



A Colony in a Nation

Dan Lowe

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especially Muslims, creating an intense desire for securitization that closes borders, and creates strong-sounding leaders like Donald Trump and Theresa May.

Part of this malaise is a heightened individualization, in which the “uncertainties of human existence are privatized” (59) and which Bauman has written about elsewhere; manifested in a contemporary “society of performance” which replaces Foucault’s disciplinary society. Shaped by the logics of markets, this can only generate failure and depression. Here speaks a man who has spent his professional life in universities in which students and academics alike are turned into a series of metrics that measure and compare performances.

Bauman’s dystopian portrait of what amount to the lethal dynamics of globalization is not without redress. He argues from the position of a humanism that embraces the stranger, and which steps back from the abyss of insecurity and individualism to more collective social arrangements: “collective wellbeing” in which we live in “mutual peace, solidarity and cooperation, amidst strangers” as opposed to the alternative, the possibility of “collective extinction” (72). Kant’s appeal to hospitality and his concept of morality are important in guiding Bauman’s thoughts here, as elsewhere in the book, where Kant supplies the philosophical architecture of the alternative to the circumstances Bauman so lucidly criticizes.

This is a dark book, written at the end of a long and intellectually productive life. It paints a disturbing and recognizable sociological portrait of what Bauman calls the “existential insecurity” through which we are living; one of his last contributions to the analysis of UK society by one of its major sociologists. And in the spirit of a progressive humanism, he points us in kinder and less brutal directions. Let’s hope he is right.

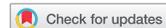
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A Colony in a Nation, by Chris Hayes, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2017, 256 pp., \$26.95 (hardback), ISBN 9780393254228

The mounting number of deaths of unarmed black men and women at the hands of police has made a tense debate about race and policing in the United States unavoidable. With some notable exceptions, academics have been slow to join this debate. This is not a criticism; to be done well, scholarship must move at a different pace from the 24-hour news cycle. But in the meantime, scholars who wish to think about these deaths and the issue of race and policing must look to other sources of analysis.

Chris Hayes is a journalist, but his recent volume contains much of interest for scholars concerned with racial justice. The conventional way of characterizing the

problem of race and policing in the United States is that our criminal justice system involves disturbing racial disparities. But this characterization, Hayes argues, obscures the deeper reality of how criminal justice operates in this country. Hayes' thesis is that 'American criminal justice isn't one system with massive racial disparities but two distinct regimes. One (the Nation) is the kind of policing regime you expect in a democracy; the other (the Colony) is the kind you expect in an occupied land' (32). The deaths noted above are aberrations only in the Nation; in the Colony, they are the result of the second criminal justice system functioning normally.

Hayes initially develops this framework through a discussion of Ferguson, Missouri – the town which erupted in protest after the death of Michael Brown. When protestors clashed with police, the world saw law enforcement bristling with military-grade equipment. As Hayes notes, this militarized overreaction is characteristic of colonial control. The illegitimacy of the colonial ruler requires more force than the traditional instruments of order, and the occupier feels the distinctive fear of those who must govern a community of which they are not a part.

The contrast between the Colony and Nation is most striking in Hayes' discussion of elite college campuses. There are places where illegal drugs are used frequently; sporting events regularly involve widespread drunken, disorderly revelry; and where acting out is romanticized as youthful hijinks. Many of these crimes are violent, as the epidemic of sexual assault on campus shows. And yet, there is no impulse toward implementing stop and frisk there. Indeed, any such proposal would face immediate rebellion from the rich, white parents of students. Where we tolerate over-enforcement determines who gets to live in the Nation and who must live in the Colony.

Hayes' most unexpected insights come from the comparison of Ferguson not with the usual examples discussed in postcolonial theory but with the British colonies on the eve of the American Revolution. The financial exploitation of the colonies parallels the fees and fines used by the primarily white city government to extract wealth from the black population. (Hayes includes the astonishing fact that the year Michael Brown was killed, police filed 53,000 traffic violations in Ferguson – a city of only 22,000 people.) Here, Hayes is at his best, interweaving history and contemporary events to illuminate these tragic deaths. It is not accidental, on Hayes' account, that many of the victims of police brutality interacted with the police only because of some minor infraction – Eric Garner selling loose cigarettes; Michael Brown walking in the middle of the street; Sandra Bland failing to signal a lane change. The over-policing of minor infractions is in fact characteristic of colonial control.

Despite these merits, scholars will find real deficiencies here. Hayes offers only a cursory engagement with the literature on mass incarceration and Broken Windows policing, too speculative to be persuasive and too meandering to be informative. Others will find his lack of familiarity with postcolonial thought aggravating. And although Hayes' prose is always readable – and sometimes exceptional – many will not enjoy his unsystematic, occasionally meditative style.

At times, these meditations leave obvious gaps. The maddening inconsistency Hayes identifies in how we treat poor, black neighbourhoods and college campuses neglects the ideology which masks the inconsistency. The story, all too easy to recite, is that (white) college students are becoming productive, responsible

members of society, but poor urban blacks are not. Thus, reactionaries respond to every new police shooting with the same question: “Why aren’t we talking about black on black crime?” This would be a baffling non sequitur were it not presuming this ideology; namely, that which we normally talk about as rights – rights against police harassment, against unreasonable search and seizure, and ultimately against being killed – are not really rights at all, but privileges, which some groups might fail to earn. And the judgement about which groups are deserving and which are not is informed by the group’s race. Hence, as Hayes himself notes, the opioid epidemic among whites has not spurred calls for a tough-on-crime crackdown, but compassionate reconsideration of addiction as a disease. This ideology of racialized deservingness isn’t developed in Hayes’ book, but it does as much as anything to maintain the boundary between Colony and Nation.

Nevertheless, this conceptual framework has great value. White Americans often react to each police shooting with confused defensiveness. Their experiences with the police are not consistent with how Black Lives Matter activists describe police behaviour. Hayes’ volume can help them see what is so crucial, that the white experience of crime and policing is usually only an experience of the Nation – and so a poor reflection of how things go in the Colony. As Hayes notes, “for white Americans, lethal violence is nearly as rare as it is in Finland; for black Americans, it’s nearly as common as it is in Mexico. So to talk about *the* American experience of crime and punishment is to miss the point” (24, emphasis added). If readers come away from this volume with a framework for understanding nothing more than this, the time reading it will have been worthwhile.

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Trying to get over: African American directors after Blaxploitation, 1977-1986, by Keith Corson, Austin, TX, University of Texas Press, 2016, ix +275, US\$27.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-4773-0908-7

Trying to get over by Keith Corson makes a significant contribution to the history of film studies in the United States by filling in the void after the Blaxploitation era that began in the early to mid-late 70s. The central thesis is the phenomenal decline in Blaxploitation films (where Blaxploitation films produced in this era were at a peak in 1974 (forty-two films) to a drastic decline in 1980 (one film)). Blaxploitation films stem from the shift in structural racism in the white dominated culture of Hollywood to racialized financial interest to capitalize on profits from the rise of a Black Culture Industry during the miserable decline of the Civil