Class, Ethnicity, and Social Inequality

CHRISTOPHER McALL

1992

McGill-Queen's University Press
Montreal & Kingston • London • Buffalo

Contents

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Collective Containment: Ethnicity and the Colonial Frontier

The confrontation between an exploding, urbanized, industrial civilization, constantly in need of raw materials and expanding markets in which to sell those raw materials transformed into finished products, and the more localized, repetitive, and traditional societies that preceded and surround it is, first, a material one. It begins with the exchange of material goods in the form of a long-distance trade in exotica, bringing, for example, spices, silks, and cloisonné-ware to late medieval Europe. It continues with the extraction of raw materials for transformation by industrial societies, as well as the more organized production of those same exotica for consumption, in the form of tea, sugar, and coffee plantations. And it culminates with the gradual displacement of the process of transformation to areas outside the old industrial heartlands.

In Marxian terms we could say that we are moving towards, or have already arrived at, global relations of production, in which the class differences that exist within the old established industrial societies pale into insignificance beside those that now exist between producer and consumer states. As with all attempts, however, to reduce the complexity of social organization to a set of clear-cut oppositions - whether between ethnic groups or between classes or among whatever constructions one chooses to place on that complexity - the rapidly changing system of production and consumption that one attempts to encapsulate within those constructions or oppositions continually manages to elude, deny, or refute them.

Alongside that material confrontation is a confrontation between peoples, in which differences in material standard of living and the ability to dominate and control by force of arms are taken by the dominant to be significant of inherent differences in capability among the peoples so brought into confrontation. It can be said that no people has been so duped by that confrontation as the British, who happened, by historical accident, to have ridden the crest of the first tidal wave of industrialization that swept

across Europe and produced secondary shock waves in the non-European world. In terms of the Protestant creed, which succeeded in remodelling the Christian conscience in line with capitalist practice, the very success of imperial expansion was taken to be an indication of the possession of God's grace and the mission of the British to civilize, convert, and generally anglicize the unenlightened.

The material confrontation thus coincided with an ideological one, which served both to justify and mystify the first. Nor was that grand ideological scheme necessarily destroyed with the end of empire. The protected peoples who were finally "granted" independence in the post-Second World War world were considered to have "grown out" of their previous barbarism under British tutelage and to be ready to fulfil their adult role as independent nation-states. The divine mission accorded to the British in the nineteenth century was considered to have been successfully carried out, and the nuclear family of the Empire gradually evolved into the extended family of the Commonwealth, except for those few ungrateful individuals who cut their links with the family altogether. This was the ideological explanation of empire that grew up alongside it, accompanied its downfall, and survives in the British consciousness as the memory of Empire.

It would, however, be unfair to say that that view of non-British subject peoples was shared in any uniform way across British society. It contributed to the ethnically constituted, overarching "British" identity that served as the ideological cement of British class society, but the ruling class and its ideological lieutenants among the intellectual petty bourgeoisie were equally duped by the appearances of their own class-divided society. The nineteenth-century eugenics movement, for example, under the leadership of Francis Galton, expressed the belief that the working classes were genetically inferior to the upper classes and that society was for that reason marked by evident social and material inequality.[1] Social inequality flowed from biological superiority and inferiority. Hierarchical class society was the social expression of natural differences. Relations of material and political inequality were thus as mystified by the dominant classes within Britain on "natural" grounds as they were within the framework of empire.

The ideological confrontation between the colonizer and the colonized, or between the imperial power and those who were subject to that power is not, therefore, essentially one between two "peoples," although in certain circumstances it can come to take that form. It is rather the continuation at the colonial or imperial level of the ideological justification of social inequality within the metropolitan society. The crises of identity experienced by colonized peoples and referred to by Sivanandan or Fanon are matched by the crisis of identity experienced within English class society by the emigrant who leaves the working-class domain and is catapulted by selective education into the state bureaucracy, the professional petty

bourgeoisie, or the upper middle class.[2] Similarly, the voyage to the end of the world by Lévi-Strauss in order to discover society in its Rousseauesque primitive state is paralleled by the voyages of Old Etonians such as Orwell into the depths of English working-class life.[3] In the case of both Lévi-Strauss and Orwell, members of a dominant class set out in search of the "other" who is necessary for the establishing of their own class identity. In this chapter I look particularly at the colonial encounter, but without forgetting the ethnic aspects of the class encounter within the industrial homeland.

In every empire from the Roman onwards, and presumably before, empire-builders have encountered two categories of peoples: those who live on the edge or beyond the bounds of the territory to be subjugated, and those who live within those bounds. Marginal peoples had to be prevented from erupting across the frontier into the subjugated zone and robbing that zone of precisely those riches that the imperial power had reserved to itself. In Roman Britain, for example, the productive cornlands of the southeast and the riches of the new urban civilization in the lowland areas were constantly under threat from the non-subjugated peoples living beyond the bounds of the settled zone.[4] The boundary between subjugated and non-subjugated territory tended to lie along the edge of the highland areas, which made penetration and subjugation difficult, and there was often no economic incentive to subjugate those areas, unless it was to exploit the tin mines of the Cornish peninsula or the silver and lead mines of Wales, except in so far as they threatened the economic life and security of the lowlands. Altogether the highland zones represented a difficult and expensive problem and one that was never resolved by the imperial administration. Roman armies were constantly tied down in expeditions that were successful only as long as they lasted (rather like contemporary police anti-street-crime operations in London). Supply lines were difficult to maintain, ambushes difficult to avoid, and the set-piece battles in which individualistic Celtic heroics inevitably came to grief against Roman discipline and superior military technology were difficult to engineer. The Romans were reduced to punitive expeditions across the lines of forts and occasionally walls that separated them from the hill peoples, and in the case of the Scottish Highlands, the "problem" was only finally resolved by the wholesale clearances of the early nineteenth century.

The British in India were confronted by a similar problem on the North-West Frontier, which equally was never resolved. Endless British expeditions set out from the plains of the Punjab to punish the Pathans for the murders of British officials and harassment of the trade routes into Afghanistan.[5] None of these expeditions succeeded in doing anything more than suffering heavier losses than anywhere else on the imperial frontiers and spurring on the hill tribes to more violent acts of revenge and

resistance. According to Elliott's pro-imperial account of the North-West Frontier campaigns, the Pathans never understood that the British were not interested in subjugating the hill peoples but just in punishing them and preventing them from disturbing the Pax Britannica that applied to the east. They were thus incapable of understanding that the aerial bombing campaigns of the 1930s were ultimately for their own good and that the endless attempts to annihilate their fighting capacity were not intended to threaten their political freedom.

The other face of the coin for the British was that the frontier provided a never-ending challenge for military ingenuity and foolhardy courage (as Northern Ireland still does), and operational disasters only served to whet the appetite of the soldiery to try again. At the same time, defeat at the hands of the Pathans gave rise to an admiration for those same Pathans, and thus a deep ambiguity in the attitude of the would-be dominant power. The pro-imperial accounts, of course, fail to appreciate the moral imperatives operating in Pathan society, in which any military encroachment is an offence against honour and any casualties inflicted require revenge.[6] The British version of the North-West Frontier campaign, therefore, constitutes another example of the situation in which a dominant power mystifies itself about its own motives, while those subjected to that attempted domination are in no position to so mystify themselves.

Both the Roman and the British Indian examples relate to established, geographically fixed frontiers, which coincide with an ideological account of nations undergoing civilization for their own good on one side and thoughtless barbarians unhelpfully (but at the same time courageously) trying to disrupt that process from the other. The frontier is not, however, always so fixed. The process of colonial juxtaposition leading to articulation and eventual domination begins with the frontier surrounding the trading post, continues with the colonizer establishing his presence elsewhere in the territory from within the security of a mobile armed force, and ultimately can lead to the ending of resistance throughout the area by the establishment of an overall paramilitary presence. This is the process described in Jeffries' pro-imperial account of the colonial police,[7] which concerns the way in which the frontier dividing controlled from uncontrolled territory is gradually pushed back to more natural geopolitical boundaries. This again is accompanied by the ideological distinction between the "tame" and the "wild", with the remnants of the untamed natives being gradually harassed, pushed back, and encircled, and if possible brought within the fold of civilization or, in the case of the "wild" Irish, executed, deported, or otherwise disposed of. On the one side of the fixed or movable frontier, therefore, we find the wild and the untamed, and on the other the recently tamed, the latter being subjected to the self-mystified reforming zeal of colonial administrators.

British administrators were generally concerned to anglicize, Christian-

ize, and generally "civilize" their colonial subjects out of their barbaric non-European habits, but they were careful to maintain rigid social barriers between themselves and those same subjects. This echoes Norwegian-Lapp relations as described by Eidheim, where Lapps are encouraged to Norwegianize themselves but are not accepted as Norwegians.[8] Thus the British expatriate community in India deplored the non-Englishness of their subjects from within the confines of their compound while at the same time maintaining the strictest possible controls over entry into the European club, which remained an island of exaggerated English ethnicity. As Gorer points out, however, the "natives" were frequently only a backdrop to the really important oppositions that were established within the community itself between the representatives of the different British classes.[9] The engineers, technical staff, and lower-grade functionaries would always be held at the greatest possible social distance by the higher-grade civil servants of altogether different social origins. The threat was not so much that of being overwhelmed and slaughtered by the surrounding population, which was something that had on occasion to be stoically accepted, but rather of being confronted by fellow British colonials of lower social rank who took advantage of the enforced intimacy of colonial life to get ideas above their station. However, if one's first loyalty was to one's class, one's second was still to one's fellow Britons, and the colonized population beyond the compound remained an object of suspicion, contempt, and paternalistic affection.

The most that could be hoped for from the colonized was that they should produce a pale copy of British discipline and virtue. As is stated in a pro-imperial history of British India (published in 1921), the great triumph of the British in India was to have "westernized" Indians, even if the process had not gone the lengths of producing a "class of 'Indians in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.'"[10] That latter passage, as quoted, had been written in the previous century but none the less serves to illustrate the guiding principle of colonial administration. The problem for the administrator was twofold. First, the native had fundamental defects of character. He was lazy, fickle, untrustworthy, cunning, elaborately deceitful, and yet honest to the point of simplicity, recklessly brave, cowardly, emotional, hot-headed, irrational, inexplicably attached to wasteful traditions and rituals, ungrateful, and unpredictable. In Darling's study of the Punjab, the native "problem" is summed up by such defects.[11] The administrator's second problem, however, was the tendency of the sterling British character, which had been reared in the invigorating atmosphere of the English Home Counties and was possessed of all the Protestant virtues, to be corrupted by the Indian climate. One had, therefore, to instil those virtues by example before they had had time to go to seed.

So the Indians were everything that the British were not, although to

be fair, Darling does distinguish among different peoples. Conditions in any area are dictated by ecology and by character. By constructing irrigation canals in the Punjab, the British administration congratulated itself on having resolved the first of these two problems, and then set out to find the native character that was best suited to cultivate the land made available. The Rajput and the Mea are rejected as being innately lazy – because they prefer aristocratic warfare and live near Delhi – but the Jat are tall, hard-working, and strong, and the Ahirs are equally hard-working after many generations of struggle in the hostile environment of the sands.[12] The best of native character, however, having been brought into the best of environments, inevitably succumbs to the wiles of the money-lender, given the childlike attitudes of the peasant in questions of finance.[13]

The process of taming, domesticating, and anglicizing the "natives" within the imperial frontiers, and above all the encouragement of settled farming, the rationalization of holdings, and the attempt to put an end to the enactment of superstitious rites when the British veterinary surgeon should have been called for, all run headlong into the problem of native character. The distant Victorian father-figure, meting out punishment and doses of affection by turns, is thus more than matched by the paternalistic colonial administrator, punishing the impudence of the tribesmen beyond the frontiers and putting up in an affectionate, long-suffering way with the foibles and recalcitrance of his settled subjects. Such pro-imperial accounts of the British experience in India tend to restrict themselves to the political and the ideological, the particular domains of the administrator and the natural subject for recollection and contemplation in retirement. The material or economic rationale behind the imperial presence can be seen to be of little significance beside the battles and campaigns waged by the agents of the East India Company and the gradual extension of their control over ever-larger areas of India, or beside the perennial struggle of the administrator with the "defects" of native character.

The determinant role of the material encounter is equally submerged in relation to nineteenth-century Ireland, where the lack of security of tenure and lack of compensation for improvement combined to provide little motivation for the peasantry to improve their holdings. Indeed, to improve one's holding normally meant that one would be removed from it so that it could be let at a higher rent by the landlord (frequently resident in England).[14] The nature of tenure thus led to the demoralization and hopelessness of the Irish peasantry, which was itself interpreted in dominant English opinion to mean that the Irish peasant was inherently lazy, careless, and uninterested in improvement.[15] The Irish "problem" was seen to be one of Irish character rather than one determined by colonial policy. This was also true of attitudes towards Ireland as a whole, where the lack of industrial development and agricultural improvement was generally

interpreted as a result of the defects of Irish character rather than of the inhibiting of Irish manufacturing industry by the dumping of British goods on the Irish market.

The history of empire and of colonialism from the pro-imperial viewpoint illustrates the Weberian thesis that the privileged will go to any lengths to legitimize and justify their privileges.[16] Officially one can say that the British considered themselves to have been divinely selected to remodel character along the lines of northern Protestant virtue and to confer the benefits of English political institutions on backward and disorganized peoples. That there was some profit to be made in this process was just a happy coincidence and, of course, a sign of divine approval for the whole scheme. There were certain cases, however, where the gap between civilization and barbarism was so wide as to make the possibility of Europeanization, and preferably anglicization (since non-English Europeans are themselves not untainted by barbarism), seem doomed from the outset. This was particularly so in the case of the American Indians. Colonists in South America tended to resolve the problem by eliminating the indigenous peoples altogether, whether by hunting them down or simply by introducing diseases against which they had no resistance. These methods were also usefully employed in North America, but administrators and missionaries were increasingly preoccupied with the necessity of Christianizing and Europeanizing the natives who survived.

In Canada colonial administrators were brought up against the problem of properly controlling and administering seasonally nomadic peoples who had no knowledge of their language and no understanding of their institutions. As long as Europeans and native peoples had only trading contact, which was mutually beneficial inasmuch as European guns and ammunition made hunting easier, there was little direct interference. But as the colonization developed, conflict over land and resource use developed alongside it and brought the colonial administration to restrict and delimit areas reserved to Indian use.[17] Again, alongside the restriction of native access to resources, there grew up an elaborate ideological structure that explained, justified, and mystified that restriction. According to the ideology, the natives had to be "civilized," and their salvation ensured. It was thus necessary to bring them within fixed bounds where they could be encouraged to settle down, cultivate the land, be converted, taught French or English, and generally be prepared for integration into the wider European society.[18] The ostensible reason for the system of reserves, therefore, was not economic or even political – although in terms of economics and politics there were certain convenient by-products – but to ensure the reform of native character such that the natives so reformed could disappear into the dominant Euro-Canadian population. In European ideology the purpose of this process was to introduce the Indians to the benefits of civili-

zation, but at the same time it necessarily involved the eradication of Indian languages and customs, since, as Canadian federal legislators stated in 1891, as long as they spoke their own language, they constituted a separate people.[19]

The logic behind the ideology is similar to that found throughout pro-imperial and pro-colonial historiography. The difference between colonizers and colonized was not simply one between backward and advanced, or non-civilized and civilized, but between immaturity and maturity. As in Darling's account of the Punjab, the colonized peoples of North America were held to be in a state of chronic immaturity. The role assumed by the colonial administration was one of protective paternalism, since without such protection, it was maintained that incoming Europeans would ride roughshod over those whom the lieutenant governor of Upper Canada referred to circa 1836 as "red children."[20] The federal government thus took the Indians into wardship, with the idea that only when individuals could be considered to have reached a state of maturity – that is, to have lost their own language and culture – could they be let loose into the wider society. This rule referred principally to male "status" Indians. From 1869 until the mid-1980s Indian women who married whites were automatically barred from band membership, it being evidently presumed that the children of a white male would be *ipso facto* non-Indian, although here a political-economic counter-explanation tended to disguise that racist and sexist belief.[21] The explanation was that white males had to be prevented from taking up residence within reserves since they would tend to dominate and exploit the Indians.

The Indian peoples of Canada remain in the 1980s under the guardianship of the federal government, in accordance with nineteenth-century paternalistic ideology. The number of Indians who chose to be enfranchised and become part of the great adult Canadian family had dwindled to 1 in 1974–75, although in the same year 590 women were forcibly ejected from band membership by marrying whites.[22] The setting up of reserves thus failed to bring about the disappearance of Indian people as had been hoped, and the federal government has been obliged to seek other means to bring about the same end of disappearance through assimilation, as expressed in the 1969 White Paper, which was subsequently shelved but not forgotten in government circles.[23]

At the beginning of this chapter I made a distinction between the untamed peoples beyond the imperial frontiers and those who find themselves within those frontiers and who are subject to being tamed, anglicized, civilized, and generally rendered innocuous. The North American Indians both found themselves within the imperial frontiers and yet proved to be untamable. Hence the erecting of an internal frontier in the form of the reserve boundary, within which the wild and the unassimilable could

be contained. The confrontation between marginalized indigenous peoples in Canada and the federal and provincial governments acting on behalf of major public and private corporations has long since come to a head with the development of mining, hydroelectric and forestry projects, and natural gas and oil prospection and extraction in the Canadian north. Native peoples who were forgotten and ignored as long as federal and provincial governments had no economic interest in the north have now become a central concern of those same governments. This was one of the factors that underlay the federal government's 1969 White Paper. The position put forward was that the protected status of Indians should be brought to an end, that reserve lands should be turned into disposable private property, and that Indians should become full, tax-paying Canadian citizens like everyone else and subject to provincial jurisdiction.[24] Ideologically, that process of assimilation was to put an end to second-class citizenship (and third-class citizenship in the case of Indian women), but underlying the ideology of equality is the more material and political question of Indian land-claims.

The federal government refused to recognize Indian claims to large areas of the north that are known to be rich in natural resources. The underlying intention of the White Paper is to resolve the Indian "problem" so as to make native peoples indistinguishable from the rest of the population and therefore in no position to press embarrassing land-claims on the basis of their existence as distinct peoples. In the event, the White Paper had the opposite effect as far as native peoples were concerned, making them even more sensitive to federal government attempts to nullify their campaign for the recognition of land rights and self-determination. This process of having to eliminate the threat posed by indigenous peoples who stand in the way of economic development can be seen in the case of the James Bay hydroelectric project in Quebec.

What is now northern Quebec officially became part of Quebec in 1912, but the Quebec government expressed no interest in or concern for the area until 1960, incidentally having failed to come to the aid of the Inuit during the famine of the 1930s.[25] The situation then changed, as the Quebec government came to recognize the north's immense economic potential, and the province began to duplicate the educational and social services already offered by the federal government. In 1971 the vast James Bay hydroelectric project was begun without any prior consultation with the Indian communities whose lands were to be flooded. In November 1983 the Cree succeeded in getting an injunction to have work on the project stopped, a decision by Judge Malouf that created something of a panic among the American and European financial backers, the provincial government, and the state corporations responsible for the development. In fairly indecent haste the judgment was reversed by a superior court,

and the Quebec government decided to go for direct negotiation with the Indians and the Inuit rather than rely on the unpredictability of legal procedures. The Quebec Indian Association, however, insisted on negotiating within the framework of its overall land-claims, which called into question Quebec's sovereignty. This was unacceptable to the provincial government, which chose rather to negotiate directly with the native people most immediately concerned by the project, the Cree, as well as the Inuit to the north who were liable to be affected by later projects.[26]

The negotiating bodies of both these groups, the Grand Council of the Crees and the Northern Quebec Inuit Association, the latter of which appears to have been created in the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa in order to provide somebody with whom Quebec and Ottawa could negotiate,[27] both accepted the principle of Quebec sovereignty and also Quebec's rights to all subsoil resources. This involved the reciprocal recognition by both federal and provincial governments of the traditional rights of the native peoples to the land, but that recognition was only conceded by those governments in so far as the native peoples concerned were prepared to renounce those rights within the framework of the same agreement. By signing the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, therefore, the Cree and Inuit negotiators won recognition of and simultaneously signed away the traditional rights of their peoples to the land, while the two governments both conceded those rights and had them extinguished.[28]

The simultaneous recognition and extinction of native rights is foreshadowed in the conclusion of the Quebec Dorion Commission's report in 1971:

> An Indian title has existed. Its real nature is difficult to determine, but it seems to be usufructuary in character and above all related to traditional hunting and fishing rights linked to subsistence needs ... Whatever may have been the case ... it is necessary to find some way of replacing the "Indian title" in those areas of Québec which may be affected by it ... as a precursor to such replacement, it is obviously necessary to recognize the territorial rights linked to Indian title, with the intention of extinguishing them ... those rights, having disappeared, must then be replaced by such rights – individual or collective depending on the choice of the Amerindian people – as may include the right to hunt and fish for their own subsistence needs and those of their family, land grants, ... the enjoyment of all the monetary and other benefits that are available to citizens generally, in addition to a special development fund.[29]

The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement thus reflects the position of the Dorion Commission. It attempts to resolve the hitherto intractable problem of native title to land – in the case of those areas of northern

Quebec that are subject to the agreement – a problem that had threatened not only resource extraction but also federal and provincial sovereignty. In return for conceding that title, the Cree and Inuit obtained compensation, the spending of which was to be administered jointly by the recipients and the two governments, as well as exclusive rights to certain areas for hunting, trapping, and gathering, and semi-exclusive rights to other areas. In addition, all the communities were to be brought more closely into line with the south in terms of education, social welfare, communications, and justice.[30]

The James Bay Agreement was constructed on the basis of a particularly fragile premise, that it is possible to extinguish native rights. With the recognition of native rights in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982, the federal government instituted a process of consultation with native peoples and provincial governments in order to clarify the nature and extent of those rights within the constitution. By the end of the five-year period allowed, the constitutional talks reached a stalemate. In a document published by the federal government in 1986, Murray Coolican concludes that all treaties arrived at with native peoples since Confederation and founded on the principle of the global extinction of rights accompanied by the granting of limited new rights are essentially indefensible.[31] The James Bay Agreement, as a recent example of that principle, thus stands condemned. The relationship between the various non-native governments involved and native peoples remains fundamentally one between colonizers and colonized. A majority of non-native provincial governments refuse to recognize native title to land and native rights to self-government, while the native peoples refuse to make any concessions. Following the failure of the constitutional talks, native groups suggest that they will proceed to exercise their rights to self-government whether or not they are recognized.

The case of native peoples in Canada represents the continuity of an old colonial frontier and the continuity in attitudes across that frontier: incomprehension, paternalism, and impatience, bonded together in a form of diffuse racism, towards a people who refuse to be tamed and assimilated. Every now and again the frustration of native communities emerges in the unilateral exercise of traditional rights, which is then peremptorily curtailed by police or game wardens, as in the case of the confrontation between the Micmacs and the Quebec police over salmon fishing at Restigouche in 1981 and between the Mohawks and federal police over the sale of cigarettes at Kahnawake in 1988. Native peoples continue to be seen as a dangerous, unpredictable element on the edge of mainstream Canadian society, just as the impoverished Irish peasantry remained equally dangerously and unpredictably on the edge of nineteenth-century British industrial society.

As the colonial encounter was continuing in the form of the violent con-

frontation at Restigouche, the British police was enacting its own version of the encounter in London, Manchester, and Liverpool. Lord Scarman's report on that encounter presents a curiously one-sided picture of the series of clashes between young unemployed blacks (for the most part) and the police in Brixton.[32] He describes the events from behind the police lines and through the testimony of the police officers, such that the "rioters" themselves constitute an undifferentiated and uncontrollable mass somewhere behind the burning police vans. Every now and again an unidentifiable individual emerges from the mass to hurl a projectile or petrol bomb at the police and then disappear. In the final encounter, the police charge down the street and the mob melts away into the darkness down side-streets and alleys. Throughout the account we are made familiar with the feelings and injuries of individual, named policemen, while their adversaries remain unnamed and unknowable. On the one hand the report emphasizes the calm courage of individual police officers, and on the other the blind, animal-like fury of the mob.

Scarman's account of the English riots recalls accounts of other confrontations across the colonial frontier: on the one side of that frontier, the coolness and discipline of the Irish Peace Preservation Force, the European club members in Orwell's *Burmese Days*, or the relics of the British forces retreating from Kabul; and on the other, the secret societies of *banditti* who, in pro-imperial accounts, are held to have terrorized the Irish countryside (although we might ask who was really terrorizing whom),[33] the rioting Burmese, and the merciless Afghan tribesmen from whom only one man escaped alive into India.[34] In all these cases the opponent is unidentifiable, incomprehensible, barbaric, vengeful, and violent, in fact the counterpart beyond the frontier of the indolent, deceitful, and childlike peoples within it. In the experience of empire the military wrestles with the one and the long-suffering administrator with the other, but all such peoples prove useful in showing up the inestimably superior qualities of the British character that they so thoughtlessly refuse to imitate.

There is, therefore, a general similarity between the attitudes of the North American colonial governments, the imperial administrators in India, the under-secretary for Ireland and his entourage at Dublin Castle in the early nineteenth century, and the impartial investigator into street disturbances in English inner cities in 1981, whether towards the different indigenous peoples under their control or, in 1981, the children of labour migrants subject to official scrutiny. In each case the economic or material logic for the existence of that subordination, which in Britain led to an outburst of frustration on the part of the young black British working class, is subverted in the ideology of colonialism into the confrontation between a superior British ethnicity and a de-individualized irascible mob.