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Review Essay: On Colonial Legacies

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Sam Klug: *The Internal Colony: Race and the American Politics of Global Decolonization*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2025. Pp. 280.)

David Scott: *Irreparable Evil: An Essay in Moral and Reparatory History*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2024. Pp. 480.)

Nazmul Sultan: *Waiting for the People: The Idea of Democracy in Indian Anticolonial Thought*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2024. Pp. 312.)

Inés Valdez: *Democracy and Empire: Labor, Nature, and the Reproduction of Capitalism*. (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. 250.)

Over the past few decades, the “turn to empire” in political theory has powerfully illuminated how legacies of imperialism and colonialism have profoundly shaped the conceptual history of core categories in modern political thought such as democracy, citizenship, freedom, equality, and the social contract. Early on, scholars in this vein of research focused their attention on tracing these dynamics among mostly canonical political thinkers. As the turn to empire has matured, however, a newer generation of studies is fixing its focus more significantly on the contemporary legacies of colonialism and empire in the present and alternative trajectories of political thought mounted by anticolonial activists and intellectuals in the periphery. Picking up on this tendency, the four books under review speak to each other in intriguing ways in both their differences and similarities. Thematically, all four books often share a common set of conceptual concerns despite speaking across an array of imperial and colonial contexts. Inés Valdez’s *Democracy and Empire* and Nazmul Sultan’s *Waiting for the People* are both interested in the entwinement of empire and popular sovereignty, yet in the different colonial contexts of the white settler colonies of the British

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Empire (in Valdez's case) and British India (in Sultan's case). Both Sultan and Sam Klug, who in *The Internal Colony* is writing about the post-World War II context of racial politics in the United States, are concerned with how anticolonial actors and thinkers enlisted developmental idioms and languages in their struggles against imperial rule and racialized exploitation. And both Valdez and David Scott's *Irreparable Evil* grapple with the contemporary prospects of emancipation from and reparation of the harms engendered by the history of imperialism and colonial slavery.

Despite these overlaps, all four books embrace different historical and interpretive frameworks for understanding the persistence of colonial legacies historically and the demands of overturning those legacies in the present. These differences raise important questions: What is the historical sensibility necessary for narrating the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and empire in the present? What story forms (e.g., romance, tragedy, satire) can and should be used to narrate the historical legacies of slavery and empire? And how should this sensibility connect to questions of emancipation and repair in the present?

In *Democracy and Empire: Labor, Nature, and the Reproduction of Capitalism*, Valdez charts the historical legacies of the relationship between appeals to popular sovereignty and imperial exploitation in the settler colonial contexts of the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. This is an incredibly ambitious book, immediately evident in the long string of five concepts invoked in the title, each of which have conceptual histories entirely unto themselves, to which are added at least two other central concepts not in the title—mobility/migration and self-determination. Of course, the wager is that all these concepts are intricately connected, and it is only through these connections that we can understand their operative logics. The central argument connecting these disparate conceptual threads is the idea that the emergence of popular sovereignty in the white settler colonies during the *fin-de-siècle* period rested on the imperial exploitation of the colonies, the imperial control of nonwhite migrant labor, and what Marx would call the real subsumption of nature and social reproduction into the circuits of capital accumulation. In and of itself, the idea that popular sovereignty has its foundations in racism, empire, and settler colonialism is not entirely novel. Where Valdez's account is distinct is in attending more closely to material underpinnings of these processes, which more concretely connect a set of themes largely explored through frameworks of democratic theory to literatures focusing on racial capitalism.

Comprising two chapters, the first section begins to flesh out these claims with a focus on the reliance of Western norms of popular sovereignty on the coercive exploitation and regulation of nonwhite labor in settler colonies. Through a reading of W. E. B. Du Bois's 1915 essay in the *Atlantic Monthly*, "The African Roots of War," chapter 1 reinterprets the notion of "democratic despotism" as a form of "self-other-determination" that analytically captures the underlying material and conceptual structure of Western norms of popular sovereignty. In a nutshell, imperial popular sovereignty implies an

entitlement to self-rule and to rule colonized others abroad not as a contingent and contextually bound association but as a matter of deep, material structures. Through these structural connections, the democratic nation is consolidated by binding together conflicting social classes through the wealth and luxury generated by the exploitation of the colonies. The story here is not simply one of elites doling out concessions to the working classes. It is, rather, that notions of popular sovereignty come to rely on the deeply felt affective attachments that citizens in the imperial metropole have to colonially accumulated wealth. In this way, the people become democratically bound together through shared affective ties that arise from processes of despotically governing colonial others. Drawing on Frantz Fanon and Saidiya Hartman, the remainder the chapter traces the persistence of this affective structure of imperial popular sovereignty amidst processes of decolonization and the rise of postcolonial sovereignty through to contemporary neoliberalism.

Chapter 2 turns to the flipside of self-determination in the racialized control of nonwhite labor migration. As European empires increasingly relied on the economic exploitation and political control of colonies as a means of consolidating democratic self-rule within the nation, patterns of nonwhite immigration also increased in the British settler colonies. A central feature of self-other-determination is the right to move, migrate, and settle in distant locales both from within and without the nation. If self-determination entails the right to free mobility as a necessary correlate of self-governance, then other-determination necessarily means limiting and regulating the movement of nonwhite labor. In this regard, the politics of "immigration control" are better characterized as a form of "imperial labor control in the service of racial capitalism" (64). Within this framework, the chapter maps how white working-class organizations and labor activists in the settler colonies cultivated transnational networks of solidarity aimed at regulating and ultimately limiting the flow of colored labor. Rather than separate nodes of racialized labor control, Valdez shows how such projects in disparate colonies drew from each other in their interconnected efforts to stem the influx of labor competition from racialized populations. Again, these dynamics were not incidental features of projects of popular sovereignty. By joining exclusive immigration regimes with projects of colonial exploitation, democratic regimes upheld the sovereign people as white.

In keeping with the examination of the material underpinnings of Western forms of popular sovereignty in racial capitalism, chapter 3 charts how the social reproduction of Western workers rests upon the destruction of the relations of care and reproduction of brown families. Focusing on labor control not just of individuals but of the family unit in the US Southwest, Valdez further explores the continuities in these forms of domination across distinctive periods in US history, such as the conquest of Mexican territory in the 1840s, increased white settlement into these conquered territories in the late nineteenth century, guest labor regimes exemplified by the Bracero program in the 1940s, and the surveillance and mass deportation of brown

families in the contemporary neoliberal period. Despite their differences, each of these periods witnessed the social reproduction of the white, working-class family resting on the depletion and expropriation of the reproductive capacities of brown families. Extending the insights of the previous chapter, such an account shows how migration control was a key part of empire, and not just an aspect of immigration politics. In doing so, Valdez reveals how the social reproduction of the relations of production are thoroughly racialized, adding another layer to theorizations of racial capitalism.

Alongside the exploitation fostered through imperial control of migrant labor and the social reproduction capacities of brown families, chapter 4 turns to the extraction of value from nature and its subsumption into circuits of racial capitalism. Again through a reading of a small selection of Du Bois's essays in the 1930s and 1940s, Valdez argues that even in the expropriation of nonhuman nature to feed industrial processes, capitalism remains thoroughly racialized. Central to these dynamics is the way that the division between nature and technology positions white populations of the imperial metropole as technologically advanced, capable of mastering and controlling the unwieldy nature of nonwhite laborers and the natural settings they inhabit. Yet in doing so, what Valdez terms techno-racism also differentially distributes the effects of human alienation from nature along racial lines. Valdez further uses Du Bois to illuminate the coupling of racial and technological superiority by showing how technological changes intensified the racial exploitation of labor and the need for raw materials, positioning racialized manual labor alongside nature as being in need of superior technological direction. Against these intensified regimes of labor exploitation that undergirded modern developmental projects, Du Bois calls for a slower speed of development that would embrace higher labor costs and less overt control of nature, which would in turn lessen exploitation of the natural world. The chapters of this second section provide valuable theorizations of racial capitalism that bring categories of nature and social reproduction to the fore, but the connection to popular sovereignty and democratic theory that frames the book becomes tenuous at best.

To recenter the book's focus on the intersections of democracy and empire, the last section elaborates a conception of "anti-imperial sovereignty" that might counteract imperial legacies of popular sovereignty. Starting with Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech, "Beyond Vietnam," chapter 5 argues that King sought to correct the "unworldliness and ignorance that underlies the disavowal of the global as a proper subject of popular politics and notes its misguidedness by tracing the continuity of anti-democratic politics and exploitative foreign relations" (170). The chapter then shows how Frantz Fanon's critique of postcolonial elites who join the project of Western elites to defend imperially accumulated wealth might complement King's attempt to persuade popular constituencies in the United States to abandon their alliances with elite projects of capital accumulation. In the assertion that "King connects this violent foreign policy to the failings of US democracy" (172),

however, we see significant tension rather than continuity with Du Bois, for whom this relationship, at least in Valdez's interpretation, is precisely the reverse (i.e., imperial foreign policy strengthens US democracy). This raises a broader question of when and where popular sovereignty are mutually reinforcing in the way implied by the language of "democratic despotism."

Styled as "an essay in moral and reparatory history," Scott's *Irreparable Evil* grapples with the narrative and normative stakes of the stories we tell about large-scale historical atrocities, in this case, the colonial slavery in the new world that has defined European modernity. Scott's wager is that, while the evil of new world slavery is universally recognized, the philosophical grounding of this evil necessary to provide critical traction for repair—compared to other historical atrocities like the Holocaust—remains murky. To provide this grounding, Scott develops reparatory history as a subset of moral history. He clarifies that each of the chapters can be read apart from the others in any order. While the chapters build up to an "interconnected chain of arguments" (25), this leaves the reader expecting a loosely connected series of separate essays on common themes. Yet one wonders if Scott is mischaracterizing what exactly he is up to here. The essays of the volume—each labyrinthine in its own right—unfold from each other in quite interesting and unexpected ways. The ultimate effect of this unfolding is not so much a single set of arguments as it is a performance of the kind of tragic and reparatory historical sensibility Scott seeks to impart. In this way, the book offers not a resolution of the paradox of colonial slavery, but rather a historical and moral disposition one must inhabit to navigate this paradox.

Chapter 1 is the central and weightiest of the chapters. Its focus is to clarify the meaning and stakes of reparatory history, which embraces the motivating question: "What is the conceptual story of the past of new world slavery that ought to command our critical attention in the present conjuncture, and why this story and not some other" (35)? The provisional answer on offer is that the motivating problem-space of such a story-form should be oriented toward repairing the continued harms of new world slavery in the present. Yet a central feature of reparatory history lies in its tragic quality, its recognition that past evils like colonial slavery are ultimately irreparable. Scott leans into this intractability, stating that it is precisely the irreparability of new world slavery that demands redress. The paradox of colonial slavery is that "it is at once irreparable and yet demands repair" (27). The task of reparatory history is to narrate this paradox.

Building on his previous work, especially *Conscripts of Modernity*,¹ Scott juxtaposes the tragic sensibility of reparatory history to the romantic and vindicationist story-form he terms "emancipationism," which narrates the problem of new world slavery as a triumphant overcoming of the past that

¹Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Duke University Press, 2004).

paves the way toward a future of Black freedom from the racial domination rooted in colonial enslavement. Such utopian, heroic, and epic stories cast the rhythm and tempo of emancipation in terms of progressive and revolutionary change. Scott maintains, however, that emancipationist narratives are fixed to an older set of questions that are no longer as compelling in our present age. In the wake of the collapse of postcolonial projects throughout the world, the redemptive arc of the emancipationist story-form is unraveling and ultimately fails to provide the critical traction necessary for grappling with the legacies of new world slavery. If the romantic temper of emancipationist narratives resolves the problem of slavery by charting a linear path from slavery to freedom, the tragic orientation of reparative history centers on the constitutive irreparability of colonial slavery as a moral harm. For Scott, reparative history is a form of moral history that seeks a critical account of historical atrocities that not only have gone unresolved, but that constitute pasts that remain disavowed as being in need of resolution in the first place. It is a history of injustices that remain unrepaired yet whose present-past demands “just repair” (61).

In the abstract, this makes it difficult to figure out what kinds of narratives Scott would have us tell about new world slavery to satisfy the ethical imperatives he identifies. As the chapters unfold, it becomes evident that what Scott means is not a history of moral psychology or a moralized history, but something akin to a genealogy of the moral sensibility that has informed recent attempts to historically narrate the evil of new world slavery with a reparatory aim. The remaining chapters of the book provide not a history *per se*, but rather a critical account of the limits of philosophical attempts to provide the historical and normative grounding for repair. If chapter 1 focuses on the irreparability of new world slavery, chapter 2 turns to its incomparability. Here Scott takes aim at the Holocaust exceptionalism that informs much of the discussion on evil. Focusing on the work of Hannah Arendt as well as her many interpreters, Scott charts the “work of exception” performed by philosophical histories that cast Nazi death camps and the mass slaughter of Jews as “the exemplary site of incomparable evil” (28). Defined as a “meta-evil,” as the paradigmatic case of historical atrocity, the exceptionalization of the Holocaust serves to diminish and disavow the intelligibility of other historical atrocities as evil, especially colonial slavery. In this way, the concern of reparatory history is not just with what counts as evil, but with probing the limits of what comes to be exemplified as evil.

The point, however, is not to position one atrocity over another as the paradigmatic case of “meta-evil.” Chapter 3 turns to the neglected work of moral philosopher Laurence Thomas, especially his 1993 book *Vessels of Evil*, to think through the juxtaposition of American slavery and the Holocaust as “incommensurable evils” in which the two atrocities are historically *sui generis* and as such do not allow for “comparative ranking” (140). Foregrounding incommensurability permits one to grasp the intelligibility of both as evil “without magnifying or diminishing the moral horror of either

with reference to the other" (140). Both slavery and the Holocaust were profoundly evil, but, as Thomas puts it, in "radically different ways" (143). The historical distinctiveness of slavery's evil lies in Orlando Patterson's notion of "natal alienation," the need for the institution of slavery to render the enslaved socially dead while maintaining their dependence on the master. For Thomas, if the institutionalization of genocidal death defined the evil of the Holocaust, in American slavery it was the prolongment of alienated life. From this, Thomas mounts a demand for repair under the assumption that natal alienation can be reversed and lost social traditions restored. It is here that Scott parts ways with and, in genealogical fashion, probes the limits of Thomas's moral sensibility.

According to Scott, the distinctive evil of new world slavery lies not so much in the nature of the violence it inflicted on the enslaved or in the economic wealth and profits gleaned from this violence as it does in the destruction of the "lifeworld" of the enslaved. The evil of slavery lies in a "process by which their tacit connections to assumed forms of life, and the conceptual fields that constituted them, were forever severed" (24). From this perspective, the victims of enslavement suffered a loss and breakdown of the social paradigms, cultural frameworks, and ethical schema that would have allowed them to make sense of this evil in the first place. Surviving this catastrophe required inventing altogether new ways of living, new forms of sociality and culture, and new languages. But the destruction of previous lifeworlds and social relations are, for Scott, forever irreparable. Chapter 4 grapples with this reality through a reading of Orlando Patterson's 1972 novel *Die the Long Day*, which in Scott's gloss "offers us a possible lifeworld of new world slavery as an incitement to critical reflection on the thinkable moral experience of the enslaved" (195) and their attempts to fashion a meaningful way of living with and against the catastrophe of slavery.

Chapter 5 offers a new interpretive account of Eric Williams's 1944 book, *Capitalism and Slavery*, which famously argued that the wealth garnered from slavery laid the economic foundations of industrial capitalism in Britain and that it was the ideology of free trade attending industrial capitalism, rather than the moral crusade of abolitionists, that ultimately undermined the monopoly system within which slavery was embedded. Scott is much less interested in the historical veracity of the "Williams thesis," which has been vigorously debated since its publication, than he is in the literary qualities of the text, specifically, the way it is structured around the "poetic trope of irony" (260). Situating the book within the broader context of mid-century British imperial historiography, Scott elucidates how Williams used "the figure of irony as a compositional strategy" (283) to puncture romantic and self-congratulatory historical narratives that located the end of British slavery in the moral and humanitarian efforts of abolitionists. The Williams thesis naturally lends itself to an argument for reparations to Caribbean countries with entrenched legacies of slavery. If coerced labor of the enslaved produced the wealth that sustained industrial capitalism, then justice requires recompense

for that enrichment. Against this critical deployment, Scott argues that the motivating problematic of the text was the anticolonial search for national sovereignty free from the moral hubris of the British Empire. Contemporary activists and historians who turn to *Capitalism and Slavery* to articulate demands for reparations thus ignore that this is their problem, not Williams's.

Intriguingly, Valdez and Scott both characterize their accounts of the legacies of slavery and empire as genealogies, but it is clear that very different historical sensibilities are at work in the two. Valdez's is an avowedly emancipatory account aimed at narrating a history of the intersections of race, capitalism, and empire so as to normatively ground contemporary resistance movements. As Valdez writes, the book seeks to contribute to "the imagining and charting of alternative futures by clarifying the forms of entanglement, the continuities in forms of subjection, and the nodes of connection between apparently distinct realms of racial oppression" (4). Scott's sensibility is aimed instead at probing the limits of these very attempts to provide a politically usable past. Where Scott's work always asks whether the problems occupying anticolonial actors and thinkers of the past are our own, Valdez either answers in the positive or assumes that such questions are diversions from the task of emancipation in the postcolonial present. Scott, in all of his work to date, has never been so sanguine, and *Irreparable Evil* is no exception. Nevertheless, Valdez's and Scott's books speak to each other in interesting ways that illuminate their respective limitations. Scott's provocation is something that implicitly plagues Valdez's book. For all she attempts to turn to the visions of past anticolonial thinkers, it is at times unclear how and whether those past visions can and should continue to guide contemporary emancipatory politics. On the flip side, Valdez's engagement with various anticolonial figures shows that emancipationist narratives need not be as naïve and romantic as Scott caricatures them to be. All of the anticolonial figures Valdez examines are deeply attuned to the complexities and contradictions of self-other-determination, and none are rosy-eyed about overcoming the legacies of empire.

Nazmul Sultan's *Waiting for the People* almost self-consciously turns away from the sensibilities of both reparatory and emancipationist history in eschewing the "moral deficit of empire" (233) as the structuring problematic of Indian anticolonial thought. Sultan instead begins with an attempt to grapple with the theoretical dilemmas that preoccupied Indian anticolonial theorists "on their own terms" (233), even if those terms were partially contoured by imperial discourses. The upshot of departing from the moralization of reparatory history is a genuine attempt to understand how the global uptake of democracy in the twentieth century was experienced in postcolonial contexts by a majority of the world's population. Refusing the intellectual blackmail of being "for" or "against" developmentalism, Sultan powerfully illuminates how developmental reason comprises a "language of politics" rather than a "problem with determinable normative content" (229). The central insight of the book is that developmental languages and discourses

constituted the horizon of democratic possibility and the imaginaries of political peoplehood in anticolonial and postcolonial politics in India by giving rise to “the colonial problem of peoplehood” (13). While the underdevelopment of colonial people was a basic predicate of British imperial rule in India, it also posed recurring problems and crises to the claims of anticolonial actors for political sovereignty.

More precisely, the colonial problem of peoplehood arises when “the people” are taken to be temporally unfit for democratic self-rule, consigned to a stage of historical underdevelopment. The consignment of colonial people to the “not yet” of popular sovereignty makes “the people” unavailable as a source of authorization for anticolonial claims for self-rule. Put differently, the impoverishment and illiteracy of the people translated not just into a kind of moral or sociological backwardness but into a basic incapacity for political sovereignty. Anticolonial actors seeking a democratic India out of imperial rule were continually motivated by the need to turn the colonial masses into a political people. Yet they perpetually came up short, confronted with an unclaimable people who were not yet in a position to provide democratic legitimacy for the anticolonial project. The absence of the people as a political claim thus emerged as a recurring source of crisis. Deftly exploring a range of political thinkers across a variety of contexts from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, the focus of the book is on how two different intellectual and political responses to the colonial problem of peoplehood structured the contours of twentieth-century anti-colonial thought in India: what Sultan calls the *development critical* and the *development affirmative* responses.

The early chapters set the stage for the conceptual elucidation of these responses in the later chapters by exploring how, rather than a perennial problem of imperial rule and anticolonial resistance, the nexus of democracy and development that defined the colonial problem of peoplehood contingently emerged in a specific context in the nineteenth century. Chapter 1 focuses on the imperial careers of John Stuart Mill and a diplomat of the decaying Mughal Empire, Rammohun Roy. In key respects, Roy serves as a foil to Mill. While both were liberals concerned with the fate of empires in India, they departed over key questions of democracy and development. Roy did hold that the end of good government was improvement of the native population, but he did not tie this project of improvement to developmental temporalities premised on the position of native populations in civilizational hierarchies. The democracy-development nexus emerged most prominently, instead, in the work of J. S. Mill, who justified British imperial rule as a means of preparing the Indian masses for self-government. The role of developmentalism in Mill is by now quite familiar, but what Sultan shows is how these developmental dilemmas translated into a political problem of peoplehood. By positing a correspondence between the state of civilizational progress and the emergence of representative institutions, Mill upheld democracy as the highest end of imperial rule, but one that was perpetually deferred.

This temporal deferral of a democracy based on the incapacity of the people for sovereign authorization structured the emergence of anticolonial thought and politics in the late nineteenth century among the liberals of the Indian National Congress, which is the subject of chapter 2. Focusing on figures such as Dadabhai Naoroji and Surendranath Banerjea, Sultan argues that Indian liberals in the early phases of the Congress inherited the colonial problem of the backwardness of the people. Rather than contest the presupposition of the historical underdevelopment of the people, however, Congress liberals turned this premise of colonial administration against itself by claiming a greater role for native elites in self-government, even if that claim did not translate into a claim for sovereignty. While liberals like Naoroji and Banerjea accepted the image of the Indian masses as unfit for self-rule, they argued that colonial rule itself had drained away the political capacities of the people. Rejecting the norm that popular sovereignty had to ground self-government, they reversed the arrows by arguing that Indian self-government (through Indian inclusion in civil services and colonial legislation) would bring into existence the sovereign qualities of the people. In a sense, these Congress liberals mounted an immanent critique of the British Empire that set the stage for the formal rise of organized anticolonialism in India. But in doing so, they also reinforced the basic premises of imperial ideology upholding the unfitness of colonial subjects.

With the stage fully set, chapter 3 dives into the *development critical* tradition of anticolonial thought by charting the emergence of *swaraj* as the defining concept of Indian politics. The idea of *swaraj* emerged as the banner of anticolonial nationalism through the efforts of the “extremist” faction of the Congress, including figures such as Bipin Chandra Pal and Gangadhar Tilak, who stood opposed to the moderate and conciliatory approach of the liberals. Although they used the term *swaraj* to reject the liberal goal of achieving self-government from within empire, Pal and Tilak never fully broke from the terms set by the Congress liberals. They remained haunted by “the absent figure of the people” (112). With neither imperial nor popular sovereignty available to authorize claims to *swaraj*, the demands of the Congress radicals reached an impasse. All this background context is necessary to understand Sultan’s central motivation in this chapter, which is to explore how Mohandas Gandhi used the language of *swaraj* to outright dissolve the colonial problem of peoplehood and reject the terms of anticolonial action set by developmentalism. Rather than a problem of collective rule, Gandhi transformed *swaraj* into a problem of moral self-rule at the individual level. Accordingly, *swaraj* was no longer bound by the temporality of developmentalism, the need to wait for the people to be ready to don the mantle of popular sovereignty. By displacing the people as the figure of collective authority with the authorizing power of the individual, moral actor, Gandhi creatively disrupted the development-democracy nexus. The force of Gandhi’s thought resided in his efforts to cleave the problem of *swaraj* from the developmental paradigm. Instead of immanently negotiating the

colonial problem of peoplehood, Gandhi rejected altogether the figure of the people as the source of sovereign authority.

If the Gandhian wing of the development critical tradition dissolved the problem of colonial peoplehood into the moral authority of the individual actor, the federalist wing attempted to dissolve the problem into the pluralism of village republics. Chapter 4 explores how federalists Brajendranath Seal, Radhakamal Mukerjee, and Chittaranjan Das displaced the problems of peoplehood by seeking a departure from the very ideal of a single, unified sense of peoplehood. Instead of a cohesive image of the people that grounded the parliamentary state, pluralists sought a diffusion of self-rule in a federation of small-scale village republics. And instead of inhabiting a singular, sovereign will forged through a unilinear path of development, they envisioned the people as many-willed and as the product of a multiplicity of qualitatively different paths of development. Yet for Sultan, the federalists didn't fully resolve the problem of colonial peoplehood insofar as they remained reliant on a provisional image of the sovereign people to collectively authorize the end of imperial rule.

The last chapters turn to the development affirmative tradition of anticolonial thought. Chapter 5 focuses on Jawaharlal Nehru, who both restored and conceptually revised the developmental premises that plagued both liberals and radicals in the early decades of the Indian National Congress. Yet Nehru also innovated ways of moving beyond the impasse reached by these figures. Central to this developmental vision was Nehru's reconceptualization of the very meaning of sovereign statehood. The postcolonial state, for Nehru, had to assert sovereign control not just over the political space of territory but over temporality itself, over the rhythms and pacing of the developmental process. Accelerating the tempo of development through state control would bridge the temporal gap between colonial people's two bodies: the naked and hungry masses and the freely developed people. Drawing partially on the model of the Soviet Union, Nehru hoped that by making the people "plan conscious" (27), the developmental state would instill a sense of unity and futurity in the people, thus authorizing the sovereign authority of the state through temporal projection into the future.

Nehru assumed that this developmental schematic of temporal sovereignty would bring into being a unified people. But he also held that the unity of the people was a prerequisite of the postcolonial state claiming authority over development. Chapter 6 confronts this paradox—the fact that the unified people was at once cause and effect of the developmental state—by illustrating how the colonial problem of peoplehood clashed with another problem of democratic peoplehood, the so-called boundary problem. Centering two sites of the boundary problem—the caste problem and Hindu-Muslim conflict that culminated in the partitioning of Pakistan—the chapter looks to the work of B. R. Ambedkar and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, each of whom saw in the developmental state grave dangers to communal minorities stemming from popular majoritarianism. All in all, one of the distinctive

contributions of the book is to foreground the role of “temporal visions” in democratic politics. As Sultan shows, questions of time and temporality were not simply background contexts of political ideas but were themselves domains of thought, intervention, and action. With its compelling blend of theoretical synthesis and deep contextualization, *Waiting for the People* will transform historical and intellectual studies of developmentalism in post-colonial politics.

Sam Klug’s *The Internal Colony* joins Sultan in turning away from the motivating problematic of the moral deficit of empire by tracing the shifting and contested languages of the “internal colony” or “colonial analogy” used to convey the structural position of African Americans as a subjugated population within the racialized political economy of the United States. One of the central threads of the book is that African American internationalists used languages of colonialism to intervene in international developmental politics. By adopting the language of the internal colony, these Black internationalists fostered a politics of comparison in which colonial rule in Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia provided the model of rule against which racial inequality within the United States should be assessed. These initial insights provide the foundation for a profound reinterpretation of US racial politics in the postwar period. Seen through the lens of these colonial languages, Black internationalism was not merely a “global supplement” to domestic civil rights struggles that allowed for drawing connections between national and international politics (13). Instead, the international-inflected languages of colonialism and developmentalism provided the grammatical structures within which racialized economic inequality was contested, reproduced, and transformed.

The book unfolds through a series of ten short chapters that trace the evolution of the internal colony language from the 1940s to the early 1970s. Its first four chapters chart how this language first emerged as a political idiom in postwar debates about the reconstruction of international order. Chapters 1 and 2 begin with the signing of the Atlantic Charter in the early 1940s, in which the “material and ideological effects of the Second World War radically altered Americans’ expectations of the continued viability of European empires” (5). In the effort to construct a new international order out of the desolation and destruction of the war, postwar planners had to grapple with definitions of colonialism and their relationship to domestic racial hierarchy, and moreover, how this would all figure into the construction of the postwar institutional order. This presented an opportunity for African American thinkers and activists such as Ralph Bunche, W. E. B. Du Bois, Rayford Logan, and Merze Tate to insert a definition of colonialism as “a problem of *racialized economic exploitation*, one that the mere granting of political sovereignty would not be enough to solve” (emphasis in original, 6).

The primary site of the semantic politics of colonialism was an organization called the Committee on Africa, the War, and Peace Aims (CAWPA), funded by the philanthropist Anson Phelps Stokes. Chapters 1 and 2 trace the

internal politics of this organization, focusing on one of its primary outputs, a 1942 report called *The Atlantic Charter and Africa from an American Standpoint*. Drawing partially on the legacy of the Permanent Mandates Commission under the League of Nations, the report argued for placing African colonies under the tutelage of an international trustee commission. While this is a surprisingly moderate goal for anticolonial activists, Klug shows how it was really the result of compromise among conservative and more radical forces within CAWPA. But more significantly, the appeal of trusteeship to anticolonial actors within CAWPA had a political and intellectual basis that was underpinned by their notion of colonialism as racialized economic exploitation. Understood in these terms, the problem of colonialism was not simply one of alien political rule by an external power but rather the economic exploitation of colonized by the colonizer. Mere political sovereignty, in this regard, would not shield African colonies from racialized economic exploitation. By placing colonies under international trusteeship, CAWPA hoped to remove the profit motive from considerations of colonial governance, which would provide surer grounding for eventual independence. Nevertheless, as these proposals made their way into UN debates, they faced severe criticism from Black internationalists such as Kwame Nkrumah.

While the specific institutional proposal of international trusteeship subsided, the legacy of these debates was the analysis of colonialism as a form of racialized economic exploitation. By the end of WWII, languages of internal colonialism became indelibly tied to developmental politics in the postwar world. Indeed, debates around the development of colonial peoples in the postwar order became an important locus of struggle for Black internationalists who articulated colonialism as racialized exploitation. Chapters 3 and 4 examine how Black internationalists on both sides of the Atlantic such as Logan, George Padmore, and St. Clair Drake elaborated an “anticipatory critique of neocolonialism” (55) in which the achievement of political sovereignty for colonized territories would coexist alongside economic dependence on European powers. The anticipatory critique of neocolonialism, however, did not result in a singular political project but rather was a shared language that spanned Cold War divides. While some utilized it to mount suspicion of developmental projects that relied on Western capital, others called for developmental aid as a necessary means of achieving national sovereignty. What the chapters together compellingly show is that Black internationalism was deeply intertwined with modernization theory and developmentalism, and not always antagonistically. Rather, developmental politics served as the venue in which the anticipatory critique of neocolonialism played out.

Central to modernization theory in the 1950s was a view of the United States as “the first new nation” (91) to emerge from colonial status as a sovereign state. Presented as a model for global decolonization movements to follow, the first new nation language served a strategic function as US policymakers tried to ward off the alignment of anticolonialism with the

Soviet Union. Chapter 5 examines how Cold War intellectuals such as Seymour Martin Lipset, in casting the United States as a model of decolonization, commended American federalism as a viable means of dealing with problems of internal pluralism in postcolonial states. Yet in doing so, social scientists and foreign policymakers adhered to a more limited definition of colonialism as alien rule rather than the more expansive rendering of racialized economic exploitation. In this context, Black radicals such as Harold Cruse articulated alternative languages of “domestic colonialism” (95) as a direct response to the first new nation discourse to capture broader dynamics than mere foreign political control. Cruse clashed with Cold War social scientists not over the applicability of the term “colonialism” to US contexts, but over its scope and meaning.

Such debates set the stage for how the meaning of internal colonialism evolved over the course of the 1960s, which is the focus of the remaining five chapters of the book. Chapters 6 and 7 argue that colonial comparisons regarding African Americans as internally underdeveloped became a mainstay of liberal social policy in the War on Poverty. Underdevelopment among African Americans, however, was understood by US policymakers and social scientists not as the result of economic exploitation and dependency, but rather as the result of a “culture of poverty,” an assumption that underpinned “community action” programs at the center of the War on Poverty (117). A central feature of these programs was the cultivation of “indigenous leadership” (119) of grassroots organizations that would guide the integration of underdeveloped communities into mainstream society. The effect was to channel community participation through indigenous elites, leading to a form of “brokerage politics” (114). It was out of engagement with these programs that the Black psychologist Kenneth Clark developed a critique of “social welfare colonialism” that cast philanthropic agencies fighting Black poverty as relying on a form of indirect rule embodied in indigenous leadership. Clark then elaborated the more territorially specific notion of the “ghetto-as-colony” (137) which became a centerpiece of the Black Power movement despite Clark’s own antipathy to Black nationalist politics.

Chapters 8 and 9 pick up on the role of the colonial analogy in the broader Black Power movement in the mid to late 1960s. After the passage of the voting and civil rights acts in 1964 and 1965, which signaled progressive albeit slow reform, the Black freedom movement faced a “crisis of vocabulary” (153) that called for a conceptual rearticulation of a more radical critique of racial oppression. Figures such as Malcolm X, Jack O’Dell, James Forman, and James and Grace Lee Boggs began to outline the colonial analogy as a sustained social theory, explaining Black oppression in response to the perceived limits of the language of “second-class citizenship,” which remains attached to narratives of creedal nationalism characteristic of post-war racial liberalism (153). Central to the uptake of colonial analogies was the translation of Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. But the colonial analogy was not without its limits. Evident in the 1967 publication of Stokely Carmichael

and Charles Hamilton's *Black Power*, the colonial analogy became indelibly tied to a model of "ethnic group pluralism" (168). Here, the internal colony language served as a metaphor for unity within an ethnic enclave, which would enhance the bargaining position of Black communities within a pluralistic society.

The consequence of this was the potential for languages of internal colonialism to semantically drift away from the definition of colonialism as racialized exploitation that had grounded its emergence in the first place. Chapter 10 looks to how a range of Black radicals such as Robert Allen, James Boggs, and Huey Newton sought to stem this semantic drift by disassociating the colonial analogy from its pluralist connections and recentering the role of political economy in achieving substantive decolonization. Paradoxically, the ultimate legacy of these efforts was Huey Newton's turn away from revolutionary nationalism toward what he awkwardly termed "intercommunalism" (199). Discarding the idea of internal colonialism, Newton argued for a shift from the land question animating revolutionary nationalist movements to what he called the technology question, which better accounted for the diffusion of networks of racialized economic exploitation through transnational capitalism. As the Black Power movement fractured in the 1970s, the language of internal colonialism transformed largely into an academic concept. Nevertheless, evident in the rhetoric of the Black Lives Matter movement and a host of other examples such as MSNBC host Chris Hayes's 2018 book, *A Colony in a Nation*, "the politics of colonial comparison" (207) is enjoying a resurgence of critical attention.

By tracing the long arc of the language of internal colonialism in the Black freedom movement, Klug has performed an invaluable service to scholars and activists alike. One of the central insights of this account is that the notion of African Americans as an internal colony is not so much a singular political project with shared normative entailments as it is a contested language of politics. Taking this further, embracing the language of internal colonialism was not a *de facto* radical position that ensued in the Black nationalist politics of separatism. Rather, it resulted in a range of liberal, conservative, nationalist, and even anti-nationalist political programs.

Despite their different contextual emphases, Klug and Sultan both depart from the strictures of emancipatory and reparatory history offered by Valdez and Scott, trading focus on how anticolonial actors confronted the moral deficit of empire for a richer account of the terms and dilemmas that guided their own struggles. Part of what this means is that anticolonial actors often couch their own arguments and actions against empire and colonialism in the very linguistic terms and discourses of imperialism. This is most evident in the way both Klug and Sultan converge on an understanding of developmentalism not as a foregone normative conclusion but as the terrain of anticolonial politics in the twentieth century. Together, however, all four books further reveal what is at stake in the different ways we narrate the contemporary legacies of colonialism and historical trajectories of anticolonial

thought. What, ultimately, are the political ends of grappling with colonial legacies in the present? Emancipation? Reparation? Or a more modest and textured genealogy of the categorical architecture and linguistic terms of anticolonial politics?