max Fisch's introduction to *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1970, p.xxiii; see also Friedrich Hertz for an example of the length to which the monarchy was willing to go to produce the appropriate illusion: 'The theory already put forward by Bodin that the Franks were a people of Gaulic stock who had wandered into Germany, and from there had returned later as deliverers of their brothers from the Roman yoke, came into favour under Louis XIV. Within the French people there was, therefore, no racial difference, but national unity of the kind so much desired by the absolute monarchy. This theory very conveniently lent support to the desire for the annexation of the Rhine, the restoration of which, as old Frankish territory, he affected to demand', *op.cit.*, p.5.
109. Kiernan, *op.cit.*, Past and Present, No.31, p.27.
110. Robert S. Lopez, *The Birth of Europe*, Phoenix House, London, 1966, pp.103-4.
111. Robert S. Lopez and Irving Raymond, eds., *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1955, pp.79-80 and 87-107.
112. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*... *op.cit.*, p.321.
113. Braudel, *ibid.*, v.I, p.695.
114. Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1966, pp.133-9.
115. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*... *op.cit.*, Vol.1, pp.335-7.
116. Braudel, *ibid.*, p.322.
117. Braudel, *ibid.*, p.344.
118. Braudel, *ibid.*, p.334.
119. Braudel, *ibid.*, pp.334-6.
120. See Charles Verlinden, *op.cit.*; Eric Williams, *op.cit.*, and David Brion Davis, *op.cit.*
121. See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1936, pp.121-4; and Hertz, *op.cit.*, pp.6 and 10.
122. T.K. Derry and M.G. Blakeway, *The Making of Pre-Industrial Britain*, John Murray, London, 1973, *passim*.
123. Sec Arendt, *op.cit.*, pp.165-7; Hertz, *op.cit.*, pp.1-19.
124. Reinhard Horsman, 1981, pp.14-15.
125. *Ibid.*, Chapter 2.
126. Louis Snyder, *The Idea of Racism*, D Van Nostrand, Princeton, 1962, pp.39-40 (also see pp.20-23, and 39-53); see also Snyder's *Race*, Longmans, Green & Co., New York, 1939, pp.93-5; Magnus Hirschfield, *Racism*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1938 (Hirschfield, interestingly, traces the usage of the term race from its introduction in scientific literature by Comte de Buffon in 1749, to its appearance in the prolegomena of Immanuel Kant's summer course in 1775 at Königsberg in the form of White Race, Negro Race, Hunnish Race, Hindu Race, and mongrel races, pp.51-4).
127. See Eric Hobsbawm, 'Some Reflections on Nationalism', in T.J. Nossiter, A.H. Hanson, Stein Rokkan (eds.), *Imagination and Precision in the Social Sciences*, Faber & Faber, London, 1972, pp.385-406.
128. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in Robert Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, op.cit., 1972, pp.342-3.
129. See Louis Snyder, *The Idea of Racism*, *op.cit.*, pp.155-65 for excerpts from various National Socialist thinkers in Germany including Adolf Hitler, Alfred Rosenberg, Ernst Haer, Felix Fischer-Dodeleben, Wilhelm Klessner, Ernst Kriek, Walter Darre, Herman Gauch, and, as well, appropriate selections from the Nuremberg Laws (1935); see also Mannheim, *op.cit.*, pp.134-46; M.N. Roy, *Fascism*, Best Books, Jijina, 1976, pp.33-43; and Renzo De Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism*, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1977, pp.176-8.
130. See William Styron, 'Hell Reconsidered', *New York Review of Books*, Vol.XXX, No.11, 29 June 1978, pp.10-12, 14.

in Al-Jahari', in *Studies on the Mamluks in Egypt*, Variorum Press, London, 1977, pp.316-17. And finally, 'Muslim attitudes toward blacks were mixed, but amid their ambivalence one can detect here and there most of those notions making up that cluster of ideas were recognized as modern Western racial prejudice.' (pp.31-2) How a racially stratified 'pigmentocracy' (Evans' terms) manages to avoid the formation of a colour bar is not clarified by Evans. In short, Evans' thesis is analytically flawed, not supported by his own 'evidence', and suspiciously convenient at this moment of renewed Western hostility towards Islamic peoples. Moreover, he never seems to get around to explaining why or how the ideologues of a society so ideologically hostile to Islamic beliefs and with a quite ancient and sophisticated racial consciousness of its own would bother or need bother to borrow such an ambivalently held social ideology.

118. Hunwick, *op.cit.*, p.28.
119. Norman Daniel has argued: 'Of the points that I summarised, most had a long life. The "Fraudulent" or "hypocritical" character of Muhammad's claim to prophecy, while he was an ambitious schemer, a bandit and a lecher; the emphasis on Islam as a falling short of Christianity, a sum of heresy, particularly in connection with the Trinity; preoccupation with the Qur'anic teaching of Christ; the general lines, if not all the details, of the most unflattering biography of Muhammad, and particularly the weight given to the influence of Sergius and other guides upon him; the enormous importance given to two moral questions, the public reliance on force and the supposed private laxity in sexual matters; the ridicule and contempt of the Qur'anic Paradise; the suspicion of determinist and predestinarian ethics; the interest in Islamic religious practices, the admission of some Islamic practice as a good example, but the treatment of the cult in general in vain; all these, with some differences in emphasis, but with great continuity in the attitude of intellectual contempt, long dominated Christian and European thought.' *Islam and the West*, University Press, Edinburgh, 1960, p.276. (See also pp.144-6.)
120. Norman Daniel, *The Arabs and Medieval Europe*, Longman, London, 1979, p.115.
121. *Ibid.*, pp.327-8.
122. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, *op.cit.*, p.94.
123. 'The Philosophy of Aristotle had such an authority in sixteenth and seventeenth century Spain, that any attack on him "was regarded as a dangerous heresy", and the *Politicks* enjoyed a *respectu casi supersticiose*'. Marx Campbell, 'Aristotle and Black Slavery: A Study in Race Prejudice', *Race*, Vol.XV, No.3, January 1974, pp.285-6.
124. *Ibid.*, p.286.
125. *Ibid.*, pp.290-91.
126. William Westermann, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1955, p.156.
127. Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe*, *op.cit.*, pp.88-9.
128. Abbas Hamdani has recalled: '"The word India in the middle Ages", says Charles Nowell, "had no exact geographical meaning to Europeans; it was a convenient expression denoting the East beyond the Mohammedan world"; "Columbus and the Recovery of Jerusalem", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol.99, No.1, January-March 1979, p.39. Later Hamdani observes, "George Kimble in his *Geography in the Middle Ages* (London, 1938, 128 n.), observes that the term "Indies" is "a vague term, for in the Middle Ages there were at least three Indias, viz... India Minor, India Major and India Tertia, i.e. Sind, Hind and Zing of the Arabs. The first two were located in Asia, the last in Africa (Ethiopia)".' *Ibid.*, p.46 n.11.
129. G.K. Hunter, 'Elizabethans and Foreigners', in Awardyee Nicoll, (ed.), *Shakespeare in His Own Age, Shakespeare Survey 17*, Cambridge University, Cambridge, 1964, p.40.

5. The Atlantic Slave Trade and African Labour

Fifteenth century 'Portugal', the singularly ambitious historical agent one encounters in countless scholarly studies, is a metaphor. It is, as we have already seen, largely a convenience, an appropriately deceptive categorical referent to what in actuality was a mixture of political and economic forces, both national and supranational in origins. The term 'Portugal', while symbolizing a nation, has as well obscured these forces and their significance for what was a little nation of less than one million people. Moreover, 'Portugal' was to play a critical role in exploiting the transfer of African labour to the New World. Consequently, for those concerned with the slave trade and its ultimate significance for Black People, a better understanding of the Portuguese nation is imperative. This is so, as I shall argue, because the same but not identical interests and dynamics which slowly formed Portugal into 'an important pawn on the chessboard of European history'¹ were also implicated in the transformation of African labour into capital. For this reason, it is worth our time to review and identify these elements as they appeared in Portugal's history.

There were several very real agencies whose interests and activities have been glorified as 'Portugal's' national concerns in the general histories of the modern Western academy. Too often, however, the nature and identities of those agencies have been inadvertently disguised by the rather grander levels of generalization which have accompanied the search to capture their ethos. For some students of the era, the motives for European expansion were "material and physical: 'What western Europe needed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', Wallerstein writes, 'was food... and fuel.'² Braudel, on the other hand, has suggested that western Mediterranean overpopulation was the key to expansion.³ There are also those who have argued, like Livemore, that the motivation was organizationally systemic, that the militaristic machinery of the *Reconquista* required new 'targets of opportunity', if it were not to be turned inwards.⁴ Others, as we have noted earlier, with more attention to ideology, have supposed the real issue was the defeat of the Muslims and the revitalization of Christendom.⁵ No single such explanation seems entirely correct or sufficiently specific, though all have been persuasively presented. The result is that at the grand level of reconstruction, the analysis of 15th Century Portugal and its historical role would appear to have no

satisfactory measure for distilling this multiplicity of needs, actors and historical forces. Still, though their number might be confusing, reconstruction of the actual power relations between these actors may simplify the task of their identification and assessment.

One generally unrecognized but crucial relationship, when we speak in strictly political terms, involved a relatively weak but native feudal ruling class and its more powerful extra-national ruling-class allies. Specifically, this amounted to an alliance between Portugal's House of Avis, with its neo-dynastic mobility and bourgeoisie,⁶ and a strain of capitalistic aristocracy which had been bred in England by war and civil war, political chaos and economic recession, and a close connection to an emerging British bourgeoisie. In 15th Century England, Postan has summed:

The great breeding season of English capitalism was in the early phases of the Hundred Years War, the time when the exigencies of Royal finance, new experiments in taxation, speculative ventures with wool, the collapse of Italian finance and the beginning of the new cloth industry, all combined to bring into existence a new race of war financiers and commercial speculators, army purveyors and wool-monopolists.⁷

Historically, the relationship between the maturing ruling classes of Portugal and England had been sealed at the end of the 14th Century with the Treaty of Windsor (1386) which secured the Portuguese throne from the ambitions of Castile's monarchy, and was itself closed by the marriage between Joao of Avis and Philippa of Lancaster, the daughter of John of Gaunt. This alliance was one that the English had believed would ultimately lead to the acquisition of the throne of Castile.⁸ The designs of the English on Castile were never fulfilled. The conclusion of the Hundred Years War, with its disastrous results on English territorial interests on the continent, a civil war in England and Spain's own national vigour at the end of the century, extinguished those interests. But the relationship with Portugal would prove to be one so valuable that it is still celebrated by English historians. In our own century, for example, Carus Wilson has written:

... Portugal's relations with England were consistently friendly. These two states were naturally disposed to be allies, since neither of them was on good terms with Castile. There was also kinship between their dynasties, and the men of both countries were born seamen and adventurers. ... The friendship... lasted on in spite of temporary ruptures through acts of violence and changes of dynasty in England; and throughout the fifteenth century the provisions made in this charter of commerce [the Treaty of Windsor] were confirmed, and the kings of both countries were pledged to punish infractions of it.⁹

As C.R. Boxer would have it, these Portuguese 'kings' were, of course, 'half-English princes'. War had brought these two nobilities together. War had

indeed been the very basis of their existence. War, finally, had so enlarged their political alliance until it achieved what could pass for historical proportions, surviving several centuries despite 'temporary ruptures'. Regardless, in the 15th Century – when the necessary conditions for the Atlantic slave trade were being laid down – the link between the emerging bourgeoisies resident in (but not always native to) the two countries provided the basis for a North Atlantic commerce and the mercantilisms which would dominate their economies for the next 300 years. This would prove no small matter for the directions in which the slave trade would develop.

The Genoese Bourgeoisie and the Age of Discovery

Even more important than these political relations, however, and certainly more directly germane to our interests in the Portuguese as the historical force which laid the basis for the Atlantic slave trade, were the merchants and bankers of Italian origins who colonized Portugal (and the Spanish kingdoms) during this period. Though Verlinden's use of the term 'nation' is more figurative than political, his characterization of the historical significance of these capitalists is helpful:

Italy was the only really colonizing nation during the middle ages. From the beginning of the crusades onwards, Venice, Pisa, Genoa, later Florence, and southern Italy under the Angevins as well as under the Aragonese, were interested in the Levant and in the economic and colonial possibilities offered there by the gradual waning of the Byzantine empire. It is also at about the same time that Italian merchants appear in the Iberian peninsula, and obtain an influence that will persist until far into the modern period, both in European and colonial economy.¹⁰

Virginia Rau notes that 'The earliest documental references we have concerning the activities of Italian merchants in Portugal date from the XIIIth century. When they come to our notice, they had already boldly found their way into the Portuguese money market.'¹¹ These 'Italian merchants' were in fact (in order of importance) Genoese and the sons of Piacenza, Milan, Florence and Venice.¹² Further, we learn from Rau that by the 14th Century, whose beginnings were appropriately marked by the appointment by King Diniz of a Genoese (Manuel Pezago)¹³ to the Portuguese admiralty in 1317, Lisbon had become 'the great centre of Genoese trade'.¹⁴ With Lisbon and Oporto as bases of operation, the Genoese merchant-capitalists ensconced themselves into the entire structure of Portuguese power: serving as creditors to the monarchy, financiers for the State's ambitions and adventures, monopolists under royal charters of security, and ultimately Portuguese nobles by a series of events including royal decrees, marriage into the native nobility and participation in military projects organized by the State.¹⁵ Precisely as Rau's example of the Lomellini family would suggest – beginning with the appearance

of Bartholomeu Lomellini, the merchant, in Portugal in 1424 and ending with integration of his heirs and relatives into the landed aristocracy of Madeira and the peninsular nobility by the end of the century – the Genoese merchant princes proved to be far more successfully adaptable than their countrymen (i.e., Italian) competitors. Unlike the arrogant Venetians, the Genoese made themselves available to their hosts financially, intellectually and fraternally. As Wallerstein has observed:

To the extent that [the Portuguese bourgeoisie] lacked the capital, they found it readily available from the Genoese who, for reasons of their own having to do with their rivalry with Venice, were ready to finance the Portuguese. And the potential conflict of the Indigenous and foreign bourgeoisie was muted by the willingness of the Genoese to assimilate into Portuguese culture over time.¹⁶

While the Venetians continued to concentrate on the domination of the Mediterranean, and the Florentines on their banking and wool trade in continental and north Atlantic commerce, the Genoese positioned themselves to take advantage of the trade which eventually would progress from the Maghreb, to the mid-Atlantic and finally to the trans-Atlantic.¹⁷ By the middle of the 15th Century, it was their capital which determined the direction and pace of 'discovery'. Verlinden remarks:

... Lagos [Portugal] became, from about 1310, an important harbor on the route of the Italian convoys to northwestern Europe. If one remembers that Lagos, much more than Sagres, was the starting point of the first Portuguese discoveries, the importance of the bonds, established there with Italian seamen and businessmen, grows evident.¹⁸

Moreover, it was the favoured status of these Italians in Portugal which facilitated Portuguese claims at Rome resulting in Papal Bulls sympathetic to Portuguese commerce and state imperialism,¹⁹ and it was Genoese capitalists who sustained the links between the English and Portuguese ruling classes by assuming a relationship to English trade and the state directly complementary to their presence in Portugal.²⁰

In England, as in Portugal, Genoese made up the bulk of the Italian merchants who in turn composed the majority of alien merchants in that kingdom during the 15th Century.²¹ There, too, they won royal exemptions from commercial taxes and restrictions, and managed to monopolize imported goods as diverse as the foreign medicines (like medicated treacle) and other drugs in vogue during that century,²² and Portuguese cork and sugar at whose points of origin they had already contracted exclusive monopolies.²³ Finally, in England, too, as creditors for its kings, as factors and merchants for royal monopolies, they came to occupy special positions in English trade:

In vain the English petitioned against the lavish privileges obtained with

a great sum by these merchants from needy kings whose financiers they had become, begging that they might be restricted to bringing goods of their own manufacture; unable to vie with the mighty Italian cities in wealth, the little English towns received scant attention.²⁴

In an England rent by civil war, court intrigues and a fractious aristocratic class, the financial support of the Italians along with their trade and concomitant sources of intelligence could be decisive. The English monarchy, with its Italian and other foreign commercial and financial collaborators, for the time being secured an independence from its native aristocratic and bourgeois classes.

It was in this way that Italian capitalists situated themselves to play a critical role in determining the pace, the character and the structure of the early trans-Atlantic slave trade of the next century. Without them and the complicity of part of the English aristocracy and of the Portuguese and English merchant classes, and, of course, the clerical nobility of Rome, it is doubtful that a Portuguese Empire would ever have come into existence. Without that empire, nothing would be as it is.

The Portuguese empire did come into being, however, and from the middle of the 15th Century and for the next 100 years – to the good fortunes of both its national and expatriate sponsors – its mixture of greed, piety, savagery, militarism, cultural arrogance and statescraft swept across the world. Not surprisingly, given the long-standing preoccupations of medieval long-distance merchants, the winds of commercial interests blew the empire first to the south and east: Senegambia, Elmina, and Luanda along the west coast of Africa; Safala, Mozambique and Mombasa on the African east coast; Hormuz in the Persian Gulf; Goa on the Malabar coast of India, Malacca in Malay; and Ternate in the Moluccas. And if their several motives still perplex us, at least to some of them the issue was clear:

When the Portuguese finally came ashore at Calicut, some astonished Tunisian traders in the crowd asked them what the devil had brought them so far. 'Christians and spices', was the answer allegedly given by da Gama's men... This close association between God and Mammon formed the hallmark of the empire founded by the Portuguese in the East, and, for that matter, in Africa and in Brazil as well.²⁵

Once the Portuguese had rounded what was for them the Cape of Good Hope (and perhaps even before they reached that point), these voyagers had become actually an analogue of the Chinese who preceded them: we refer, of course, to the 'seven massive' imperial expeditionary fleets commanded by the Muslim admiral Cheng Ho between 1405 and 1434 (Cheng Ho died that year) which had already confidently assayed these waters for trade and plunder.²⁶ The Chinese ventures that with their fleets of junks carrying sometimes as many as 40,000 people, amounted to convoys of 'impressive intercontinental missiles' according to William Appleman Williams.²⁷ With its fleets the

Chinese empire successfully challenged the Arab and Muslim traders who had already grown accustomed to their own domination of the East African and Indian Ocean commercial trades. This did not please the former masters of the trade of these seas, but it did not seem to matter. Whatever the weight of their resistance it never amounted to enough to be included among the reasons speculated to underlie the apparently sudden imperial decision to forego further adventures in the area.²⁸ The withdrawal would seem to have been an affair internal to the Chinese empire.

The Portuguese, less audaciously but necessarily more cunning,²⁹ accomplished the displacement of the area's 'resident' tradesmen at the end of the century and the beginnings of the next. Momentarily, the maritime markets most coveted by Europeans were in the hands of the Portuguese/Italians – the African and south Atlantic trades with their gold, salt, malagueta pepper, gum, cork, cereals, sugar and slaves; and the trade with the East with its spices, wools and dyes.³⁰ This Portuguese monopoly was, however, not entirely uncontested in Europe.³¹ In the Atlantic region, Castile's commercial strata had shadowed its rival's ventures along the Guinea coast from at least as early as 1453–54, laying claims through the Castilian crown to both Guinea and the Canary Islands.³² The controversy between the 'two Catholic kings' continued even beyond its formal resolution by the Treaty of Toledo (1480) and into the following century. It was punctuated by raids by each of the other's merchant shipping and trading posts, and by claims and counter-claims to ancient or papal privileges.³³ Though their defeat would prove to be only a temporary setback, the point is that the monarchial claimants of Spain lost. With the south Atlantic closed to them for legitimate merchant exploitation, the Spanish crown and its native and Italian partners began to explore the possibilities of an entirely different route to the East.³⁴

Genoese Capital, the Atlantic and a Legend

For Spain, the key to its achievement of a western route to the 'East' was, as it had been for the Portuguese empire of the Indies, the Genoese. In particular, became concentrated in the figure of Cristoforo Colombo (Christopher Columbus). Still it was not a simple or straightforward event, there were some elements of even this relationship between the Spanish and the Italians which in retrospect seem almost entirely fortuitous.

Although much of his background before his journey to Seville in 1485 will probably always remain obscure, Columbus was in many ways a natural if not typical bourgeois creation of Genoese capital, trade and manufacturing. Born around 1451 of parents whose origins appear to have been in the Ligurian Republic, Columbus, at 14 years of age, first took up his father's trade: wool weaving.³⁵ Notwithstanding the fictional constructions of his past which Columbus, his son Ferdinand and Las Casas would perpetuate, it appears he remained a weaver into his early twenties, taking part in occasional voyages

in that capacity to Genoese possessions in the Mediterranean.³⁶ Around 1476, the documents of his contemporaries place him on a voyage to England undertaken by the bankers Giovanni Antonio di Negro and Nicolas Spinola. This trip was intercepted by French pirates, and the survivors, Columbus among them, found refuge in Lisbon.³⁷ Columbus settled in Lisbon and like some other notable Genoese bourgeoisie, he eventually married into Portuguese nobility. In his case, Felipa Moniz Perestrello, whose family had property on the island of Porto Santo near Madeira, became his wife and his entree into the stream of Portuguese overseas expansion.³⁸

By all rights, the credit for Columbus' rediscovery of the 'new world' beyond the ocean should have attached to the Portuguese throne. Columbus had taken up residence in Lisbon in 1477 and five years later had made his first attempt at petitioning for state sponsorship (and the grant of feudal privileges) at the royal court of Portugal. Interestingly enough, it is still not clear what Columbus had in mind at this stage for what he would persist in describing as his divinely appointed mission. It is very possible that Columbus' initial petition (1482) concerned islands in the Atlantic rather than the search for a mainland, but by 1484, a second submission spoke of Cipango (Japan) and Cathay (China).³⁹ Apparently, Columbus' application was clumsily constructed (Davies believed that Columbus had no command of written Latin until 1489 and never mastered the writing of Italian or Portuguese), his calculations unpersuasive and his use of cosmographic authority suspect.⁴⁰ The Court's Mathematical Junta, after a year of study of Columbus' proposal and consultation with Martin Behaim,⁴¹ the Nuremberg cartographer, convinced King João II to reject Columbus' project on the grounds that João had 'information regarding the western lands more positive than the visions of Columbus'.⁴² If João's technical commission now said of Castile, the more enthused but still cautious Andalusian dukes of Medina-Sidonia and Medina-Celi, and the English crown (in England, Columbus had been represented by his brother, Bartolomeo – all of whom rejected the Genoese's petitions for support between 1485–89).

The Portuguese, however, seemed to have been on fairly firm ground, for at least by 1486 there is some indication that some of their seamen had sighted land west of the Azores. Verlinden is confident enough of this to conclude: 'What is certain is that in 1486 the talk was no longer of one Island of the Seven Cities, but of the possibility of an archipelago or even a continent. Clearly, then, the period of the hypothetical or legendary island had passed.'⁴³ For some at court, the western route across the seas to Cipango and Cathay – a distance calculated by the Florentine mathematician and cosmographer Toscanelli to be 5,000 miles and by Columbus as 3,500 miles – appeared to be a distinct possibility.⁴⁴ Thus, in 1487, the same year which (Verlinden points out) saw Pero da Covilhão and Afonso da Paiva pursuing Portuguese interests in India, Arabia, and Ethiopia, and Bartolomeu Dias round the Cape of Good Hope (all three contributions to the Portuguese commitment to the African route to the East), the Portuguese crown had authorized its own

exploration of a western route.⁴⁵ Since the bourgeoisie dominating the Genoese colony of Lisbon were unwilling to show any tangible interest in a western route, the Portuguese crown's participation in the project mounted (and paid for) by the Flemish Azoresian Ferdinand van Olmen (Bartolome de las Cases would refer to him as Hernan de Olmos)⁴⁶ and the Portuguese Madeiran, Joham Afonso do Estreito, was limited to the ceding of jurisdictional powers and territorial rights in the new land. The Crown was apparently incapable of much more than that when it sought to act independently of its major commercial partners. Unfortunately for the Portuguese monarch, neither van Olmen nor Estreito ever returned from their winter excursion.

Columbus was a bit luckier than either of his predecessors in the Atlantic, for at least he had their example to profit from. Verlinden is convinced that Columbus must have learned of the voyage in Seville, for there was active communication between the Italian colony of Lisbon and that of the great Andalusian port.⁴⁷ This would, of course, imply that the Genoese families, their joint-stock companies and their banks were in the habit of exchanging or sharing information which might be of value to their commercial interests. Whatever the case might be, Columbus did find something of value in Seville:

Italian bankers, much of whose activities were blocked by the Turks, were the financiers for a big part of ocean-borne trade. There was a Genoese commercial colony in Seville and local links with the Italian banking house of Spinola and Di Negri, Columbus' old employer. Francesco Pinelli, a Genoese banker of Seville and co-director of the Santa Hermandad, the Spanish state police, guaranteed a loan for the Columbus plan. Pinelli's fellow police director was none other than Luis de Santangel, the royal treasurer.⁴⁸

With the support, at least, of these two highly placed Genoese, and several forms of assistance from the powerful Pinzon family which dominated the port of Palos de la Frontera,⁴⁹ Columbus now had a project worthy of the Spanish Crown's official support. And if we recall that Columbus' appearance before Ferdinand and Isabella coincided historically with that moment when the Spanish Crown was intent upon its self-appointed mission to unify Spain, centralize state authority, vanquish its rivals among its own aristocracy, and acquire an independent source of capital for itself, Columbus and his Genoese collaborators and countrymen were an almost perfect instrument.

Italian support was unquestionably well received, at least by the rulers. Ferdinand the Catholic, in particular, understood admirably the contribution Italian capital and techniques could make at that crucial time to his kingdom. Coming from the east of the peninsula, he was accustomed to look to the Mediterranean and Italy and considered economic relations with that country as obvious and natural. This attitude of mind dictated a similar policy in Andalusia, in the Canary

Islands, and in America, when destiny put control of these areas into his hands.⁵⁰

Here was a resourceful community whose very existence rested on the persistence of its interdependence with the State. The colonial trade which the Genoese (and Italian) community dominated, the capital which it commanded, the inventory of science and culture which it possessed, all were Spanish at the pleasure of the state — no matter how independently powerful and significant they might appear to be. And for the moment it was the state's pleasure to balance the Italians (and also — but not for long — the Jews) against its own bourgeoisie and its still militaristic aristocracy.⁵¹ Columbus' luck was holding.

With only the barest of exaggeration, then, it might be said that Columbus' achievements of 1492 — beginning with the extraordinary concessions he acquired from his royal partners in April of that year at Santa Fe, and ending with the arrival of the ships under his command in the West Indian islands in October — amounted to one more level on the extraordinary financial scaffold which Genoese and other Italian capitalist families had been constructing in the Iberian peninsula for nearly 300 years. When Columbus came to terms with Ferdinand and Isabella, the road had been paved for him by Genoese admirals who had served Portuguese and Spanish kings for centuries; by Genoese, Piacentine and Florentine merchants who had assumed the primary financial risks in colonizing the Portuguese Azores and Madeiran islands, and Spain's Canary Island group; by Italian factors and money lenders who had strung their capital from Algiers and Ceuta in north Africa, to Elmina and Luanda on the west coast of that continent, and east to the Moluccas and Nagasaki; and by an Italian bourgeoisie whose financial and technical character and business affairs had become totally assimilated to the interests of the Spanish and Portuguese states and their most adventurous aristocracies.⁵² Whether Columbus was the extraordinary seaman that Samuel Eliot Morison has persisted in making him,⁵³ whether his obsessive personality and religious zeal were so compelling as to have cast a spell over Isabella and her religious advisers,⁵⁴ are all of secondary significance to the single fact of his origins and the legacy to which he was heir as a Genoese. This was the structural means of his accomplishment: the two-centuries long apogee of Genoese influence in Spain and Portugal.⁵⁵ Thus, when Columbus and the others with him (and those who followed) came face to face with the Arawaks, the Tainos, the Aztecs, the Mayans, the Quechuas and all the other inhabitants of the western hemisphere, it was this complex mixture of feudal authority and privilege, comingled with the appetites of emergent merchant capitalism, national ambitions and missionary compulsions which stood at their backs.

African Labour as Capital

The use of slave labour in the New World of the 16th Century by the Spanish

Crown (and soon after the Portuguese) and its merchant concessionaires was consequently a most natural step. Slave labour had been a basis for colonial trade in the Mediterranean,⁵⁶ Africa and the Indies; it was already the foundation of colonization in the Canaries, the Azores and the Madeiran islands. At first, the relationship between capitalism, colonization and slave labour had appeared almost coincidental. To some it still does. Philip Curtin, for example, has written:

The choice between freedom and slavery... depended on European institutions and *habits of mind*... One was the Mediterranean tradition of filling the gaps between the demand and supply of people by importing alien slaves. The Venetians used that device in their east Mediterranean colonies, where imported slave labor played an important role in agricultural development in Crete, Cyprus, and Chios. This *institutional habit* was no doubt reinforced by the fact that Venice was a city-state, not a large territorial unit with abundant population resources to be mobilized and sent overseas as colonists.⁵⁷

Notwithstanding Philip Curtin's rather casual language in describing the process, we should remember that it was in Venice's affairs of trade that Oliver Cox situated 'the first capitalistically organized commerce in human beings'.⁵⁸ Still, at first as we have noted before, the slave trade had been more significant to Venetian commerce than slave labour.

As Italian capitalism matured, however, this emphasis on trade was to change for three reasons. Briefly, they were the expansion of the power of the Ottoman Turks in the eastern Mediterranean in the 15th Century, the extension of sugar-cane cultivation from Asia Minor to Cyprus, Sicily and the Atlantic islands (Madeira, Cape Verde and the Azores) at the end of that century, and the collaboration of Genoese capitalists with the ruling classes of Iberia. These events transformed the incidental relationship between capitalism and slave labour into the very foundation of New World enterprise.⁵⁹

Madeira, as it turned out, was the physical and historical juncture where these processes congealed. Sidney Greenfield observes:

... with the introduction of sugar cane and its commercial success... Canary Islanders and Moors — followed by Africans — as slaves, performed the necessary physical labor that enabled the upwardly mobile settlers of Madeira to develop a life style, derived from the tradition of the continental nobility but based upon the physical efforts of slaves producing commercial crops for sale on the markets of the continent, that characterized the emerging social institution of the slave plantation.⁶⁰

The 'Admiral of the Ocean Sea' was the embodied connective. Columbus, a son of Genoa, an agent of the Spanish Crown, an ambitious merchant who had married into one of the families of lesser Portuguese nobility which had

acquired its new wealth from the early colonization of Madeira and the cultivation of sugar there, and the founder of Spain's Caribbean colonies, had also brought sugar to the New World.⁶¹ In England, where envy of Spain's monopoly was tempered by the Spanish Empire's seapower for at least the next century and a half, it was all said quite simple. Columbus' 'West Indies' became known by English merchants as the 'Sugar Islands'.⁶² However, for the time being — that is the better part of the 16th Century — Italo-Portuguese enterprise dominated the European trade with the Atlantic coast of Africa. This meant that African labour for the colonial plantations of Sao Tome, Cape Verde, the Azores, Madeira and the West Indies, and the mines of New Spain and Peru was supplied by these merchants. 'Until 1570', Leslie Rout Jr. maintains in an almost absolute consensus with other students of the trade, 'the Portuguese had the lucrative slave trade entirely to themselves'.⁶³ And as the colonies grew, so did their appetites for *Pizcas de Indias*,⁶⁴ 'captives of just war'. For Angola, as early as 1530, Jan Vansina calculates, 'the annual export figures were from four to five thousand slaves a year — and if there were no more, this was due only to the lack of ships to carry them'.⁶⁵ No wonder Affonso, the Catholic king of the Kongo and collaborator in the trade with the Portuguese Crown, had been shaken enough to write to his 'partners' in 1526: 'There are many traders in all corners of the country. Every day people are enslaved and kidnapped, even nobles, even members of the King's own family'.⁶⁶ It seems the trade was already exceeding the boundaries of its commercial origins. Even the conquest of Portugal by Spain in 1580 did not retard the acceleration of the trade. Indeed, the Spanish left the trade to their Portuguese underlings to administer.⁶⁷ That relationship persisted until the Portuguese regained national independence in 1640. By 1650, it is estimated that 500,000 Blacks were living in Spanish America. More than 220,000 Africans had been transported to the ports of Cartagena and Veracruz by Portuguese merchants during the first 45 years (1595–1640) of their Spanish trade. Enriqueta Vila writes:

It is undoubtedly the Portuguese era that marks the African ethnic influence in the new continent. It was the Portuguese who, by creating a vast network of traders, factors, and middlemen, and by profiting from the drop in the Indian population, achieved a market capable of absorbing such enormous quantities... I believe that the Portuguese period was a special era for the slave trade, which was never repeated.⁶⁸ 'For Brazil', Inikori writes, 'the first reliable census... in 1798... showed that there were 1,988,000 negroes in that country by this time'.⁶⁹ (By the 18th Century, of course, Portugal's monopoly in the Atlantic slave trade had been superseded first by the Netherlands, and was now the business of the merchants and ruling classes of England and France.)

The Ledgers of a World System

The historiography of the Atlantic slave trade is immense and is still growing. Consequently, at least the outlines of the trade and the characteristics of those economies and societies which required slave labour are fairly well known. In any case, even the barest review of the literature would entail volumes in its own right and perhaps deflect us from our primary purpose here, to ascertain the material, social and ideological foundations for the emergence of a Black radical tradition. Our attention, then, will be centred on the work which most directly bears on this problem.

The significance of African labour for the development and formation of the commercial and industrial capitalist systems can be only partially measured by numbers. This is the case because, first, the numbers we have are questionable, but more disconcerting, the relationship between the growth of capitalism and slave labour has persistently been in dispute. At least one influential 'school' of historiography has denied this relationship, challenging the volume of the slave trade, its profitability, and in some instances even arguing for the benevolence of the trade and slavery. As Roderick McDonald puts it, 'The shadows of Adam Smith and Ulrich B. Phillips loom large and dark over the profitability question, and their perspectives continue profoundly to influence the debate'.⁷⁰ Still it is not quite the case, as McDonald terms it, that 'you pays your money and you takes your pick'.

With respect to the volume of the *piezas de Indias* transported to the New World, Philip Curtin's work is at the centre of the storm. In 1969, Curtin authoritatively calculated that between 1451 and 1870, 9,566,000 African workers were brought to the Western Hemisphere. He further concluded that 'it is extremely unlikely that the ultimate total will turn out to be less than 8,000,000 or more than 10,500,000'.⁷¹ This significantly lowered the figure most commonly used, 50,000,000. In 1976, however, J.E. Inikori published a critique of Curtin which took him to task for the casualness of his methodological and statistical computations, his shallow historicity and, in a subsequent debate, for the peculiarities of his logic and ideology.⁷² Inikori's argument

related to slave population and slave import figures in the Americas; slave smuggling and the inaccuracy of official slave export data in Portuguese African territories (Angola and Mozambique); understatement by the customs records of the volume and value of commodities employed by English merchants in the purchase of slaves on the African coast, as well as the number or tonnage of shipping employed.⁷³

Inikori's treatment of customs records, contemporary censuses of slave populations, descriptions of population fluctuations due to epidemic and the varying conditions of work, and the studies of Eltis, Ansley, Daget, Peyraud and Davis, would appear to support an upward revision of Curtin's figures by at least one-third.⁷⁴ A preliminary summation of Inikori's figures for only the major periods of the slave trade comes to 15,399,572.⁷⁵ Still, whatever the actual number was, the volume of the trade was enormous. The work

of Inikori, McDonald, D.R. Murray and others, however, serves to underscore dramatically Curtin's remark that before the 19th Century the number of Africans crossing the Atlantic each year exceeded that of Europeans.⁷⁶ Moreover, as we shall see momentarily, the relative decline of European colonists to African populations from the end of the 17th Century – and in some instances the decline of the Europeans was absolute – may have helped to confuse the issue of the profitability of the slave system.

With respect to the significance of African labour for the development of European-directed economies on both sides of the Atlantic, the literature again is substantial. We have already noted Marx's assessment in his letter to Annenkov in 1846, and his later treatment of the same issue in the first volume of *Capital*. For Marx, slavery had been 'the chief momenta of primitive accumulation', an economic category of the highest importance.⁷⁷ First, African workers had been transmuted by the perverted canons of mercantile capitalism into property. Then, African labour power as slave labour was integrated into the organic composition of 19th Century manufacturing and industrial capitalism, thus sustaining the emergence of an extra-European world market within which the accumulation of capital was garnered for the further development of industrial production.

Marx, however, was not the first to recognize the existence of a relationship between Britain's economic growth and the business in slaves. Williams reminded us that in 18th Century Liverpool, 'the red brick Customs House was blazoned with Negro heads'.⁷⁸ In 1788, to Bristol, which had preceded Liverpool in the slave trade, 'The West Indian trade was worth... twice as much as all her other overseas commerce combined'.⁷⁹ Even contemporary English writers were prescient enough to match the signs and lexicon of the streets. In 1839 at Oxford, Herman Merivale had anticipated Marx when he lectured:

We speak of the blood-cemented fabric of the prosperity of New Orleans or the Havana: let us look at home. What raised Liverpool and Manchester from provincial towns to gigantic cities? What maintains now their ever active industry and their rapid accumulation of wealth? The exchange of their produce with that raised by the American slaves; and their present opulence is as really owing to the toil and suffering of the negro, as if his hands had excavated their docks and fabricated their steam-engines. Every trader who carries on commerce with those countries, from the great house which lends its name and funds to support the credit of the American Bank, down to the Birmingham merchant who makes a shipment of shackles to Cuba or the coast of Africa, is in his own way an upholder of slavery: and I do not see how any consumer who drinks coffee or wears cotton can escape from the same sweeping charge.⁸⁰

A century later, Eric Williams, as we have noted, made the point again. So, too, has McDonald more recently:

was plentiful, capital was available to 'prime the pump', and labour was provided by African and Afro-American slaves. The source of all value is labour; the value of the New World, the fabulous wealth of St. Domingue, Brazil, Jamaica and Cuba, created by slaves, was enjoyed not only by planters and in the colonies, but by the mother country.

It was reinvested, purchased power and position, and stimulated development in commercial and industrial spheres.⁸¹

These assertions of Merrivale, Marx and McDonald, and the political economy of Williams' analysis can be buttressed in a myriad of ways. One writer indicates that quite early '... England's colonies had begun to pay off, and by the middle of the seventeenth century, of a population about five and a half million it is estimated that about fifty thousand were at sea.'⁸² Moreover, the wealth of the plantations drew together the commercial bourgeoisie and the state, implicating them in behaviours and institutions entirely dependent on the existence of slavery and long-distance trade. In Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France and England, the immensity of the profits to be made spawned extensive corruption as its tell-tale mark. The English and French colonists and planters were slower than their Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch contemporaries to come to sugar but when they did – that is when tobacco ended its reign of wealth⁸³ – they, too, displayed their venality. For one, the colonies had helped to transform England into a bourgeois democracy with a capitalist and commercial trading economy. At the end of the 17th Century, mercantile elements of the Christian nation had circumvented the religious prohibitions against usury, institutionalizing their financial freedom with the official establishment of the Bank of England in 1694. The rise of the English bourgeoisie of course occasioned the beginnings of the overturning of English society. The leading members of this mercantile clique had been associated with 'republicanism, treason and Dutch connections', in the previous decade. 'This was exactly the background', P.G.M. Dickson suggests, 'that contemporaries expected plans for a national bank to have.'⁸⁴ In France, the maritime bourgeoisie were forced into a much more dangerous game:

The slave-trade and slavery were the economic basis of the French Revolution. 'Sad irony of human history', comments Jaures. 'The fortunes created at Bordeaux, at Nantes, by the slave-trade, gave to the bourgeoisie that pride which needed liberty and contributed to human emancipation.' Nantes was the centre of the slave-trade. . . . Nearly all the industries which developed in France during the eighteenth century had their origin in goods or commodities destined either for the coast of Guinea or for America . . . upon the success or failure of the traffic everything else depended.⁸⁵

The demonstration of the relationship between slavery and the development of Western Europe, however, need not end here.

One other sort of direct evidence respecting the profitability of slave labour can be found in the later work of Richard Pares, a scholar who earlier on, McDonald reminds us, had questioned the relationship between capitalism and slavery.⁸⁶ Discussing the wealth of the planters themselves, Pares wrote in 1960:

The absentee sugar planters were, with the East India Nabobs, the most conspicuous rich men of their time. Other absentee planters were nothing to them. There were some coffee and indigo absentees in France, but the tobacco planters of Virginia and even the rice planters of Carolina could not afford to behave in England like the sugar planters. They might go to England for their education but, unlike the sugar planters, they returned home when it was over; for in Virginia and Maryland, unlike the islands, life was tolerable and a real local patriotism came more easily to the planters; besides, their estates were mostly too small to support an absentee owner for the whole of his life. Yet they lived a luxurious life at home. . . .⁸⁷

Another clue, also drawn from Pates, was the source of the capital which edged planters into the indebtedness for which they were notorious.

The money came, in the last resort, from the planters themselves. . . . The money which was received from one planter was lent again, either to him or to another planter. . . . Thus it was the planter who was paying, so to speak, for his own enslavement. The profits of the plantations were the source which fed the indebtedness charged upon the plantations themselves. In this sense Adam Smith was wrong: the wealth of the British West Indies did not all proceed from the mother country; after some initial loans in the earliest period which merely primed the pump, the wealth of the West Indies was created out of the profits of the West Indies themselves, and, with some assistance from the British tax-payer, much of it found a permanent home in Great Britain.⁸⁸

Even the fabled decline of European merchants in the New World in the 18th Century provides little support to the thesis that the slave system was of marginal economic significance to metropolitan development. Here again the later Pares intervenes. He maintains that the explanation of this phenomenon lies both in K.G.B. Davies' assertion that the merchants had been displaced by planters engaged in entrepreneurship and the fact that Europeans were being displaced by Africans. 'As the white populations diminished in most of the British islands, and were replaced by slaves who were hardly allowed to consume anything, the market for European goods must have fallen off quite considerably. (Incidentally, this reduction in the number of their customers helps to account for the decline of the class of resident merchants.) Finally, one might add the testimony of contemporaries. The comments come from widely different moments in the business of slavery but their sources, their

specifics and their timing all describe the enthusiasm with which the system of slavery was undertaken. From the archives of the first 'large-scale introduction of Africans' into the New World, Vila discovers:

In a report about the asientos taken to the Junta in 1612 it was affirmed that, should the trade be lost, not only would the income produced by it be lost, but also the sales tax (*alzabala*) and the export-import tax (*averia*) on the money that arrived from the Indies . . . Moreover the buying and selling of slaves was one of the most important and lucrative sources of the Alcabalas.⁹⁰

Almost 200 years later, on 20 February 1793 to be exact, Bryan Edwards wrote to Henry Dundas from Jamaica:

Our harbours are full of Guineymen [African slave ships], yet the price keeps up enormously. Mr. Shirley gave £100 a head for a pick of 20 Koromanies out of a ship of Mr. Lindo's, and so long as the notion continues that the trade will be abolished, people will buy at any price, even to their own ruin, and the destruction of half the negroes, for want of provisions. Meaning that the planters are not in general provided with sufficient means to support so great an influx of newly imported negroes on a sudden.⁹¹

From whatever vantage point one chooses, then the relationship between slave labour, the slave trade and the weaving of the early capitalist economies is apparent. Whatever were the alternatives, the point remains: historically, slavery was a critical foundation for capitalism.

The Column Marked 'British Capitalism'

We may now have sufficient grounds for saying that in the New World, the British (and French) entrepreneurs — following the models provided by the Portuguese, Spanish and the Dutch — substantially substituted human capital for commodities in the 17th and 18th Centuries. We will follow this British trade for the moment because it seems the best documented, because it so firmly seats slavery in the movement from mercantile to industrial capitalism and because many of the clearest tracings of a Black radical tradition lead back to it.

To be sure, the leaders of the colonizing efforts of Britain had begun by exporting those colonized peoples to whom they had immediate access, that is the Irish. We have already made mention of that fact as well as the collateral uses of labour from Germany and Great Britain itself. It appears that the earliest investors in the colonies — lord proprietors, politicians and merchants according to Pares — had economic designs which at first could be met by a modest labour pool. As independent venturers, the landed rich seemed most

frequently to anticipate that their colonies would produce an income resembling in form the manorial dues to which they were accustomed in England.⁹² The joint companies, in which some lords along with merchant and public representatives of the bourgeoisie also took an interest, were typically more trade oriented. These companies were promoted for the colonial cultivation of cotton, tobacco, indigo, ginger, and the production of extractive industries such as timber, glass, iron and precious metals.⁹³ Thus, until the arrival of sugar in the early 1640's, and the development of large plantations, labour was adequately supplied by Europeans: indentured peasants, political outcasts produced at varying times by national and civil wars, and poor or orphaned females (only some of whom possessed "bad reputations").⁹⁴ As Richard B. Moore reiterates, their lots were oppressive:

Somewhat less onerous [than African slavery], but still quite oppressive, was the system of indentured slavery of Europeans, forced in one way or another into the colonies whether on the mainland or in the islands. Writing of this, the Jesuit priest, Joseph J. Williams, relates how Irish peasants were 'hunted down as men hunt down game, and were forcibly put on board ship, and sold to the planters of Barbados'.⁹⁵

Between 1624 and 1634, tobacco became the main staple of the colonies, earning in that period profits which attracted more and more English and French planters to it. By the end of this period, a glut of tobacco had hit the market and prices declined. The resultant long depression of the late 1630's and early 1640's compelled the search for a new staple, despite the lingering expectations that tobacco would recover.⁹⁶ In England, an additional strain was being generated: 'harried by depression and the ever growing threat of civil war, Englishmen left their homeland in such numbers during the 1630's that their exodus was called the "Great Migration"',⁹⁷ Battie tells us. Many of these newcomers settled in the West Indies, and particularly Barbados, which only made the attempt to locate a substitute for tobacco more desperate. The culling of history then intervened, cutting off Europe's supply of New World sugar as one result of the wars for the possession of Brazil between the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Luso-Brazilians.⁹⁸

The cultivation of sugar in the English colonies began consequently in the late 1630's. Once the techniques of sugar cultivation and refining were mastered, it rapidly displaced the less profitable crops of tobacco, indigo and ginger in the islands. With the massive demands for labour which sugar production engendered, the appetite of colonial production for labour increasingly outpaced supply. Having already decimated those aboriginal populations they had encountered in the West Indies, the English mercantile and planter bourgeoisie found it necessary and expedient to expand their Irish (and homeland) strategy to West Africa. As they did so, the scale of their enterprise grew beyond anything seen in English history.

During the 17th Century as a whole, Curtin claims, 60% of the slave trade in the New World 'went to the Hispanic colonies'.⁹⁹ This may, or may not

have been the case, since Curtin's figures have been shown to have a rather erratic authority and accuracy. Here, at least, he has consistently maintained some caution (in the wrong direction)¹⁰⁰ and even, on occasion, admitted to error (again towards lessening the numbers of Africans impressed into slavery).¹⁰¹ The more immediate concern, however, is that by the last quarter of that century, English merchants supplying slaves primarily to the British Caribbean had surpassed the Portuguese and the Dutch, their predecessors in the trade.

Curtin's approximations reveal that while imports by the Portuguese and Dutch merchants during the first half of the century exceeded the English trade by a substantial margin (a combined 327,000 for the Dutch and Portuguese as compared to 20,700 for English traders), by the third quarter, the English territories had overtaken the Spanish colonies in labour imports. By the last 25 years of the 17th Century, English merchants had more than doubled their performance in human trading for the previous quarter (69,000 for the earlier period versus 174,000) thereby besting their commercial contemporaries.¹⁰² This achievement, again, was largely due to the demands of sugar production.

By the end of the 18th Century and the abolition of the legal British slave trade in 1807, British factors, merchants and traders alone were to account for the transportation of 3,699,572 more Africans to the New World.¹⁰³ If we were to accept Curtin's argument concerning the levels of death in transit during this period, then perhaps as many as 400,000 or more of these people never saw the western end of the Atlantic.¹⁰⁴ They died 'in transit', and thereby produced one profoundly tragic measure of the extent to which the development of the capitalist world system depended on labour its metropolis could not produce.

The Africans were, however, not the only ones to be so unfortunately used in the slave trade. The greed of the English and European merchants easily overran their racial and national sympathies. Thus it was that the crews of their slaving ships died at rates perhaps even higher than their human cargoes. In time, English seamen sang about their fate in graphic terms:

Beware and take care
Of the Bight of Benin:
For one that comes out,
There are forty go in.¹⁰⁵

After the 1680's, Jamaica consistently began to exceed Barbados and the Leeward Islands in sugar exports. By the early 1700's, Jamaica's slave population followed suit, reflecting the island's pre-eminent role in British colonial commerce. By the end of the English trade in slaves, something like 38% of the slave labour force transported by English shippers had been relocated to Jamaica.¹⁰⁶

In almost equal parts, the origins of these Africans had been along the routes which fed into the slave ports at the Bight of Biafra, the Gold Coast, Central Africa, the Bight of Benin and Sierra Leone. This ethnic distribution, however, was not the result of consistent or regular patterns of recruitment.

Initially, Orlando Patterson concludes, the predominant groups were the 'Coromantees' (Kormantin was a port about 70 miles west of Accra), the Akan and Ga-Andangme peoples. After 1675, and for the rest of the century, the British trade for Jamaica shifted to Angola and the Ewe-speaking peoples of Dahomey. Between 1700 and 1730, the Slave Coast and Ghana became the favourite sources only to be succeeded themselves in the years between 1730 and 1760 by the Niger and Cross deltas. At the end of the 18th Century, the Congo once again became the dominant region, followed successively by the Niger and Cross deltas, the Gold Coast and (by a much smaller order) the Windward Coast.¹⁰⁷

In many ways the Jamaican trade followed a pattern established by the European mercantile predecessors of the English. They, too, had deposited the majority of their African labour in the islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles. Both tobacco and sugar had something to do with this since the islands possessed the ideal climate for the production of these crops. The Portuguese, with the lush tropical fertility of their Brazilian territories, had been the exception – an exception which Curtin maintains accounted for approximately 38% of the total number of African peoples brought to the New World.¹⁰⁸

To the North American colonies it can be estimated that the British merchants sent approximately 20% of their slave cargoes in the 18th Century. Surprisingly, perhaps, to many present-day North Americans, this amounted to less than 5% of the total number of Africans brought to the New World by European merchants. Curtin's best estimate is that 399,000 Africans were brought to the English colonies during the entirety of the slave trading period (another 28,000, he suggests, came to the continent by way of French traders supplying the Louisiana region).¹⁰⁹ Inikori, however, warns us that 'meaningful import estimates for the United States are yet to be made'.¹¹⁰ This African population, however, differed from that distributed in Jamaica in that at least a quarter of these peoples had originated from Angolan ports. Nearly as many came from the Bight of Biafra, half as many from the Gold Coast and Senegambia, followed by ever decreasing proportions from the ports of Sierra Leone, the Bight of Benin and Central Africa.¹¹¹

In South Carolina, Blacks made up 60% of the colony's population in the 18th Century. In Virginia, the comparable figure was 40%. They were used as labourers on the tobacco farms, and, later, on the cotton plantations, but they also worked 'in mines, salt- and rope-works; and they trained as shipwrights, blacksmiths and as various kinds of woodworkers, including carpenters, coopers, wheelwrights and sawyers'.¹¹² Those who were imported directly from Africa were termed 'outlandish' to distinguish them from what their masters called the 'new negroes' of the fields and the supposed deracinated, acculturated artisan slaves with whom they were more 'comfortable'. As Gerald Mullin has demonstrated, these distinctions were for the colonists practical considerations:

In sample runs of the *South Carolina Gazette* in the early 1750's and

1771 there was clear evidence of tribal cooperation in advertisements for the return of four 'new Gambia men'; three Angolans, 'all short fellows'; six other Angolans . . . and four men from the 'Fullah Country'.¹¹³ The invention of the Negro was proceeding apace with the growth of slave labour. Somewhat paradoxically, the more that Africans and their descendants assimilated cultural materials from colonial society, the less human they became in the minds of the colonists. Just as instructive, the rebels among these Africans and 'negroes' were described as 'runaways', a term which has endured in the historiography of the period. It should be remembered, however, that it was from the efforts of men and women such as these that the Black settlements of Virginia's piedmont and the Afro-Creek 'Exiles of Florida' (the Seminoles) would consist.¹¹⁴ In similar fashion, the maroon peoples of the Caribbean and South America would be formed. They were as well, at the end of the 18th Century, among the estimated 55,000 who fled to the British forces and the loyalist settlements when the colonists pursued the logic of the fear of their own enslavement to the point of revolution.¹¹⁵

Still, enough of the African labourers remained in the colonies of North America and the Indies to play a significant role in the development of the English imperial economy. The 'triangular trade' in slaves, as Eric Williams asserted, broadened the 'home market' by stimulating the production of British manufactures which English merchants exchanged in Africa for Black workers. Once in place, these workers formed the labour for British tropical production, craft work and extractive industries. The end result was capital accumulation for the advance of productive forces in England and Europe (the Industrial Revolution), for the growth of staple industries in northern America (fisheries, food crops, etc.), for timber, ship-building and textiles, and for the expansion of colonization and settlement. The concomitant, however, was the degradation of these African peoples and their social institutions when touched by that trade, and, as Walter Rodney has argued, the underdevelopment of Africa's economies.¹¹⁶

This trade, this movement of Black workers, though, did not end with slavery's legal termination in the 19th Century. Leopold's Congo, Harry Johnston's Central Africa, Cecil Rhodes' southern Africa, Lugard's West Africa, Portuguese Africa and French Africa as well as the New World's slave descendants all contributed to the further development of the capitalist world system. As peasants, as tenant farmers, as migrant labourers, as day labourers, as domestic servants and as wage labour, their expropriation extended into the present century. Even in the destruction of the means of production, the wars which Marx and Engels had stipulated as inevitable in capitalism, Black labour was pressed into service.¹¹⁷ They were exempt from no aspect of exploitation.

Notes

1. Alan Manchester, *British Preeminence in Brazil: Its Rise and Decline*, Octagon Books, New York, 1964, p.1.
2. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, Academic Press, New York, 1974, p.42; see also Boxer, *Four Centuries . . . op.cit.*, p.9.
3. Wallerstein, *ibid.*, p.47.
4. 'According to the chroniclers, the idea of carrying on the Reconquest in North Africa was suggested by the need to find useful employment for those who had lived on frontier raids for almost a quarter of a century, and by the desire of John's sons to be armed knights in a real conflict such as the older generation had known.' H.V. Livermore, 'Portuguese History', in H.V. Livermore, (ed.), *Portugal and Brazil*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1965, p.59. Partially cited in Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, p.46.
5. See pp.118ff, chapter 4; and especially Francis Rogers, *op.cit.*, pp.54ff.
6. Livermore states: 'With the passing of the old dynasty, some of the older nobility had clung to Castile and disappeared from Portugal. Their places had been taken by a new nobility formed of John of Avis's supporters, almost all new men, recently enriched, ambitious, and loyal.' Livermore, 'Portuguese History', *op.cit.*, p.60.
7. Wallerstein provides an interesting characterization of the Portuguese bourgeoisie: 'The interests of the bourgeoisie for once did not conflict with those of the nobility. Prepared for modern capitalism by a long apprenticeship in long-distance trading and by the experience of living in one of the most highly monetized areas of Europe (because of the economic involvement with the Islamic Mediterranean world), the bourgeoisie too sought to escape the confines of the small Portuguese market.' Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, pp.51-2. His interpretation of the relationship between this bourgeoisie and its Genoese colleagues differs from mine (see text below) and is uncharacteristically lacking in cited scholastic authority.
8. M. Postan, 'The Fifteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, IX, 2, May 1939, p.165. In this short essay, Postan recounts the deterioration of English domestic production – agricultural as well as manufacturing – and foreign trade in the 15th Century.
9. Carris Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.220. Alan Manchester notes that in the 17th Century, British merchants in Lisbon [submitted] . . . a complaint against the non-execution of privileges justly theirs, with certain papers showing the nature of these privileges. Arranged chronologically, these documents were: a charter dated August 10, 1400, by which D. João I conceded to the English the same privileges as had been conceded to the Genoese; a charter dated October 7, 1455, by which D. Afonso V conceded to the English the right to a special judge in all commercial cases which should arise between them and the Portuguese; a charter dated March 28, 1451, by Affonso V, granting the right to Englishmen to live and move about at will within the Portuguese kingdom; and the letter patent, dated February 7, 1455, by which D. Manuel granted special privileges to merchants from certain German cities.' Manchester, *op.cit.*, p.5. Unlike Manchester, Wilson makes no attempt to reconcile the fact of this linkage between the two 'states' with his predilection for the nation as a unit of historical analysis. This serves him badly when, in a few pages on (*ibid.*, pp.222-4), he must deal with piracy between the 'Portuguese and English'. It should have occurred to him that he was dealing with different entrepreneurial factions, some quite reconciled to mutual collaborations and shared interests, others, unaffected by treaties of alliance and still quite comfortably mutually antagonistic and piratically competitive.
10. Charles Verlinden, 'Italian Influence in Iberian Colonization', *Hispanic American*

- Historical Review*, XXXIII, 2, May 1953, p.199, and Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, pp.49ff.
11. Virginia Rau, 'A Family of Italian Merchants in Portugal in the XVth Century: The Lomellini', in *Studi in Onore di Armando Saporì*, I, Instituto Editoriale Cisalpino, Milano, 1957, p.717.
12. Verlinden comments: 'After the appearance of Florentines in the Portuguese records in 1338... only Milanese, Piacentines, and Lombards are mentioned, and more often Genoese. But one must not think that the Venetians did not play an active role in Portugal.... Nevertheless, the position of the Genoese and Piacentine merchants seems to have been more important, especially in Lisbon itself.' Verlinden, 'The Italian Colony of Lisbon and the Development of Portuguese Metropolitan and Colonial Economy', in Verlinden, *The Beginnings of Modern Colonization*, *op.cit.*, p.101.
13. About the Pezagno (Pessagno) family, Verlinden writes: 'The merchant Salveto Pessagno, a member of a Genoese family which played a large part in Atlantic trade – particularly with England – and which provided Portugal with a series of admirals from 1317 on, died in Famagusta toward the end of the century.'
- Verlinden, 'Some Aspects of Slavery in Medieval Italian Colonies', *op.cit.*, p.89; See also Verlinden, 'The Italian Colony of Lisbon ...', *ibid.*, pp.98-9 n.3.
14. Rau, *op.cit.*, p.718.
15. See H.V. Livermore, 'Portuguese History', *op.cit.*, pp.60-1; Rau, *op.cit.*, *passim*; and Verlinden, 'The Italian Colony of Lisbon ...', *op.cit.*, p.110.
16. Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, p.52.
17. See Verlinden, 'The most frequently mentioned of the Italian merchants in Portugal is Bartolomeo Marchionni. The one who appeared in 1511 among the outfitters of the ship "Bretta" is another Bartolomeo Marchionni, presumably a relative of the man encountered around 1443 in connection with the coral agreement. No doubt it was the second of these namesakes who was given the task of supplying Pero da Covilhao and Afonso de Paiva with money during the course of their voyage in search of India and Prester John.' 'The Italian Colony in Lisbon ...', *op.cit.*, pp.107.
18. Verlinden, 'Italian influence in Iberian Colonization', *op.cit.*, pp.202-03.
19. Verlinden, 'Navigateurs, marchands et colons italiens au service de la découverte et de la colonisation portugaise sous Henri le Navigateur', *Le Moyen Age*, LXIV, 4, 1958, pp.448-70.
20. See Montague Guiseppi, 'Alien Merchants in England in the Fifteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, New Series, IX, 1895, pp.88-90; W.I. Howard, 'The Financial Transactions between the Lancastrian Government and the Merchants of the Staple from 1449 to 1461', in Eileen Power and M.M. Postan, *op.cit.*, p.315; and Martin Holmes, 'Evil May-Day, 1517', *History Today*, XV, 9, September 1965, pp.642-3.
21. Guiseppi, *op.cit.*, p.94.
22. Thirrupp, 'The Grocers of London, A Study of Distributive Trade', in Eileen Power and M.M. Postan, *op.cit.*, pp.250, 290.
23. Rau, *op.cit.*, p.723; Carus Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.221; and Verlinden, 'The Italian Colony of Lisbon ...', *op.cit.*, pp.104-5.
24. Carus Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.225; see also Guiseppi, *op.cit.*, pp.90, 93; and Verlinden, 'The Italian Colony of Lisbon ...', *op.cit.*, p.111.
25. Boxer, *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion*, *op.cit.*, p.14.
26. C.A. Curwen records: 'In the third year of [Yung Lo's] reign (1405) began that remarkable series of seven maritime expeditions which rank among the great feats of seamanship of all time. They were commanded by a Chinese Muslim, a court eunuch called Cheng Ho. On the first voyage his fleet consisted of sixty-three ships, constructed with watertight compartments, the largest of which are said to have been over 400 feet long and 180 feet wide, with four decks. The total complement was 27,560, including troops, officials, and officers, and 180 doctors. This expedition reached India. In subsequent voyages Cheng Ho's ships visited

more than thirty countries in the Indian Ocean and archipelago, the Persian Gulf, Aden, and the east coast of Africa.' Curwen, 'China', in Douglas Johnson, (ed.), *The Making of the Modern World: Europe Discovers the World*, Volume One, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1971, pp.341-2. See also Wallerstein's discussion of the Chinese empire's long-distance trade in Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, pp.52ff.

27. William Appleman Williams, 'Empire as a Way of Life', *The Nation*, 2-9 August, 1980, p.104.

28. It is interesting to contrast Williams' use of the Chinese example with Wallerstein's defence of what he terms 'materialist arguments'. Williams writes: 'The Chinese canne, they traded, they observed. They made no effort to create an empire or even an imperial sphere of influence. Upon returning home, their reports engendered a major debate. The decision was made to burn and otherwise destroy the great fleets.... The point is not to present the Chinese as immaculately disinterested, or whiter than white. It is simply to note that we now know that the capacity for empire does not lead irresistibly or inevitably to the reality of empire.' Williams, *op.cit.*, p.104. Wallerstein, on the other hand, appears utterly convinced that the voluntaristic explanation is both sufficient and too indeterminant. His argument seems to be that the Chinese imperial structure acted as a political, technological and ideological constraint on the development of a bourgeoisie – prematurely developed? he wonders aloud – identified with the further development of capitalism in China and colonial expansion. He concludes: 'So China, if anything seemingly better placed prima facie to move forward to capitalism in terms of already having an extensive state bureaucracy, being further advanced in terms of the monetization of the economy and possibly of technology as well, was nonetheless less well placed after all. It was burdened by an imperial political structure. It was burdened by the "rationality" of its value system which denied the state the leverage for change (had it wished to use it) that European monarchs found in the mysticism of European feudal loyalties.' Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, p.63.

29. Boxer recounts that: 'After rounding the Cape of Good Hope, and calling at various Arab-Swahili ports along the east coast of Africa, da Gama reached Malindi, where he received the help of Ahmad-Ibn-Madjid, the most famous Arab pilot of his age, and one who knew the Indian Ocean better than any other man living. Thanks to his guidance, the Portuguese were enabled to reach Calicut, the major emporium of the pepper trade.... Not unnaturally, Ibn Madjid's memory is still execrated by the majority of his fellow-countrymen and co-religionists; and he himself bitterly bewailed in his old age what he had done.' Boxer, *op.cit.*, pp.13-14.

30. Of the 16th Century, Fernand Braudel has written: 'The commercial activity of the sea, concentrating more and more in the West, tipped the balance, spelling the inexorable decline of the eastern basin which had for so long been the source of wealth. The shift brought little joy to Milan, but brought Genoa and Florence to prominence. Genoa for her share, and a lion's share it was, acquired the Spanish and American trade.... In the second half of the century, Genoa took the lead.... Foreign catchment was the most important, and it was by this means that Florence and Genoa gained control of all the economically backward regions, whether in Eastern Europe or southern Italy, in the Balkans, France, or the Iberian peninsula.' Braudel, *The Mediterranean* ..., Vol.1, *op.cit.*, p.393.

31. One should be aware, as Robert Knecht reminds us that in 'the Indies ... the superiority of the Europeans was confined to the sea.' Knecht, 'The Discoveries', in Douglas Johnson, *op.cit.*, p.27.

32. John William Blake in his documentary history of *Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1460* Volume 1 (Kraus, Nendeln, 1967) asserts that the records he has gathered... show that between 1453 and 1480 Andalusian seamen and traders sent many ships to the West African coast, and that the government of Castile claimed exclusive possession of Guinea', p.186, see also p.189.

33. *Ibid.*, p.191; see also Edgar Prestage, 'Vasco da Gama and the Way to the Indies', in Arthur Percival Newton, (ed.), *The Great Age of Discovery*, University of London,

69. J. E. Inikori, 'Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment of Curtin and Anstey', *Journal of African History*, XVII, 2, 1976, pp.204-5.
70. Roderick McDonald, 'The Williams Thesis: A Comment on the State of Scholarship', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 25, 3, September 1979, p.63.
71. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, op.cit., p.87.
72. Inikori's criticisms are important enough to warrant quotation. Of Curtin's statistics, Inikori writes: 'All the computations required by the formula employ only two slave population figures — the figure at the beginning and the figure at the end of the given period. While this poses no problem for compound interest calculations ... the same is not true for a slave population that was subject to considerable hazards (which may have had no regular pattern) affecting the year-to-year movement of the total population and import figures.' 'Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment', op.cit., p.198. Regarding Curtin's historical sensitivities, Inikori states: 'The amount of historical evidence supporting my argument in this aspect of my original paper is really so substantial that only Curtin's ignorance of the historical data can make him write in the way he does; General statistical theory of random error does not take precedence over historical data. ... Arguments about the inaccuracy of official records based on a large amount of historical data can only be countered with opposing historical data, not with vague theories of random error. ... In fact, all the statements made by government committees or government officials which I quoted in my original paper were based on actual investigations.' 'Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Rejoinder', op.cit., p.617. Finally, of Curtin's logic of defence, Inikori cautions: 'The key to a proper understanding of Curtin's comments in his statement that what I said deliberately falsified the estimates so as to minimize the size of the trade. Ordinary error without a political or other bias would be more random; ... With this misconception it apparently became an emotional issue for Curtin to defend his "honour" at all cost. ... The logic which runs through Curtin's paper is that only "a political or other bias" can skew the frequency of error in a set of estimates in one direction. ... The naivety of this logic is too obvious to warrant much comment. Suffice it to say that the frequency of error in a set of estimates can be skewed in any direction for several reasons that have nothing to do with "a political or other bias". And, for that matter, a man can have a political motive and yet produce an accurate estimate.' *Ibid.*, pp.609-10.
73. Inikori, 'Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Rejoinder', op.cit., p.615.
74. D. Eltis, 'The Direction and Fluctuation of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade 1821-43: A Revision of the 1845 Parliamentary Paper', unpublished paper presented at the Mathematical Social Science Board Seminar on the Economics of the Slave Trade, Colby College, Waterville, Maine, 20-22 August 1975; Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-810*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1975, and *idem*, 'The Volume and Profitability of the British Slave Trade, 1761-1807', in Stanley Engerman and Eugene Genovese, (eds.), *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1975, pp.3-31; Serge Daget, 'La Repression Britannique sur les Negriers Francais du Trafic Illegal: Quelques conditions generales ou specifiques', unpublished paper presented at Maine, 20-22 August 1975; Lucien Pevraud, *L'Esclavage aux Antilles Francaises au XVIIIe d'apres des documents inedites des Archives Coloniales, These Presentee a la Faculte des Lettres de Paris*, Paris, 1897; and Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies*, Wednesfield and Nicolson, London, 1973.
75. Inikori does not present a total for the Atlantic slave trade. This figure was arrived at by totalling the amounts for the French West Indies, Brazil and the English colonies which appear in Inikori's two essays, and interpolating an amount for Spanish America consistent with Inikori's treatment of pre-19th Century Brazil's slave population. From Inikori's first essay ('Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment', op.cit.), the numbers are: French West Indies: 3,000,000; for the English colonies in the 18th Century and Brazil in the first half of the 19th Century.

76. F. or Curtin's statement see note 52, chapter IV. For D.R. Murray's critique of Curtin's figures, see *Statistics of the Slave Trade in Cuba, 1790-1867*, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 3, 2, November 1971, pp.131-49. Richard Pares concurs with Curtin on this matter: 'M. Debiac has observed that the trickle of indentured peasants ... dried up at various times in the second half of the seventeenth century: after 1666 few more such servants were sent to French St. Christopher; after 1685, few more to Guadeloupe. The same contrast can be seen between the older settled sugar colonies, like Barbados, which soon ceased to demand the services of any white men from Europe besides specialists, and the newer settlements, like Jamaica, which still, for a time, welcomed unskilled white labourers. Specialists — tradesmen, coachmen, refiners, private tutors — were still sent out to the plantations for another century; but the peasant, with his two hands and nothing much else, was no longer in demand. His place had been taken by an African.' Pares, *MERCHANTS and PLANTERS, Economic History Review Supplement*, No.5, 1960, p.19.
77. See note 47, previous ch.
78. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, op.cit., p.63.
79. *Ibid.*, p.61.
80. Herman Merivale, *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies*, Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, London, 1861 (Reprinted by Augustus Kelley, New York, 1967), p.302.
81. Roderick McDonald, op.cit., pp.65-6.
82. James Burke, *Connections*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1978, p.192.
83. Robert Carlyle Battie, 'Why Sugar? Economic Cycles and the Changing of Staples on the English and French Antilles, 1624-54', *Journal of Caribbean History*, Vol.8, November 1976, pp.4-13.
84. P.G.M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England*, Macmillan, London, 1967, pp.55-6.
85. C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, op.cit., pp.47-8.
86. Roderick McDonald, op.cit., pp.63-4.
87. Richard Pares, op.cit., p.38.
88. *Ibid.*, p.50.
89. *Ibid.*, p.33. The Davies piece to which Pares refers is K.G.B. Davies, 'The Origin of the Commission System in the West India Trade', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Ser., Vol.II, 1952, pp.89-107.
90. Vila, op.cit., p.277 n.9.
91. Cited by Roderick McDonald in his 'Measuring the British Slave Trade to Jamaica, 1780-1808: A Comment', *The Economic History Review*, XXXIII, 2, May 1980, pp.257-8.
92. Pares, op.cit., pp.2-6.
93. *Ibid.*, pp.11 and 63 n.54; and Battie, op.cit., p.1.
94. Pares, op.cit., p.16.
95. Richard B. Moore, 'On Barbadians and Minding Other People's Business', *New World Quarterly*, III, 1 and 2, Dead Season and Croptime, 1966/1967, p.69.
96. Battie, op.cit., pp.4-13; and Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1972, p.203.
97. Battie, op.cit., p.16.
98. *Ibid.*, pp.15, 19.
99. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, op.cit., p.126.
100. *Ibid.*, pp.118-26.
101. See Inikori, 'Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Rejoinder', op.cit., p.619.
102. Curtin's figures are used here not for their accuracy but for their relative weights, Inikori, 'Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade', op.cit., p.119.
103. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, op.cit., pp.612-15.
104. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, op.cit., Chapter 10, This figure, it must be recalled,

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- is only an 'estimate' of the number of deaths associated with the British slave trade in the 18th Century. For France, during the same century, Robert Stein, who (without attribution) puts the French slave trade at 1,150,000, also claims that 'no fewer than 150,000 died before reaching the New World, and many more died within a year or two of arrival'. Stein, 'Mortality in the Eighteenth-Century French Slave Trade', *Journal of African History*, 21, 1, 1980, p.35.
105. Curtin, *Ibid.*, p.282. For the period 1714-78, Stein puts the death 'rate' of crews in the French slave trade at 13% and argues: 'crew mortality was on the average higher than slave mortality at least along the coast and on the Middle Passage.', Stein, 'Mortality in the Eighteenth-Century French Slave Trade', *op.cit.*, pp.36-7.
106. Curtin, *Ibid.*, pp.139-40.
107. Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Rutherford, 1969, pp.134-44.
108. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, *op.cit.*, pp.91-2.
109. *Ibid.*, pp.83, 268.
110. Inikori, 'Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment . . .', *op.cit.*, p.222.
111. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, *op.cit.*, pp.144, 156-8.
112. Gerald Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1972, p.7.
113. *Ibid.*, p.43.
114. For the background of the Black maroon settlements of 17th Century Virginia and the Afro-Indian (Seminole) settlements of 18th Century Florida, see chapter 7. An early account of the Seminoles is given by Josiah Giddings (1858).
115. See Nwabueze F. Okoye, 'Chattel Slavery as the Nightmare of the American Revolutionaries' *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXVII, January 1980, pp.3-5; Jeffrey Crow, 'Slave Rebelliousness and Social Conflict in North Carolina 1775-1802', *William and Mary Quarterly*, *Ibid.*, p.89; C.L.R. James, 'The Atlantic Slave Trade', in James, *The Future in the Present*, Lawrence Hill, Westport, 1977, p.246.
116. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Howard University Press, Washington D.C., 1972.
117. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in Robert C. Tucker, (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1978, p.478.

The role of Black labour in the expansion and preservation of capitalism was not, however, the whole of it. The deposition of Black peoples in the New World had still another consequence — a consequence entirely unintended and unanticipated by the tradesmen and ideologists of slavery. Still, the naivete of the Europeans was substantially of their own making: slavery, as a system and way of life, was hardly a propitious setting for much else. The 'structured' ignorance which was an almost inevitable concomitant of the use of enslaved labour weighed heavily on European thought in general, irrespective of social ideology.

Marx had once assigned slavery to that stage of capitalism's development which he characterized as 'primitive accumulation'. He had not meant the term in any invidious sense but had intended simply to — in part — emphasize that the dominant capitalist mode of production bore little responsibility for the production and reproduction of the human materials it commanded in this aspect. Marx had meant by primitive accumulation that the *piezas de Indias* had been produced, materially and intellectually, by the societies from which they were taken and not by those by which they were exploited. The cargoes of the slave ships were real human beings notwithstanding their manner of transport, the bills of lading, the captains' logs and trade account books which designated them otherwise.

However, Marx had not realized fully that the cargoes of labourers also contained African cultures, critical mixes and admixtures of language and thought, of cosmology and metaphysics, of habits, beliefs and morality. These were the actual terms of their humanity. These cargoes, then, did not consist of intellectual isolates or decultured blanks — men, women and children separated from their previous universe. African labour brought the past with it, a past which had produced it and settled on it the first elements of consciousness and comprehension.

This was the embryo of the demon which would be visited on the whole enterprise of primitive accumulation. It would be through the historical and social consciousness of these Africans that the trade in slaves and the system of slave labour was infected with its contradiction. Much later, in the midst of the struggle against Portuguese imperialism in Guinea-Bissau in this century, Amilcar Cabral would reveal the nature of that contradiction:

Black Marxism

The Making of the Black Radical Tradition

Cedric J. Robinson

For Leonard and Gary
for whom there was not enough time.



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