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Robbie Shilliam ^a

^a Victoria University of Wellington,

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The Atlantic as a vector of uneven and combined development

Robbie Shilliam¹
Victoria University of Wellington

Abstract *The conversation between Alex Callinicos and Justin Rosenberg broaches an issue that is central to any sociological approach to the subject matter of international, namely, the extent to which analogies drawn from 'society'—understood as an endogenous entity—can be used to explain inter-societal phenomena. So far, the debate has focused analytically primarily upon the relationship between class conflict and geopolitics, and has exhibited a substantive focus primarily upon European history. The contribution of this article to the debate is to problematize both these foci. I suggest that Atlantic slavery and the racialization of New World identity might be the fundamental vector through which to explore the special quality of international sociality in the making of the modern world.*

There shall be sung another golden age;
The rise of empire and of arts,
The good and great inspiring epic rage,
The wisest heads and noblest hearts.

Not such as *Europe* breeds in her decay;
Such as she bred when fresh and young,
When heavenly flame did animate her clay,
By future poets shall be sung.

Westward the course of empire takes its way;
The four first acts already past,
A fifth shall close the drama with the day;
Time's noblest offspring is the last.
Bishop Berkeley (1726)

The first and most obvious light in which the sea presents itself from the political and social point of view is that of a great highway; or better, perhaps, of a wide common, over which men may pass in all directions, but on which some well-worn paths show that controlling reasons have led them to choose certain lines of travel rather than others. (Alfred Mahan 1965, 2)

¹ My thanks to Pat Moloney, George Lawson, the editors and one anonymous reviewer for their helpful and challenging comments.

Introduction

The conversation between Alex Callinicos and Justin Rosenberg (2008) broaches an issue that is central to any sociological approach to the subject matter of international relations (IR), namely, the extent to which analogies drawn from 'society'—understood as an endogenous entity—can be used to explain inter-societal phenomena. As both Callinicos and Rosenberg argue, the constitution and dynamics of inter-societal phenomena cannot be directly extrapolated from discrete intra-societal dynamics and yet neither can the former dynamics be understood as 'externalities' lest their sociality be denied. The potential that lies in Leon Trotsky's uneven and combined development (U&CD) as a theoretical approach that might position analysis beyond these inadequate choices is debated in the exchange of letters. The debate is most vigorous with regards to the appropriate level of abstraction but, to me, is at its most profound when considering the special quality of the sociality generated in the interaction of differentially developed political entities.

In this article I wish to make two related contributions to the debate. Firstly, if the special quality of this 'international sociality' cannot be read directly through a domestic analogy, then neither can it be read through a 'regional analogy', that is, by transposing intra-European dynamics to the level of global dynamics. This means that narratives constructed through the U&CD approach cannot be diffusionist in their contours; but neither can uneven and combined processes within Europe be assumed to encompass or exemplify the prime social transformations associated with the making of the modern world. While of course the history of European geopolitics has been the primary informant of discussions of U&CD, it is a necessary but by no means sufficient vector through which to explain the special quality of international sociality. The nineteenth-century imperial currents incorporated into discussions in this issue by Neil Davidson (2009) and Alexander Anievas and Jamie Allinson (2009) speak to this problem, but, as I shall show, its roots are deeper and wider.

Secondly, if the U&CD approach is to be convincing, it must be used to critically reassess the most fundamental organizing concepts of IR theory. So far, the main object of inquiry has been the states system in general and the (imperialistic) relationship between geopolitics and (capitalist) class politics in particular.² These are, no doubt, fundamental concepts for historical sociological approaches to IR, but they are not the only ones. After all, the classical European discourses on political economy, civil society and international law that have been so important for the construction of present-day historical sociological approaches all posited the attainment of civilization as the condition of successful modern development. Whether analytical or normative in intent, civilization referred to a particular cultural constellation—European civilization—that was defined in opposition to both internal and especially external barbarians and savages (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; Jahn 2000). Even Trotsky's own thoughts on the Russian Revolution—its uneven and combined origins, and its permanent-revolutionary future—were framed by a normative desire to emulate the bourgeois culture of Western civilization (Shilliam 2008a). In any case, at the same

²See for example the special issue of *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 20:4 (2007). The exception here is John Hobson's (2007) contribution.

time as IR was institutionalized as an academic discipline, so was Western civilization institutionalised as one of the most important geocultural concepts for organizing European thought on the new world order.³

Bringing both of these contributions together, I propose that the Atlantic should be considered as perhaps the most profound vector through which to explore the special quality of international sociality in the making of the modern world. Atlantic history is a very broad area of study and my focus here is primarily upon the era of Atlantic slavery, an era that is now referred to by a significant body of academic literature. My contribution, in this respect, is an experimental attempt to relate this literature to the concerns of IR by way of the present debate over the utility of U&CD approaches.⁴ And for this purpose I shall use the problem of New World identity formation as a heuristic device through which to sketch out the myriad social, political and economic aspects of Atlantic slavery and the way in which they illuminate the special quality of international society.

As a basic schema one could say that the international sociality driving the formation of New World identity in the slavery era was composed of: (a) the uneven relation between nascent colonies, pre-existing New World communities, and established European metropolises, leading, within the colonies to, (b) the rearticulation of various forms of European social organization within a new context where the political structures that underpinned these forms were necessarily malleable. These socio-political transformations were expressed in the need to forge a 'native' identity. The contestations surrounding the emerging condition of *Créolité*—that is, New World nativity—led to the rearticulation of existing ideas and practices of autonomy, freedom, civility and exploitation brought from the 'Old World'. In this sense, the international sociality constitutive of New World identity formation should be understood as possessing a Creole grammar.

'Creolization', rather than 'U&CD', is a more apposite concept for exploring the international sociality of New World development, primarily because it is a term organically linked to Atlantic slavery, initially designed to denote African slaves brought up in a master's house, but generalized over time to refer to anything that, first introduced into the New World from elsewhere, managed to reproduce itself in its new setting (Stewart 1999, 44). Unlike some contemporary usages of creolization (and hybridity) that describe the cultural mosaics that putatively arise in the age of globalization, my usage of the term retains its original focus on the character of social transformations possible within severe political structures of inequality (Stewart 1999, 44). Although the concept invokes linguistic analysis, my usage of creolization is not formally of this kind and is instead inspired by the work of Edouard Glissant (1999), who explores the formation of the Creole self in a set of relational linguistic, discursive, political-economic and even environmental dimensions.

In particular, however, I am interested in the transformations within the condition of *Créolité* evident from the late seventeenth century to the mid/late nineteenth century. During this time the African slave trade became the

³ See for example Oswald Spengler's influential *Decline of the West* (1926), the first volume being published in 1918.

⁴ There is a sizeable constructivist literature on abolition in IR but little on actual slavery.

predominant practice of the Atlantic vector, and, concomitantly, slave societies became the predominant (but by no means only) mode of colonial development. I argue that slavery injected a new syntax of racial hierarchy into processes of creolization. Unlike the preceding and coterminous contestation over 'native' identity between (and amongst) European settlers and Amerindians, this new syntax starkly differentiated the white 'free' Creole from the black slave Creole. This racial differentiation prompted a rearticulation of ideas and practices of autonomy, freedom, civility and exploitation and profoundly affected identity formation in the New World.

My argument is that the production of New World identities cannot be understood as a variation on a European theme because the *direct* nature of the importance of slavery in New World colonial development was qualitatively unlike the institution's relationship to contemporaneous European societies. Due to the special quality of its social constitution and political effect, Atlantic slavery could be considered the root cause of the differentiation of European and Western hemispheric developmental trajectories. I would argue that it is this differentiation that constitutes the deepest structural unevenness upon and through which the modern *world* order developed. This consideration is crucial to our understanding of the form and content of the unevenness upon which the expanded reproduction of European capital proceeded in a combined manner. For if it is accepted in the U&CD approach that non-capitalist social forms and political organizations are not simply sublated under the movement of capitalism but become co-constitutive of the movement itself, then by the logic presented above we cannot adequately explain modern world development through a narrative that starts with the rise of capitalism, nation and class within England or Europe.⁵ The Atlantic slave trade, New World slavery and creolization must complicate this starting point.⁶

Such a complication is surely of general importance to the historical study of IR. That European civilization rhetorically tends to take on a peculiar surplus value, so to speak, in its 'westward' orientation is in no small part due to the analytical failure to appreciate the international sociality of the Atlantic vector concretized in the slave trade and New World slavery. In other words, the Atlantic cannot be understood as a vector for the cumulative expansion of European civilization into Western civilization. Rather, the Atlantic must be understood as a vector of U&CD, the socially transformative nature of which must, in turn, be studied by reference to slavery in the New World and processes of creolization.

I proceed by drawing out the lacuna of slavery in the rhetorical and intellectual construction of the 'West' that is most intimately associated with the substance of IR—namely, the post-1945 Atlantic security community. Against this construction, and in order to reassess the nature of the Atlantic as a vector, I then engage with the burgeoning literature of Atlantic studies and specifically show how slavery has become a pivotal phenomenon for understanding the novel compositions of New World societies. Taking prompts from this literature, I sketch out the way in which slavery informed a new grammar of *Créolité* seminal to the formation

⁵ Contra to most of the contributions to the U&CD debate in this issue and in previous fora.

⁶ For further thoughts on the non-derivative nature of the historical relationship between class and race, see Shilliam (2008b).

of New World identities. I conclude by relating these investigations back to the contemporary debate over the West and the Atlantic community, in order to underline the importance for historical sociology in IR of directing the U&CD approach to investigate deeper currents in the making of the modern world.

The Atlantic in IR

How has the Atlantic been imagined amongst foreign-policy-makers and IR scholars? Certainly not just as an inanimate body of water. Alfred Mahan's notion of a great highway or a wide commons is more apposite. But a highway connecting what? What kind of traffic giving rise to what kind of commons? By far the dominant understanding of the Atlantic in IR has been as a vector of the original security community of the post-1945 world and one that could potentially reap the dividends of a democratic peace by protecting the values of Western civilization (Deutsch et al 1957). The nerve centre of the community has often been understood to lie in the almost mystical special relationship between Britain and the United States (US) (Danchev 1996; 2007), with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (now the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) constituting this community's military and economic sinews.⁷

However, since 9/11, talk has been rife of the possible end of the Atlantic community. The bridge British Prime Minister Tony Blair's foreign policy hoped to build between America and Europe seems to have collapsed (Dunne 2004; Wallace 2005) and 'somewhere between Kabul and Baghdad ... the US and Europe lost each other' (Asmus 2003, 21). Growing asymmetries of power, diplomatic ineptitude and increased US unilateralism in opposition to European Union multilateralism are cited as causes, but the overall effect, as Michael Cox (2005) asserts, seems to be the loss of trust—of a sense of 'we-ness'. Without this sense of shared identity a security community will find it increasingly harder to absorb the impulses of the anarchic system towards pursuing self-interest.⁸

Yet problematizing the integrity of the Atlantic community has been a constant occupation of Anglo-American politicians and academics since the early 1950s. For example, Walter Lippmann (1943, 79), Lauris Norstad (1963), Walt Rostow (1963), Lyndon B Johnson (1964, 886–887), John F Kennedy (1962) and Stanley Hoffmann (1963) all spoke in various ways of the interdependence—based on mutual consent and peaceful cooperation—that held together the integrity of the Cold War Atlantic community. Moreover, echoing the present-day prescriptions for a reinvented 'concert of democracies' (Princeton Project on National Security 2006),⁹ the purpose of the Atlantic community was understood not only in terms of military defence against communism, but just as much in terms of the defence

⁷ On the importance of the concept of Western civilization in the formation of NATO, see Jackson (2003).

⁸ In opposition see Vincent Pouliot (2006) and somewhat in-between see Thomas Risse (2004) and Andrew Moravcsik (2003).

⁹ The term was used by William Fulbright (1961) to describe a Western group of states, united under NATO, securing a peace that the United Nations promised but could not (yet) deliver.

and promotion of the community's shared values in the world at large (McNamara 1962, 66).¹⁰ In fact, discussions of the Atlantic community were usually embedded within an Anglo-centric narrative of the development of European civilization.¹¹ For example, Lord Robert Cecil, an architect of the League of Nations, declared that American rulers should be treated as fellow Anglo-Saxons. James T Shotwell, influential in the writing of the UN Charter, distinguished the 'heritage of freedom' owned by Anglo-Saxon countries of the North Atlantic triangle from the 'continental mind' (Shotwell 1945, vii–viii).

This being said, many commentators were charitable enough to present the Atlantic community as the expression of European civilization as a whole (McNamara 1962, 64). Extended westward, this narrative of the expansion of European civilization imagined the Atlantic as vector rather than barrier. In Lippmann's famous words, 'the inland sea of a community of nations allied with one another by geography, history, and vital necessity' (Lippmann 1943, 83). Furthermore, providence itself seemed to underwrite the development of the Atlantic community, just as it did for Bishop Berkeley in the early eighteenth century with his desire to redeem the corrupt European soul on the virgin shores of Bermuda. 'We shape an Atlantic civilization with an Atlantic destiny,' proselytized Johnson, while Kennedy was confident that 'Atlantic unity represents the true course of history' (Johnson 1964, 867; Kennedy 1962).

Of course the rhetoric always ran ahead of the politics. But what is important to note is how the 'non-West' figured in this historical imaginary of the Atlantic as a vector of European civilization. It did so in a decidedly ambiguous fashion. If the communist world was a clear threat, the status of the 'non-Western' world was undecided: with independence, colonial peoples held both the promise of treading the westward path towards the Atlantic community and the danger of being seduced by the Eastern alternative. How, for example, would the Atlantic community react to the loss of Western influence over the United Nations General Assembly? What (echoing contemporary post-9/11 debates) might be the impact of differential European and American approaches to Third World development?¹² The non-Western world, therefore, always retained an alien, but defining, presence for the imagination of an expanding and embracing Atlantic community.¹³

Furthermore, such distinctions were often made—as a matter of course, or as considered observation—by reference to race. For example, Stanley Hoffman defined the inhabitants of the Atlantic community as 'predominantly white'; Francis Wilcox alluded to the danger of NATO being seen as a 'white man's club'; and John Foster Dulles straightforwardly pointed to the potential barrier to further expansion of the Atlantic community constructed by 'racial arrogance' (Hoffman 1963, 524; Wilcox 1963, 694; Dulles 1956, 56). In the 1990s Christopher Coker provided a salient observation of the continued imagining of a racial-civilizational distinctiveness to the Atlantic community. Coker noted that *within* American society there had recently developed a challenge to the heretofore

¹⁰ See also Francis Wilcox (1963, 684).

¹¹ For a critique of the northwest European bias of much Atlantic history see Mignolo (2005). Due to space considerations, I somewhat replicate this bias here.

¹² On the former see Wilcox (1963). On the latter, see Robert McNamara (1962, 65).

¹³ For example, Fulbright (1961, 17).

Anglo-Saxon nature of the Atlantic community in the form of a changing ethnic-cultural demographic (Coker 1992, 418–420). In short, the ‘browning’ of America might, ultimately, shift the nature of a white ‘we-ness’, but perhaps we need to extend this insightful observation backwards in time.

The first chapter of the Atlantic story has overwhelmingly been written as the end of World War Two and it would be trite to discount the significance of this moment. Nevertheless, commentary on the Atlantic community has always alluded to a pre- or proto-history. Kennedy, for example, claimed that the eventual economic convergence of America and Britain was a process that originated out of the Boston Tea Party; and Henry Kissinger spoke of 200 years of shared history defined by radically different foreign policies of isolationism for America and a balance of power for Europe (Kennedy 1962; Kissinger 1982, 572). The point is that in most narratives the story of the Atlantic community presumes a longer and deeper history than that which starts with the Second World War, one that instead begins with the independence of New World colonies from their European overlords.

And yet, as Derek Walcott (2007) forces us to remember, the Atlantic has a history deeper and wider than even this. It is, above all, a history defined by the rise of New World slavery: the ‘well-worn paths’ of the great Atlantic highway, to use Mahan’s terms, were ploughed most of all by slave-ships, linking the shores of Europe, Africa and all three Americas (North, Central/Caribbean and South) and the peoples, cultures and polities to be found therein in a co-constitutive developmental relationship. In reference to the whitewashed histories of Atlantic shores we should remember that as late as the 1820s 90 per cent of those who made the ocean crossing were African.¹⁴ It is my contention, then, that the conceptual ‘we-ness’ of the Atlantic community that is most often expressed as Western civilization can only rest securely within a historical narrative that has forgotten the constitutive role of slavery in the development of the New World.

Atlantic history

To pursue these contentions further I now turn to the burgeoning literature of Atlantic studies.¹⁵ The reference trail for revisionist histories of the Atlantic usually winds back to the 1950s and particularly to Jacques Godechot’s (1965) thesis of a single Atlantic revolution in the late eighteenth century and Robert Palmer’s (1959) contemporaneous investigation of this era through a comparative constitutional history of Western civilization. Both Godechot and Palmer sought to break away from the exceptionalist and nationalistic literature that had defined studies of the American and French Revolutions. This attempt to reconfigure the histories of the ‘lands washed by the Atlantic’ prefigures the purpose of much subsequent scholarship that, firstly, approaches Atlantic history as a moving whole, more than the sum of its constituent parts, and, secondly, considers the

¹⁴ The peak years of the slave trade were between 1680 and 1830. See David Eltis (2000, 2) and John Thornton (1999, 1).

¹⁵ This literature is hardly ever seriously engaged with in IR. For one notable exception see Tarak Barkawi (2006, 14–18). For overviews of Atlantic history see Bernard Bailyn (2005), David Armitage (2002), Horst Pietschmann (2002) and Donna Gabaccia (2004).

purpose of Atlantic historiography to be to rethink the scopes and dynamics of this putative 'whole'.

By far the most profound development in the last 50 years of Atlantic historiography has been the positing of slavery as the site upon which to reorganize the scopes and rethink the relations of Atlantic history.¹⁶ The slave had long been understood by pro-slavery and abolitionist intellectuals alike to be a passive being with his/her mind culturally wiped clean by the horror of servitude. Melville Herskovits was the most famous proponent of an alternative thesis and his 1941 book *The myth of the Negro past* highlighted the vestiges of African culture within the life of slaves in the New World. Recent work has done much to reveal how various African cultures migrated along with African bodies and how vital these cultures were to the sustaining of a social life for slaves in the plantations (see especially Thornton 1999; Lovejoy and Trotman 2003). Indeed, a related body of work has shown that African kings, traders and militias engaged with European mercantilists and soldiers on a fairly equal footing. African politics and culture, it is now claimed, did as much to *actively* shape the contours of and changes in the slave trade as did European forces (see, for example, Eltis 2000, chap 7; Thornton 1999; Law and Mann 1999; Nwokeji 2001). The trade was truly triangular in its political dynamics and social constitution.

Moreover, recent scholarship has also interrogated the Atlantic trade as a vector that, through its multiple geocultural connections, had a transformative effect on the social beings caught up in the middle passage. Paul Gilroy's celebrated thesis of the Black Atlantic uses the abiding memory of slavery as a means to explain the double consciousness of the African diaspora as a people in but not necessarily of the modern Western world. Through this strategy Gilroy opens up space for thinking of hybridity and cultural mixing as symptomatic of Atlantic culture in general.¹⁷ To this end, Gilroy invokes the image of a slave-ship—a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion—in order to break free from a history of nations and borders (Gilroy 1993, 4). Gilroy's work complements a growing trend to turn to the 'ship' not as a metaphor but as a concrete site of historical investigation. A number of scholars, for example, have examined free black sailors working on slave-ships to elucidate the cultural and political contradictions produced in the construction of what Bernard Bailyn describes as 'an immensely complex and regionally differentiated Euro-Afro-American labor system' (Bailyn 2005, 92–93).¹⁸ The importance of sailors as links for (and agents in) a revolutionary circum-Atlantic movement of a multi-ethnic working class, against both enclosure and slavery, has been drawn out

¹⁶ The enterprise is not, however, new but was undertaken by a generation of scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who were thereafter neglected. A significant number of these earlier scholars were of various African extracts. In contrast, neither Godechot nor Palmer spoke of slavery. In more recent years Philip Curtin's work has been seminal. See especially Curtin (1969). The 'social history' turn in slave studies has also contributed immensely to the rise in the importance of slavery in Atlantic history. See especially Richard Dunn (1972) on Barbados and Edmund Morgan (1975) on Virginia.

¹⁷ However, Gilroy has been criticized for treating slavery only as a sublime category of the unspeakable horror of modernity. Gilroy does not interrogate the actual contestations by slaves as themselves part of the construction of a counter-modernity. See Sibylle Fischer (2004).

¹⁸ On black sailors, see W Jeffrey Bolster (1997) and Emma Christopher (2006).

most famously by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker (2000). For Linebaugh and Rediker the 'many-headed hydra' of revolution reveals itself in the gathering of the 'multitude' in markets, fields, piers and ships, plantations and battlefields.¹⁹

The literature that reconsiders the slave as a truly social being, and the attendant reconceptualization of the Atlantic as a vector of social transformation, is cognate to another literature that investigates the creolization of New World societies. Seminal in this respect is the work of Sidney Mintz and Edouard Glissant. For Mintz, the slave-holding Caribbean expressed a precocious modernity. Being violently displaced from their prior life worlds, slaves learned to adopt a new non-valuative openness to cultural variety (Mintz and Price 1992; Mintz 1996).²⁰ Glissant's understanding of creolization fleshes out Mintz's point. 'There is a difference', notes Glissant in reference to the slave's New World experience, 'between the transplanting ... of a people who continue to survive elsewhere and the transfer (by the slave trade) of a population to another place where they change into something different, into a new set of possibilities' (Glissant 1999, 14). It should be noted, however, that some have criticized the 'creolité as modern identity' thesis to the extent that it reserves this modernity only for the New World (and the Caribbean especially). This exclusivity has the effect of rendering Africa as a passive—in fact pre-modern—corner of the Atlantic world.²¹ Alternatively, the same processes of creolization have been uncovered in nineteenth-century Sierra Leone—amongst other things, a dumping ground for Africans freed from slave-ships by the British Navy—and in the nineteenth-century Afro-Brazilian diasporic influence back upon the creation of the quintessential West African 'nation', the Yorùbá (Northrup 2006; Matory 1999). While in this contribution I cannot explore these considerations further, these investigations of the African node of the Atlantic points to the wider dissemination of creolization as a process of identity formation beyond the New World proper.

Browsing the new archive of Atlantic history therefore requires us to appreciate how slavery was *generative* in the construction of a new cultural and political grammar of New World identity—one that impacted, albeit differentially, upon all shores of the Atlantic. In what now follows, I sketch out how the Atlantic can be understood as a vector of international sociality, substantively formed through the slave trade and by which New World identity formation proceeded as creolization.

Slavery and creolization

Before the Treaty of Utrecht in 1714, European geopolitics in the Caribbean occurred 'beyond the line' of diplomacy and treaty-making. Treaties between France, England and Spain in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century were expected to be honoured only east of the longitude of the Azores—to the west

¹⁹ Interestingly, Linebaugh and Rediker have been criticized for making an analogy between the ship and the factory. The more fitting analogy might be the absentee-owner plantation, due to the ship's captive workforce, disciplinary floggings and quasi-independent managers. See Christopher (2006, 10). For a critique of the class unity ascribed to the Atlantic multitude by Linebaugh and Rediker see Featherstone (2005).

²⁰ See also Michel-Rolph Trouillot's notion of the Caribbean as 'otherwise modern' (2003, 41).

²¹ See especially Charles Piot's (2001) critique of Gilroy. In general, see Mann (2001).

of that longitude lay a zone of decentralized warfare where British- and French-sponsored privateers plundered the Spanish Main (Dunn 1972, chap 1). But this hemispheric differentiation in the rules of geopolitics can also be found in the social constitution of the first colonies. Indeed, for European settlers (and here I concentrate on the English and French), the New World was experienced, in Nicholas Canny's terms, as a 'permissible frontier' (Canny 1978). When one thinks of the Atlantic as a vector of creolization, the term is apposite.

Most of the upper stratum of settlers came from either the lower end of the European nobility or the less capable cadre of military officers.²² To them, the New World offered the chance of progressing up a social hierarchy imported from the Old World, without the barriers created by the presence of already established elites. Likewise, the availability of 'unoccupied' land in the Americas encouraged an unplanned dissipation of free settlers and the formation of family farms free from existing processes of enclosure. However, the majority of the lower stratum of settlers arrived in the New World having already been dispossessed of land or having been dispossessed of freedom in their capacity as indentured servants. Maroonage of the lower stratum to the Indians (on the mainland) or pirate communities (on the islands) was commonplace, especially considering that many of the colonies had a dearth of European women. For the English colonists on the mainland, 'native' communities often appeared more civilized or at least better equipped to provide for the good life than their own precarious settlements.

Because of these issues, the integrity of the settler colonies had to be maintained through unusual violence to both insiders and outsiders, sacrificing many of the (relative) political liberties that were now commonplace in Western Europe. Nevertheless, those who kept order were as guilty of moral excess as the workers and servants in their rush to enrich themselves, mete out corporal punishment and gratify their sexual desires. Perhaps the most important 'function' of Amerindians, in this respect, was as a mirror to the barbarism evident within English settler society. For example, if the first charge of many royal charters was to convert the natives to Christian civility, before long the prime occupation of many heads of colonies was a violent pacification of natives. The Caribbean settlers displayed the strongest excesses of social licence in the reproduction of the colonies and these were to reach new heights with the shift to sugar and the mass importation of African slaves to compliment and then replace indentured servants from Europe.

It is important to note, then, that the development of European settler colonies rarely reflected the wishes of the metropolitan powers that sponsored them and who expected the European moral and social order to be transplanted unproblematically onto American soil. Crucially, in the eyes of European commentators, New World colonies as a whole—that is, in terms of both the upper and lower strata—start to become socio-politically differentiated and uncomfortably distant from the moral heartland of European civilization. It is interesting to note, for example, that the initial legitimization for French colonization of the Caribbean was the moral rescue not of Amerindians but of Frenchmen who, via piracy, shipwreck or maroonage, had already become barbarous in their attempts

²² The following two paragraphs rely variously upon Anderson (1991, chap 4), Dunn (1972) on seventeenth-century Barbados, Canny (1978) and Zuckerman (1989) on early Virginia and Carolina, James Axtell (1981) on the Anglo-Amerindian encounter in general and Doris Garraway (2005, chap 2) on the French Caribbean.

to survive on the islands (Garraway 2005). Even as late as 1797, the Comte de Volny observed on a journey through North America that the continent was largely inhabited by 'Frenchmen of the age of Louis XIV who have become half-Indian' (quoted in Pagden and Canny 1989, 275)

Therefore the development of a specific New World identity, in its many manifestations all depicting 'nativity', was produced first and foremost as a term of abuse wielded by European commentators to describe an intimate yet distanced civilizational relative. Concomitantly, settler colonists, or at least the elites among them, started to articulate their desires for relative autonomy from their economic and political dependence upon the old European power centres by valorizing the condition of nativity. This was even pursued by use of the Amerindian (usually in the form of a princess) as a symbol for legitimate sovereignty.²³ After all, the indigenous peoples of the Americas, if 'backward', if even 'savage', were still in the broadest sense free.²⁴ Yet with the rise of the African slave trade the constellation of entities that provided the syntax for New World identity changed significantly. As African slaves came to form the dominant group of peoples crossing the Atlantic instead of Europeans (free or indentured), the grammar of New World identity gained a new dominant syntax. Most importantly, 'nativity' or *Créolité*, became organized and contested by reference to a stark racial differentiation of free and unfree, independent and dependent.

True, the collapse (although not elimination) of the *political* import of local, regional and dialectic differences internal to Europeans had always commenced on the ships that transported settlers, nascent Creoles, across the Atlantic (Garraway 2005, 93; Garner 2007). Nevertheless, European colonial thought had been historically unable to categorically deny the legitimacy of the Amerindian as a pre-existing native inhabitant of the Americas. At the heart of the famous Spanish debates of the sixteenth century over Amerindians was the question of common humanity (Rodríguez-Salgado 2008); and until the later nineteenth century British commentators situated Amerindians in a stadial universal history, rather than in a social-Darwinist pluri-genetic typology of races (Moloney 2001).²⁵ A Creole identity that would successfully justify political autonomy from the Old World by reference to its New World nativity *and* distinguish its singular claim to such freedom from other 'natives' by reference to its Old World cultural heritage only succeeded *definitively* when the 'white' Creole was placed in racial categorical opposition, culturally and politically, to the black slave. In other words, the segregation of the white Creole (eventually the 'American')—who could lay heritage to European civilization and the freedoms that were claimed to derive from this heritage—from the 'non-white' (associated with non-European savagery) was not categorically effected by reference to the indigenous population but only by reference to African slaves.

Ultimately, the differential political-economic relationship between settlers and natives and settlers and slaves set the terms of reference for creolization: the former relationship centred upon the use of land and hence encouraged—albeit tenuously—assimilation policies; the later relationship centred upon the differential use of labour and hence demanded segregationist policies (Wolfe 2001).

²³ On the English colonies see Fleming (1965).

²⁴ See especially Roediger (1999, chap 2) on this differentiation with regard to the making of the American working class.

²⁵ On the former see Rodríguez-Salgado (2008). On the latter see Moloney (2001).

The construction of the racial meta-identities of 'white' and 'black' therefore led to an increased politicization of acts of miscegenation as slave populations grew. For in the sexual economy of the plantation the categorical separation of the white civilized American and the black uncivilized 'American' increasingly unravelled with the growth of mulatto populations (Garraway 2005; Wolfe 2001). Various typographies of racial intermixture were developed and redeveloped to ensure a continuum of political and economic freedom for the whitest and unfreedom for the blackest (Glissant 1999, appendix 2). At the same time, poor whites in plantation societies, especially women, came under increased surveillance. For the fact that this social group often had more intimate relationships (in the social and sexual sense) with the slave population threatened to undo the categorical separation between the purity of white women and the depravity of black women.²⁶

In this respect, the formation of white Creole identity was a sort of levelling movement, especially in the mainland settler colonies—the civic privileges heretofore associated with aristocratic elites became somewhat democratized through the attribution of all European classes as 'white' (Goldfield 1997). Even the European 'ethnicities' that were more troublesome to categorize as 'civilized', by default, especially the Irish, enjoyed at least the possibility of becoming full 'white' members of the civic community in the Atlantic crossing (Garner 2007). Conversely, this racial meta-identity formation is also evident in the creation of diasporic slave 'nationalities' that had no *direct* correlation to African groupings but in the New World context of plantation slavery formed ethnic subsets of a racialized meta-identity, 'black' (Chambers 2001). This identity, in turn, was to be contested, by those whom it interpolated as subjects, with regard to its Sambo and Quashie stereotypes. However, in doing so, blacks in the New World would have to negotiate far more tortuously the relationship between the African or European roots of their own creolized existence.²⁷ Finally, the mestizo, that interpolation of the 'racially mixed' New World subject was increasingly forced to surrender its ambiguity to either pole of the racialized unfree/free and uncivilized/civilized divide. But this Manichean process, too, was contested; José Martí, for instance, proclaimed the mestizo to be the face of an independent Cuba.²⁸

Thus, the creation of 'black' (unfree, uncivilized) and 'white' (free, civilized) became the key organizing syntax for a Creole grammar of identity formation. In this respect, we need to take seriously the generative effect of living within a slave/plantation society in the development of New World cultures and societies. The British, French and Dutch in Europe, for example, were never slave societies—the ruling classes never intimately lived amongst their slaves as did the ancient Greeks or Romans. In any case, New World slavery was, in substantive terms, incomparable in its depth and extent to ancient forms (Solow 1991, 39; Eltis 1999, 47).²⁹ The point is that the *direct* experience of slavery in the New World

²⁶ For Barbados and North Carolina case studies, see Jones (2007).

²⁷ For this negotiation in Francophone Caribbean thought see Munro and Shilliam 'Alternative sources of cosmopolitanism: nationalism, universalism and Créolité in Francophone Caribbean thought' unpublished manuscript.

²⁸ On the mestizo see, for example, Nash (1995); Martínez-Echazábal (1998) and Aching (2005).

²⁹ See Solow (1991, 39); Eltis (1999, 47). On the special nature of New World slavery vis-à-vis the ancient world see Blackburn (1997).

provided the impulse towards a starkly racialized process of creolization. This impulse led to the creation and policing of racial meta-identities imbued with claims about political status and cultural affiliation. *Créolité* was therefore the expression in the ideational realm of the special transformative quality of international sociality produced through the Atlantic vector in the era of slavery. This quality was also expressed in the way in which the philosophical articulation, moral tenor and political effect of Enlightenment thought developed in relation with—but again differentially to—the Old World. Both the elite strata in the New World (for example, slave-holders and Creole officials) and the lower strata (for example, slaves, free mulattos and freed blacks) had to contend with slavery as a directly present reality.³⁰

French writings on their Caribbean colonies, for example, tended to use depictions of slavery as a metaphor to speak to disenfranchised metropolitan subjects. But for French colonial subjects slavery was no metaphor. As Laurent Dubois has convincingly argued, it is not just that republican ideas from France inspired Caribbean insurgents, but that these insurgents transformed the content of republicanism (Aravamudan 1993; Dubois 2004; 2006). Despite the abolitionist sentiments prevalent amongst a number of Old World intellectuals, the possibility that slaves might fight for and win their own freedom and subsequently struggle amongst themselves over the constitution of their political independence (by no means with a united voice) was literally unthinkable (Trouillot 1995). Yet this is precisely what the slaves did, and, negotiating uncharted waters, Haitian elites constructed constitutions that expressed in their substance a revolutionary universalism far outstripping the French version even in the midst of being formally nationalistic and racially essentialist.³¹ At the same time, British slaveholders in the Caribbean petitioned against the abolitionist movement by imagining the relationship between the metropolis and colonies in terms of 'mutual dependency, loyalty and a hierarchical relationship centered on the Crown' (Lambert 2005, 415). This royalist discourse, so suspicious of Parliament, should not be mistaken as a relic of an archaic class but should be seen, paradoxically, as part of the cultivation of an Anglo-Creole *nationalism* (Lambert 2005, 415).

It could be posited, then, that creolization *congenitally* combined in New World identity formation 'pre-modern' social attributes of the most extreme kind, for example, hierarchical political status and cultural affiliation based upon personalized attributes and affections (race), with 'modern' attributes, for example, the horizontal political status of the abstract individual and an instrumentalized and interchangeable cultural life. There is, of course, an established literature by European intellectuals on the dialectical relationship of Enlightenment and modernity, freedom and unfreedom—one especially represented in Marxist critiques of capitalist modernity. To conclude this contribution to the U&CD debate, I would like to suggest how the above discussion impacts upon this literature.

³⁰ For top-down discourses on the French Caribbean see especially Marick W Ghachem (1999); and for the British American mainland around the time of independence see Winthrop D Jordon (1968, chap 13), David B Davis (2006, chap 7) and Dana D Nelson (2000).

³¹ On the constitutions see Fischer (2004, chap 11) and Bogues (2004).

Slavery and European capitalism

Perhaps the most significant attempt to reconcile the coeval nature of capitalist modernity and slavery has been provided by the World Systems inspired historical–geographical imaginary.³² Here, capitalism, as a totality, is said to be composed of both unfree and free forms of labour that are geopolitically separated but systemically interrelated and reproduced by the tendencies of capital accumulation on a world scale.³³ However, because such approaches tend to focus on the synchronic reproduction of a system rather than the diachronic development of that system, the tendency exists to read the purpose of slavery as a functional contributor to the expanded reproduction of capitalism.

Another attempt to explicate the relationship between slavery and capitalism uses specific cases to draw attention to the complicity of New World slavery within wider circuits of finance capital (McMichael 1991; Tomich 1991). It is not that the arguments, with reference to particular cases, are wrong, but that the grand narrative in which they are couched tends to flatten the differentiated impact of New World slavery on Atlantic history. This kind of argumentation implies that the past of Atlantic history exists in the present by way of a universalizing of one form of modernity produced by capitalist industrialization. This implication eschews the historical–sociological challenge of accounting for the way in which the *direct* experience of slavery in the New World provided an impulse towards—and dissemination of—novel processes of creolization before and also coeval with capitalist industrialization which were not endogenous to Europe. To draw out this concern, it is useful to consider Robin Blackburn's inspirational historical sociology of New World slavery.

Note, first of all, the way in which Blackburn's narrative utilizes (although he himself does not call it this) a general theory of U&CD, reminiscent of Rosenberg's project. Blackburn first notes,

The social relations of colonial slavery borrowed from an *ancient* stock of legal formulas, used *contemporary* techniques of violence, developed manufacture and maritime transport on a grand scale, and *anticipated modern modes* of co-ordination and consumption. Slavery in the New World was above all a *hybrid mixing ancient and modern*, European business and African husbandry, American and Eastern plants and processes, elements of traditional patrimonialism with up-to-date bookkeeping and individual ownership ... These borrowings necessarily involved *innovation and adaptation*, as *new social institutions and practices*, as well as new crops and techniques of cultivation, were arranged in *new ensembles*. (Blackburn 1997, 19, emphasis added)

Blackburn suggests that this hybridity existed as an impulse for the initial 'ancient' form of New World slavery that manifested as the 'Baroque': a political culture that attempted to retain classical order in the midst of the discoveries and the opening of new avenues of exploitation and accumulation. However, this hybridity *remained* a fundamental impulse even during the commercialization of New World slavery:

³² The work of Eric Williams is, of course, also seminal in this respect. On the Williams debate see the special issue of *Callaloo*, 20:4 (1997).

³³ For an overview of the debate see Santiago-Valles (2005).

Those elements of the baroque which implied any restraint on the commercial dynamic of plantation slavery were gradually whittled away by the relentless pressure of military and economic competition between rival slave systems. The slave systems of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became attuned to more industrial rhythms, losing first their baroque and then their colonial features. But these processes also brought into view the informal work of cultural and productive synthesis underlying the productivity of the slave systems. The colonial version of the baroque anticipated elements of the Creole. The Creole mixtures thrown up by plantation development became increasingly confident and coherent, escaping beyond European forms and models. (Blackburn 1997, 19)

And yet Blackburn's profoundly challenging narrative ends by ultimately drawing out the crucial contribution of New World slavery to the original home of capitalist 'primitive accumulation', England. Slavery, redolent of Marx's (1991, 924–925) own famous comments, ultimately gains its world-historical meaning in this narrative by helping to give birth to a European capitalist modernity.

Inspired by Blackburn's work, I nevertheless wish to suggest that we should resist the urge to bring slavery 'home' to the Old World. The impulse that New World slavery gave to Atlantic history—an impulse stronger and weaker depending upon the directness of the society's involvement in the plantation system—was *not* a persistence of anachronistic 'pre-modernism', nor one that was subsumed under a singular capitalist modernity. Rather, I want to suggest that New World slavery provided a contradictory dynamic of development that, through the construction of racial meta-identities, conjoined in novel ways the personalized hierarchies of social unfreedom with impersonalizing and horizontalizing movements towards political freedom. The paradoxical and frictional union within Creole identity formation of political independence from, but cultural fraternity with, the Old World was enabled through this racial meta-identity formation.

In sum, I am suggesting that the Atlantic was a vector of international sociality that via slavery created a particular grammar of modern identity formation, its deepest syntax being racial. The contestational dynamics of creolization regularly sent waves of 'combined' development throughout the Atlantic world, that overdetermined to various extents and in different ways the political ruptures and cultural transformations that we might very imperfectly consider to constitute the rise of the modern 'West'. However, the intensity of this wave was differentially spread across the already uneven geocultural and geopolitical terrain that constituted the Atlantic world. For these reasons, the Creole grammar sketched out above should not be mistaken as a Rosetta stone for modern world development. Rather, my argument is that from the late seventeenth century to the late nineteenth century, the deepest world-historical stratum of 'unevenness' and 'combined development' is to be found in New World slavery.

Conclusion

It is ironic that what most profoundly unites the historical shores of the Atlantic is that which makes the Atlantic community alien to itself. Of course, present-day concerns over the loss of a sense of 'we-ness' within the Atlantic community speak to a particular set of issues of the post-9/11 world. However, at the same time, they represent the latest expression of a far deeper ambivalence about the singularity

and modernity of 'Western' civilization. To approach the 'we-ness' of the 'West' without recognizing the fundamental ambivalence of this identity is only possible if the Atlantic vector is emptied of the special quality of international sociality. Only then can the 'we-ness' of the 'West', along with its attendant cultural signifiers of modernity (impersonalization, progressiveness and freedom), be held in categorical distinction from the signifiers of the 'non-West'—namely, the traditional, the personal, the backward and the unfree. A reconsideration of 'Western civilization' along these lines is therefore of pressing intellectual and political importance for historical sociological approaches within IR. In this respect, U&CD approaches cannot afford to merely disturb the domestic analogy: they need to push further and disturb the regional analogy of 'Europe' to the 'West' to the 'World'. European geopolitics and capitalist class formation are a necessary but by no means sufficient vector through which to explain the special quality of international sociality in the making of the modern world. The Atlantic beckons.

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