

Colonial Capitalism

THE IRRUPTION OF CAPITALISM

In November 2010 Prime Minister David Cameron and cabinet ministers on a trip to China caused a diplomatic stir when they refused the Chinese request to remove the red poppies they wore on their lapels. While the British regretted that the Chinese could not understand the cultural significance of the World War One remembrance symbols, the Chinese were offended by this reminder of a different variety of poppy—that which culminated in the Opium Wars of the mid-1800s, of which 2010 marked the 150th anniversary of China's defeat (Chapman 2010). The incident is a reminder of the extent to which Britain has forgotten its capitalist-imperialist involvement in China based on trade in a long history of tumultuous and imbalanced relations. The contemporary British eagerness to gain a bigger part of the export market share to China recalls the earlier attempt, with a similar uneasy apposition of being at once the weaker trading partner, in financial terms, yet imagining itself the stronger in terms of global geopolitical power. Today, the UK imports around £36 billion per annum from China, its second-largest trading partner. By contrast, China is only Britain's sixth most important export market, sending only around £14 billion, thus creating a significant trade deficit.¹ In the mid-eighteenth century, the imbalance was even starker, with British exports amounting to only 10% of its imports from China, predominantly tea and silk (Schirokauer and Brown 2013, 240). One response to this trade deficit, which depleted Britain's

wealth and haemorrhaged the national cash reserves, was to establish tea plantations in India, where British rule controlled the market from the plantations and processing to export, and thus ensured greater profit margins (Schirokauer and Brown 2013, 248). The other response was to become the suppliers of China's opium habit, securing a lucrative niche market for a product which they could grow in their own colony in India. The resulting trade surplus with China was won through Britain's monopoly on the industry, controlling all steps from the production to shipping and sale, the latter of which was reinforced following the First Opium War and the requisition of Hong Kong as a colonial possession for the explicit purpose of facilitating the drug trade, construed as upholding the tenets of the global 'free' market. Britain's handing back of the trading hub to the People's Republic of China in 1997 makes Hong Kong the most recent secession of Britain's colonial possessions.

Along with his poppy-wearing diplomatic faux pas, Cameron's speech at Peking University was also highly ironic, even hypocritical in the light of the historical opium trade. Cameron boasted of Europe's human rights tradition and urged China to embrace the Western free-trade economic model. He claims, 'China has attempted to avoid entanglement in global affairs in the past. But China's size and global reach means that this is no longer a realistic choice' (Cameron 2010, n.p.). The speech, which assumes Britain's upper hand in the geopolitical domain, wilfully forgets the long history of British gunboat diplomacy, open warfare, and the harm of opium in China, all enforced in the name of global free trade.² Postcolonial studies also suffers a similar amnesia, with considerable work on Sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and indigenous peoples of white-settler colonies detracting attention from other zones of European colonial aggression, such as China and South-East Asia. This chapter looks at a considerable body of historical fiction that brings back into the picture overlooked global spaces, in the Canton opium trade in Amitav Ghosh's Ibis trilogy, in the American form of imperialism in Hawai'i, in Kiana Davenport's *Shark Dialogues*, and in the Dutch, French, and British wrangling over the Dutch East Indies in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's work. The significant output of fiction written in the postcolonial era yet set in the colonial period indicates authors' motivations to join the dots between past and present eras of globalisation. Reading postcolonial historical fiction as reminders of forgotten pasts challenges the kind of short-sightedness that led Cameron to woo modern Chinese capitalism without regard to the historical relations between the two countries.

To focus on the early days of capitalism also exposes the range of responses colonised peoples took toward the new set of social relations, which in each unique colonial setting included members of a society who embraced nascent capitalism as well as those who resisted. The epic scope of much historical fiction, with large casts of characters and early examples of cross-cultural movement and contact, reveals how capitalism's irruption in the colonies differently affected members within colonised cultures, with pre-contact hierarchies and traditional cultural conventions of inequality reshaped into the capitalist model of wealth and income familiar today.

Finally, to write and read historical fiction of early capitalism in the colonies from today's framing position of neoliberal free-market globalisation is to highlight the similarities between these two periods. Far from imagining and portraying the past as a foreign country, these writers highlight the historical imposition of economic tenets central to the neoliberal time in which they write. The fiction dramatises the introduction of concepts such as the free market, user pays, and the uneven sharing of financial rewards based on meritocratic individual capability, as well as the privatisation of land and the conscription of the human body to labour that are capitalism's necessary foundations. Such beliefs and constructions, which are new, strange, and illogical for the historical characters, are familiar to the contemporary reader, who is placed in the uncomfortable position of witnessing the contested and forced birth of what has become, by our times, economic 'common sense.'

Just as Cameron's speech is representative of Britain's historical amnesia in regard to the opium trade, India's importance to British imperialism in China is a neglected aspect of Indian national history as well. India's role in the opium trade—such as the drug's production in Bengal, the key role of Indian ports in merchant shipping, Britain's financing of its Opium Wars with profits from India, and the significant role of a conscripted Indian army in the battle of Canton—all illustrate the global interconnectedness of the capitalist world-system in the colonial era. Indian historian and novelist Amitav Ghosh, in an interview about his research for his *Ibis* trilogy of novels about historical ties between India and China, comments thus:

Like most Indians, I had very little idea about opium. I had no idea that India was the largest opium exporter for centuries. I had no idea that opium was essentially the commodity which financed the British Raj in India. It is not a coincidence that 20 years after the opium trade stopped,

the Raj more or less packed up its bags and left. India was not a paying proposition any longer. ... Opium was the fundamental undergirding of our economy for centuries. It is strange that [even] for someone like me who studied history and knew a fair amount about Indian history, I was completely unaware of it. (2008b, n.p.)

Ghosh offers a fictional redress of the historical amnesia he outlines in his 2008 novel *Sea of Poppies*, the first of a trilogy that maps the opium trade from its roots in rural Bengal to the British invasion of Beijing in the Opium Wars.

Throughout this novel and its sequels, *River of Smoke* (2011) and *Flood of Fire* (2015), Ghosh foregrounds the economic imperatives that motivate colonial-era capitalism. At its peak in the early-to-mid-1800s, opium accounted for up to 20% of all Britain's revenues from India, earning even more than the importation of Indian cotton for manufacture in England. If the cloth industry is the much-heralded backbone of the British Industrial Revolution, then opium is the product that funded it: the two are interdependent, both managed by the East India Company monopoly. It is this economic history that Ghosh's novel encompasses, locating a postcolonial epic in the Chinese port of Canton in order to pull together the three edges of the trade triangle—India, China, Britain—so usually held apart. Indeed, before the company was liquidated in favour of the state-run colonial management of British imperial rule, this private consortium generated revenue greater than that of the whole of Britain (Robins 2003). Throughout the 1800s India financed 40% of Britain's total trade deficit (Chomsky 1999, 26). By 1900, the colonies as a whole accounted for one-quarter of Britain's capital—on par with national agriculture and housing combined (Piketty, 116–121).³

Analysis of China, which is usually disregarded by postcolonial studies, illustrates the close imbrication of capitalism and colonialism, and further foregrounds the violence used to capture the market and enforce its conversion to capitalism. The interdependence of India and China that Ghosh explores at length in his trilogy stresses the global movement of capital and produce that was enabled by mobile and co-optable labour and military, as well as by new financial concepts invented for colonial trade, particularly the public limited company, of which the Dutch and British East India Companies were the first, and insurance, such as Lloyd's of London, founded to insure slave ships. *Sea of Poppies* describes the workings of the opium industry from a number of narrative perspectives, including farmer,

factory worker, transporter, merchant, broker, purveyor, investor, and opium user. These multiple subjectivities each illustrate a facet of Britain's selective use of free-market principles to protect its own interests in the quest for profit and expanding market share, not only at the expense of the Indian subjects, whose land and labour made the industry possible, but also against other competitors aiming to wrest a share in this lucrative market. In calling on an enormous cast of characters from all social strata and cultural milieus, Ghosh narrates innumerable forms of violence done to characters lower down the economic pecking order, from domestic violence among poor opium farmers to hostile business takeovers among the international merchants. Ranging across caste, class, and culture, the novel acts out capitalist relations embedded into social interaction from the most intimate family relationship to the public spheres of East India Company directors and British parliament.

The novel's interwoven narrative, which eventually brings all the characters together on the *Ibis*, a boat bound for Mauritius, follows each character as they respond to narrowing sets of choices that led them to the *Ibis*, each pressured by the limitations of their respective social statuses. The lascar sailor Serang Ali and quadroon Zachary Reid are each condemned by their race to limited possibilities for promotion. Ah Fatt is crippled by his opium addiction; Paulette is circumscribed by the limitations European middle-class culture imposes on her gender; and Kalua acts within the bounds permitted by his status as an untouchable, the meagre rights to which he signs away in an indentured labour contract. Each storyline herein offers a version of the classic postcolonial trope of colonial abuse of the colonised. Even though the majority of characters have no direct contact with the white oppressor, internal social hierarchies such as class, caste, age, and gender produce and maintain inequalities that the British use and exploit.

In the various plot strands that bring the characters together on the *Ibis*, Ghosh demonstrates how economic inequality percolates through the entire fabric of the Indian social structure, with all sectors of society ensnared in the colonial economics of Britain's mercantile superiority. Indeed, the *Ibis* is the floating microcosm of the colonial economy, afloat in the very medium that enables it, the shipping trade routes and ports of the first era of globalisation. The ship physically embodies the combined and uneven composition of global capital of its time, in its history (slave transporter refitted for shipping opium) and trajectory (Baltimore, Patagonia, Calcutta, Mauritius, Java, Canton), as well as in the international composition of its provisions and its crew. In particular,

two main characters representing opposite ends of the Indian social spectrum—Deeti, an impoverished land tenant, and Raja Neel, a wealthy zamindar—illustrate the impact of Western capitalist land relations on Bengali society. Deeti describes the shift from the mixed crops of subsistence farming to poppy monoculture, forced by local agents of the British sahibs who now own the land (31). Following a poor harvest and the cost of caring for her dying husband, Deeti becomes indebted to a moneylender (163). As a poor widow, she lacks both economic and social capital, and is thus rendered literally useless to her family and to capitalism. Her options are limited either to being bodily discarded through forced sati on her husband's funeral pyre, or to existing as an appendage through a coerced marriage to her brother-in-law. She chooses instead another form of co-opted labour, fleeing her family to join the *girmityas*, indentured labourers. At the other end of the socio-economic scale, Raja Neel, a highly educated Bengali zamindar, loses his fortune and estate, and ends up a convict deported to Mauritius following a devious about-face by his erstwhile business partner Benjamin Burnham, head of a powerful British opium-trading merchant firm. The zamindar lends his wealth of land, assets, and contacts among the Hindu elite as investment capital to the entrepreneurial Burnham. After enjoying twenty years of high returns from the expanding opium trade, the zamindar borrows capital from Burnham to invest in high-risk, high-return stock. In a classic speculative market bubble familiar also in today's neoliberal economy, the bubble bursts in 1837 and Burnham calls in the loan and repossesses the zamindari land and properties on trumped-up criminal charges that dispossess Neel and his extended family from their ancestral lands (87–93).

The long backstory that Ghosh attributes these characters brings back into contemporary memory the importance of forced agricultural monoculture and dispossession of local zamindar elites as key strategies in Britain's colonial policy in India. In the 1793 Bengal Permanent Settlement Act, the British government supported the East India Company's imposition of British land tenure laws on the area in order to guarantee 90% of income from the land, extracted from the tenants by the zamindar landowners, who received a 10% cut. The Act caused a series of famines, dispossessed twenty million smallholder tenants, and with the zamindars defaulting on their tax quotas created a commercial property market boom, in which properties were bought by other zamindars, by British investors as absentee landlords, or sub-divided into unprofitable microtenures among lower-caste Indians. Ghosh inscribes

Burnham's repossession of Neel's zamindari within this particular opportunity: 'merchants who controlled their own production [of poppies], rather than depending on small farmers, would stand to multiply their already astronomical profits' (226).

Far from heralding the transition to a modernity characterised by development and progress, Ghosh portrays capitalism as resoundingly negative even for many traditional elites. As Mike Davis succinctly summarises in *Late Victorian Holocausts*, his analysis of market-induced famines that killed millions in Bengal:

Millions died, not outside the 'modern world system,' but in the very process of being forcibly incorporated into its economic and political structures. They died in the golden age of Liberal Capitalism; ... by the theological application of the sacred principles of Smith, Bentham and Mill. (2002, 9)⁴

The theorisation of the modern political economy, which emerged in the nineteenth century, conceives of development as the incrustation of capitalism everywhere, and of progress as a synonym for increasing profit. This commonplace emphasis on success, however, fails to register its hidden costs, often termed 'externalities'—the very word expresses the refusal of economic theory to see the myriad of indirect impacts as intrinsic to its practices. Davis's focus on the human toll of applying capitalist market principles to food as the basic necessity of human life, and the postcolonial insider views of Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, reveal the fundamental flaw or contradiction of classical economic theory that claims the superiority of the free market while causing death, dispossession, and devastation for a large number of people co-opted into its circle.

Ghosh is not alone in giving considerable narrative weight in fiction to this particular change of land ownership in redefining power relations in colonial Indian society. Sanjay Bahadur in *Hul: Cry Rebel* (2013) revisits a little-known historical moment in the dispossession of the Santal tribe by the East India Company and the resulting 1855 Santal rebellion. Similar to Ghosh's descriptions of Neel's dispossession from his zamindari, Bahadur, who trained as an economist, describes in considerable detail his characters' multiple financial motivations and accompanying strategies. The character of Bipin Roy becomes a rich zamindar by buying the land from a maharaja indebted to the East India Company. Demonstrating the capitalist accumulation and reinvestment of profit

on land that has been divorced from the local inhabitants, Bahadur describes how traders dupe cash-poor but asset-rich maharajas into giving them the rights to collect land revenue (Section 'July 1830,' para 5). Maharajas who buy land in other regions simulate colonial relations by themselves becoming outside investors, who 'looked upon land as merely an asset and a means of generating more profit. They neither had nor desired any understanding of the people who survived on those lands' (Section 'July 1830,' para 10). While Ghosh follows the money of the poppy crop to take his story from Bengal's fields to Canton's opium trade, Bahadur's narrative focus remains with the wealth of the land itself. His novel is thus national in scope and local in focus, delineating how the Santal tribal peoples' traditional territories were increasingly restricted by encroaching crop monoculture, and their traditional relations with the maharajas changed by the latter's adoption of capitalist land relations. In portraying nineteenth-century Santal resistance, Bahadur offers a historical context to the ongoing discrimination and immiseration of twenty-first-century tribal groups. By centralising Santal characters and their culture, he inscribes the modern-day relationship between the indigenous group and the Indian state within a postcolonial dynamic, calling for recognition, respect, and redress for historical wrongs from this form of internal colonialism.

The fact that both writers draw for different narrative purposes from the same historical information about the precise ways in which land was wrested from local to foreign ownership attests to the pervasive impact of emergent capitalism on India and on world trade. While the Santal rebellion and the Cantonese Opium Wars are on the surface unrelated events, they may both be seen as separate violent responses to the same pressures of changing land relations in the violent co-optation of colonised spaces into capitalist structures. The global geopolitics of early British empire-forming, which links India to China and the founding of Hong Kong, and the long history of indigenous immiseration which continues to occupy a marginalised place within Indian politics today, are both manifestations of local and global impacts of capitalist formation. Updated to a contemporary context, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her analysis of Mahasweta Devi's stories in *Imaginary Maps* (1995), names local complicity in the devastation of the environment in the name of free-flowing global capital, to the point where the map of the world is based on 'economic rather than national boundaries' (198). As literary explorations of a historically new financial map, both Ghosh's maritime

journey and Bahadur's walking the tribal boundary structure their narratives by following the money.

The truth of Ghosh's and Bahadur's fictional renditions of the colonial-era foundations of land privatisation and dispossession, and resultant criminalisation of the poor and exploitation of a newly landless labour force, is supported in historical evidence of such facts and figures. Unlike a historical document, however, the novel does not present one coherent argument. Rather, the polyphonic form of the novel allows multiple voices to express a range of often vacillating attitudes to the colonial enterprise, including collusion from the locals and reluctance from sympathetic colonials. Ghosh's and Bahadur's claims to the longevity of practices of dispossession and resistance to it are also the subject of Noam Chomsky's history of the long-term inequality of capitalist globalisation, *Profit over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (1999). Chomsky shows how colonial-era British politicians and historians were keenly aware of the negative social impacts of inserting capitalist land practices into Indian colonial administration. He cites the Bengal governor general William Bentinck's 1835 report on the repercussions of the abrupt arrival of Western capitalist land ownership:

[T]he settlement fashioned with great care and deliberation has unfortunately subjected the lower classes to most grievous oppression,' leaving misery that 'hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce,' as 'the bones of the cotton-weavers are bleaching the plains of India.'... The British governor-general observed that 'the "Permanent Settlement," though a failure in many other respects and in most important essentials, has this great advantage, at least, of having created a vast body of rich landed proprietors deeply interested in the continuance of the British Dominion and having complete command over the mass of the people.' (26)

The report from the Bengal governor general shows early British criticism of the rapacious origins and unfair distribution of colonial wealth. In their different prose mediums, Chomsky, Ghosh, and Bahadur bring back into contemporary consciousness historical voices of protest, which they apply to their contemporary political purpose of critiquing global inequality. In particular, both Chomsky and Ghosh quote from historical archives, either in direct citation or paraphrased through historical characters, to remind readers that there were vocal opponents to the unethical corporate practices of colonial times just as there are whistle-blowers and critics of neoliberalism today—alongside whom they position themselves.

The significant amount of recent postcolonial fiction that looks back to the historical moments of colonialism's implantation, such as Ghosh's and Bahadur's novels, invites readers to consider the contemporary relevance of long-forgotten events. In particular, these writers' emphases of economic history mesh with similar theories of long-range globalisation, such as the world-systems approach and longitudinal macro-economics. Certainly, the shift in moral norms that today condemns drug trafficking (while by no means managing to stamp out the practice or reduce its considerable part of world trade) allows a contemporary view of Britain's opium trade as a condemnable example of a now-outmoded imperialism. This change in attitude toward narcotics masks significant areas of continuity from past to present, in which the same principles of political economy pioneered by the East India Company, in particular, and British imperialism, in general, remain buried in global practices of privatisation and state military intervention normalised today.

Both Chomsky's non-fiction and Ghosh's fiction use their different mediums to expose the turbulent and violent historical birth of economic principles that are today seen as frictionless and imagined as timeless. In tracing the trajectory from colonial to neoliberal capitalism, they reveal the hidden traumas and structural inequalities on which the present system continues to be based. In his two histories of capitalism, *Kicking Away the Ladder* (2002) and *Bad Samaritans* (2007), economic historian Ha-Joon Chang exposes developed nations' 'bad Samaritan' attitudes to the developing world with strategies that preach the superiority of free-market liberal capitalism while 'kicking away the ladder' to growth, development, and wealth. Correcting the historical forgetting of the importance of the opium trade in the expansion of British capitalist political economy, Chang claims the 'real history of globalization' begins with Britain's colonial annexing of Hong Kong (2007, 24). Chang's economic histories have been popular with a general reading public interested in turning to the past to identify the roots of present economic problems. While Chang's economic histories have certainly sold particularly well, they are nowhere near as popular as Ghosh's fiction, or as blockbuster historical novels by other popular writers such as James Clavell, Bryce Courtney, and Wilbur Smith. While commonly snubbed by literary scholars, their bestsellers provide some of fiction's most vivid examples of the historical irruption of capitalism in their various geographical locations.

Ghosh's postcolonial history of early capitalism, Chomsky's recourse to history in his critique of neoliberalism *Profit over People*, and Chang's

attention to a long tradition of unequal trade relations imposed by powerful economies over weaker nations, actively contradict contemporary economic dogma of the objective and rational ‘free’ market. Conveniently forgetting historical British–Chinese trade relations, in his 2010 visit to China Cameron called for ‘[p]artnership not protectionism’: ‘Britain is the country that argues most passionately for globalisation and free trade. Free trade is in our DNA. And we want trade with China. As much of it as we can get’ (Cameron, n.p.). However, the history of Britain’s changing policy on tariffs belies Cameron’s neoliberal-era claim that free trade equates with freedom from tariffs. After embracing zero tariffs from the 1880s after fierce debate, Britain reintroduced trade tariffs after the shock of the Great Depression in the 1930s, repealed only in the early 1970s (Chang 2005, 52–56). In his 2005 address to the UN, President George W. Bush similarly forgot where isolationist policies historically came from—including 40% tariffs until 1945—when he blurred together the liberal philosophy of individual freedom with the liberal economics of free trade to claim:

We need to give the citizens of the poorest nations the same ability to access the world economy that the people of wealthy nations have, ... to ensure that they have the same opportunities to pursue their dreams, provide for their families, and live lives of dignity and self-reliance. And the greatest obstacles to achieving these goals are the tariffs and subsidies and barriers that isolate people of developing nations from the great opportunities of the 21st century. (Bush 2005, n.p.)

Both Cameron and Bush promote laissez-faire capitalism in the present as if their relationship with China and other developing countries is based on an equal footing, a premise that their long histories of trade protectionism belie.

Both Cameron’s and Bush’s discourses further align with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and core capitalist countries’ pressure on undeveloped nations *not* to invest in state-supported development of industry and technology. Rather, economic theory argues they should allow the market to decide their areas of competitive advantage, which consist of cheap manufactured goods in China and raw materials from most developing nations. The significance of state-owned businesses in growing China, however, challenges this assumption.⁵ Furthermore, as a concise example of Chang’s argument that

many of today's famous companies required years of state support and market protection before they could stand alone on the world market,⁶ the former colonial Ghazipur Opium and Alkaloid Works featured in *Sea of Poppies*, now nationalised, is today the world's largest provider of pharmaceutical opium derivatives, specialising in high-tech production of opium alkaloids. The factory, founded by the East India Company and later run by the British colonial government, has always been a state-run monopoly that has never been subject to competitive free trade.

In *World Orders Old and New* (1994), Chomsky gives an example from colonial Bengal of the hidden coercion and manipulation behind the tenet of the free market that Chang's history and Ghosh's novel identify. Chomsky cites eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources who describe imperial Britain's forced deindustrialisation of India and subsequent turn to cash-crop monocultures, particularly of poppies and cotton. In a historical example of a hostile takeover followed by asset stripping explicitly intended to quash competition, the East India Company invaded Bengal for its flourishing textile industry, which it promptly destroyed, leaving only the raw material of cotton farming, much of which was further converted to poppies. Dhaka, dubbed by the East India Company in 1757 'the Manchester of India'—'extensive, populous, and rich as the city of London'—was by 1840 reduced to an impoverished, backwards small town (Chomsky 1994, 115). Sven Beckert labels such strategies against competition as testifying to capitalism's 'illiberal origins' (2014, 37). Certainly, aspects of this historical transaction are familiar in corporate strategies today, including buying up the competition, corporate raids, and asset stripping.

As with the Bengal Permanent Settlement, described above, British analysts of the time were aware of the economic repercussions of their actions. One 1820s historian explains the benefit for Britain of this unfair market competition: 'the mills of Paisley and Manchester would have been stopped in their outset, and could scarcely have been again set in motion, even by the power of steam. They were created by the sacrifice of Indian manufacturers' (Horace Wilson [1826] qtd in Chomsky 1994, 115). Karl Marx gives a similar example of England's dismantling of Irish wool manufacture, a form of oppression by enforced backwardness that he claims to have been a common technique across European empires, which 'forcibly rooted out, in their dependent countries, all industry' ('Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist,' 830). It is this predatory strategy of reducing competition that leads Ghosh to claim in his interview about his *Ibis* trilogy that

‘[a]ll the empirical facts show you that British rule was a disaster for India. Before the British came 25% of the world trade originated in India. By the time they left it was less than 1%’ (Ghosh 2008b, n.p.). Historical examples of such aggressive protectionist strategies contradict today’s common understanding of market triumph as closely linked to superior technology: even the innovation of steam power would not have given enough competitive advantage to Britain’s fledgling textile industry without the active suppression of overseas competitors. Chang, for example, describes several strategies of historical British and American protectionism, such as trade embargoes, unequal treaties, and high import tariffs, which only opened to the free international market in the late 1800s, once the protected industries were developed enough to dominate (2007, 25; 40–46).⁷

The misunderstood and misapplied concept of the free market of low tariffs and no state support or intervention exemplifies hidden inequalities within capitalism’s mechanisms that are popularly construed as open and fair. Ghosh’s Ibis trilogy brings back into view the highly contested, turbulent history of modern economics by revealing the unlevel playing field and ‘bad Samaritan’ behaviour most evident at the moment of capitalism’s imposition in the colonies. In particular, the second novel, *River of Smoke*, dramatises the substantial tension and conflict in early colonial negotiation between private enterprise and state support. Whereas the first novel traces the product from Deeti’s field, the Ghazipur factory, and river transport to the Kolkata trading docks, the second volume relates the merchant middlemen, international shipping, and the opium’s sale at the port of Canton. Ghosh’s focus on characters involved in the East India Company is a reminder of the importance of private investment in the development of modern capitalism that emerged out of the Industrial Revolution at home and colonisation abroad. The instantiation of British involvement in India through a private speculative business consortium is often overlooked in popular understandings of colonialism as primarily a state-led, political, and ideological endeavour of national desires for expansion of its purportedly superior civilisation.⁸ Contradicting this misconception, economic historian Nuala Zahedieh⁹ argues that ‘[p]olicy was not driven by a body of theory underpinning systematic rules’ (2014, 392). Rather, she argues:

Expansion was largely financed and organised by private individuals. ... The state did not direct the policy but it did provide support, both because the commercial classes were active stakeholders in government, especially

after the Glorious Revolution, and because the policy promised economic growth and easily taxable revenue streams. (393)

This economic rather than cultural focus construes imperialism as quintessentially private rather than state led. Rather than being motivated by a national desire to spread its civilisation, expansion was primarily driven by the emerging theories of modern economics, and pioneered by self-interested, individual entrepreneurs free to circulate and to trade around the globe.

Supporting Zahedieh's argument for the avant-garde position of private investors ahead of the state, in *River of Smoke* Ghosh portrays the European merchants of the Canton Chamber of Commerce as a law unto themselves. They make illegal forays into northern Chinese ports looking for new markets by bribery or force (307), and take into their own hands decisions of local justice and its enforcement, yet claim impunity for their own illegal actions through protection as British citizens (368). The novel's climax portrays the standoff between European traders and Chinese compradors over the opium trade in Canton immediately preceding the First Opium War of 1839. The entrepreneurs defend their actions through recourse to economic 'common sense,' a belief in the scientific and objective nature of the market, which they tout as fact, thereby drawing the nascent discipline of economics into the Enlightenment principles of rationality.¹⁰ With their insight into political economy, the East India Company and other British trading barons proclaim that the government representative in Canton 'understands nothing of financial matters' (251) and that 'he should trust our leading merchants to represent our own best interests' (252). In the words of Burnham, regarding the merchants' power to declare war on the Chinese Emperor for his threatened opium embargo without consent from the British government, 'if such matters were left to Parliament there would *be* no Empire' (Ghosh 2008a, 123, italics in original). The traders' confidence that Britain will not pass unfavourable laws against the lucrative trade is furthered by their knowledge that a number of members of parliament have vested interests in the trade, as investors in the East India Company, shipping, banking, or colonial possessions (425).

In these plot developments, Ghosh's background as a historian is in strong evidence, with his fictional narrative closely following historical fact and argument. Writing about the close relationship between politics and business under early empire, Amartya Sen claims 'nearly a quarter

of the members of Parliament in London owned stock in the East India Company in the 1760s. ... The commercial interests at the beginning of the empire in India reached far into the British establishment' (2007, n.p.). Explaining eighteenth- and nineteenth-century patronage and corruption, R.R. Neild states, '[p]ublic offices were private property to be bought and sold' (62). The influential economist John Stuart Mill, for example, was an executive of the East India Company as well as a member of parliament. Overt in his dependence on historical research, or perhaps positioning his novel as biographical fiction, Ghosh retains in his novel the names of real-life British opium traders and members of parliament William Jardine and James Matheson, and John Dent, a trader who went on to become a leading official in Hong Kong after its annexation following the First Opium War.

Ghosh's merchants' claims that the function of government is to support and not to meddle in the market is a founding tenet of economic liberalism, upheld today even following economists' and financial analysts' catastrophic miscalculations that led to the 2008 global financial crisis. In concordance with capitalism's dependence on state support structures of policy, law, and the military, identified in neoliberal critique, Ghosh demonstrates the opium traders' reliance on British support for their illegal activities in China. The premonition that Great Britain would rather wage war against China than accept the Emperor's opium ban—and thus lose the British Empire's most lucrative industry—is foreshadowed in the earlier *Sea of Poppies*. From the privileged position of historical hindsight, in which the reader knows the outcome of China's attempt to reject the West's imposition of global free trade, Ghosh spells out the economic grounds for a war that has been largely forgotten today. Using the narrative opportunity of the unworldly aesthete Raja Neel asking Burnham the reasons for the downturn in the opium trade, Ghosh explains the threat to Britain's economy of a potential end to the opium trade to the equally uninformed reader:

But Mr Burnham! Are you saying that the British Empire will go to war to force opium on China?

... The war, when it comes, will not be for opium. It will be for a principle: for freedom – for the freedom of trade and for the freedom of the Chinese people. Free Trade is a right conferred on Man by God, and its principles apply as much to opium as to any other article of trade. More so perhaps, since in its absence many millions of natives would be denied the

lasting advantages of British influence. ... Do you imagine that British rule would be possible in this impoverished land if it were not for this source of wealth? (120)

Burnham's didactic language, ostensibly simplified for Neel and thus also the reader, offers a simplistic explanation of free-market liberalism and its hidden ideological foundations. Burnham's patronising tone conveys the alleged superiority of this economic system, and thus also the superiority of the British trader over the local Indian zamindar and the Chinese opium user. He further makes clear the drive for wealth as being behind Britain's God-given mission of expanding its sphere of 'influence,' thereby unmasking the economic over the civilising motivation of empire. In his emphatic proclamation, the primacy of the market renders Neel's humanist concerns secondary, as Burnham, in Chomsky's terms, privileges 'profit over people.'

Like the character of Neel in *Sea of Poppies*, whose high status in Indian society brings him in direct contact with the colonial administration, *River of Smoke* also features a narrator ambivalently positioned between the dominant foreigners and subjugated natives. Bahram Modi, a Parsi Indian merchant, is a private individual who acts out of his own entrepreneurial interests to gain respect from his wealthier in-laws in Bombay, boat builders contracted to the East India Company (47–60). As an Indian tai-pan in Canton, he is a cultural outsider, and although he is primarily in collusion with the British, he is emotionally aligned with the victims of colonisation, a useful position with which to expose the impact of merchant imperialism on both Indians and Chinese. Modi, to whom all European ideas and manners are foreign, narrates from his ideological remove the actions and claims made by Canton's British traders and merchants. His gaze exposes as strange the British beliefs and motivations that the modern-day Western reader may find unremarkable or even normal, and thus not notice. Modi's narrative control prepares the reader for speeches by British and American opium traders defending their trade that are shocking to the point of ludicrous, reinforcing through repetition Burnham's speech on free trade from the previous novel, quoted above:

I am quite confident that the attempts to ban opium will wither in the face of growing demand, it is not within the mandarins' power to withstand the elemental forces of Free Trade. (425)

Free Trade, Universal Free Trade, the extinction of all monopolies, and especially the most odious one, the Hong monopoly! ... 'To Free Trade,

gentlemen! ... It is the cleansing stream that will sweep away all tyrants, great and small!’ (428)

[I]t is not my hand that passes sentence upon those who choose the indulgence of opium. It is the work of another, invisible, omnipotent: it is the hand of freedom, of the market, of the spirit of liberty itself, which is none other than the breath of God. (486–487)

Is freedom not a principle as well as a right? Is there no principle at stake when free men claim the liberty to conduct their affairs without fear of tyrants and despots? (488)

Coming at the end of the second novel, after several hundred pages outlining the mechanisms through which opium is extracted, transported, and traded, the reader knows that the ‘freedom’ expressed in these quotes is heavily compromised. The pompous and earnest sincerity of these utterances ought to render them highly parodic to the contemporary reader. Yet, any sense of farce is undercut by the very real power wielded by these merchants, on behalf of the British Empire, which waits in the wings with a naval fleet, ready to invade the bellicose, protectionist China. Although these phrases sound absurd, the pantomimesque narrative takes a turn to realism when the reader learns from the Author’s Note that in many instances Ghosh is quoting verbatim from archival newspapers and letters (582). Indeed, the majority of the Western characters are based on famous historical figures, including Benjamin Burnham, Lancelot and John Dent, William Jardine, James Matheson, Charles King, Charles Elliot, and John Slade. In citing passages from, for example, Slade’s (2007) journalism from *The Canton Register* and King’s 1839 appeal to the colonial administrator to end the opium trade, Ghosh suggests that the location of fiction is not the novel but rather the tenets of free-market capitalism itself. In the absurdity of the above phrases about free trade, the reader sees the illusionary nature of key principles of the modern political economy.

If the language of such quotes rings anachronistic, the ideas they propound are not out of date. The liberal theories of freedom proclaimed by the tai-pans, both of the market and of the individual’s choice to consume, are indebted to Adam Smith’s concept of the free hand of the market and John Stuart Mill’s philosophy of individual freedom. The neoliberal interpretations of these classical economists’ theories, which are today taken for granted as common sense, are uncomfortably jarring to the modern reader familiar with many of the principles espoused

by the traders. The above medley of citations voices key concepts of the power of the individual as consumer, trade freedom as a principle, the invisible hand of the market, consumer-driven supply and demand, and anti-monopolies. Rather than the obscuring economic jargon and matter-of-fact tone of today's descriptions of the free market, Ghosh's bombastic, quasi-religious nineteenth-century idiom foregrounds the ideology of capitalism that is today usually hidden behind mathematical formulae and data. Ghosh thus provides a powerful critique of capitalist political economy by conveying familiar principles rendered suspicious and unethical by the unfamiliar language and unfamiliar setting of now-forgotten British imperialism in China. Known as a postcolonial writer, Ghosh's rewriting of the economic history of the opium trade asks for postcolonial studies to incorporate into its remit the injustice of British imperialism in China and the injustice of capitalism.

Britain comes out looking the villain on both economic and imperial fronts, as the contemporary reader takes a moral position against the blatant British greed to profit from now-illegal international drug trafficking. The trader's invocation of a God-given right to trade also sits uncomfortably with modern secular society's expectations of clear separation between church and state, and the shift of religious practice to the private sphere. At the same time, the elevation of money-making to such an exulted level of mystification, here rendered in ecclesiastical tones, is unnervingly close to contemporary society's thrall to Mammon. While the contemporary (white Western) reader might emotionally reject the opium traders' beliefs, he or she is cognitively aligned with the tenets of free-market liberalism that dominate today in a political economy directly descended from such historical figures, corporate strategies, and moments of state intervention.¹¹ It is exactly in such dissonant moments of recognition that Rita Felski locates the power of literature's epistemic and ethical insights (29–30). To recognise one's complicity in a system that has subjugated and marginalised the colonised Other is, of course, intrinsic to the white Western reader's experience of postcolonial literature. Ghosh's novel expands this complicity to include the reader's collusion in capitalism.

Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy exposes the illegal and underhand dealings of both private interests and the state in a distant historical and cultural setting; however, his novels have particular resonance in regard to the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath. For Felski, the flash of recognition experienced while reading, of seeing a part of one's own world exposed on the page, confounds the reader's 'sense of who and what they are' (23). Reading *River of Smoke* at

the time of its publication in 2011, when debate over state bailouts of banks and companies deemed ‘too big to fail’ was still prominent in the media, the reader recognised in a little-heard-of historical context similar dynamics of the neoliberal political platitudes that smoothed over the bullying of powerful private investors pushing the state into backing them up. Corroborating the truth of fiction and the fiction of economics, post-crisis pop-economics texts such as *Too Big to Fail* and *The Big Short*, which explicitly blame individuals and institutions for the 2008 crisis, offer contemporary versions of the crookedness of antipathetic characters in the opium trade. Indeed, if we shed the nineteenth-century idiom of Ghosh’s narrative, the ideas expounded by the opium traders are familiar to key twenty-first century neoliberal arguments. These include George W. Bush on American oil deals in post-invasion Iraq—‘[b]y expanding trade, we spread hope and opportunity to the corners of the world, and we strike a blow against the terrorists’ (2005, n.p.)—and Ben Bernanke, chairman of the US Federal Reserve, who supported Smith’s concept of the invisible hand in relation to trusting commercial banks and hedge funds just months before the collapse of sub-prime mortgages in late 2007 (Bernanke 2007, n.p.). Common across the pronouncements made by each of these advocates of free trade, from nineteenth-century opium traders to modern-day leaders such as Cameron, Bush, and Bernanke, is their great confidence in the political apparatus that supports them, even when their economic models are proven to be wrong.

In accounting for the extraordinary lengths to which the rich cling to disproven or controversial economic concepts, Thomas Piketty brings together examples from France’s *Belle Époque* and the contemporary USA to claim: ‘no hypocrisy is too great when economic and financial elites are obliged to defend their interests—and that includes economists who currently occupy an enviable place in the US income hierarchy’ (514). Piketty’s example of the tendency for the elite to package their self-interest as general norms chimes with the indignation with which Ghosh’s opium traders berate the appointed British governor to Canton’s attempts to curb the opium trade in the name of law rather than the free market: ‘[i]t is appalling that a man whose salary we pay should take it upon himself to impose Celestial misrule upon free man’ (382). Paul Krugman, in his review of Piketty’s *Capital*, refers to a similar Upton Sinclair quote on the US Gilded Age of the 1920s: ‘it is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it’ (2014, n.p.). Krugman, who argues that the 2010s represent a contemporary gilded age, claims the phenomenon is today repeated in the deluded

businessman's notion that his great wealth benefits the public good, as a contribution to the economy. Andrew Sorkin is more direct about the self-serving response of the public and private engineers of the crisis. He briefs his early post-crisis pop-economics book *Too Big to Fail* as 'the inside story of how Wall Street and Washington fought to save the financial system—and themselves' (Sorkin 2009, front cover). Nick Robins extends the logic of private–public collusion back to the East India Company, which he calls the forerunner of the modern multinational and the original 'too big to fail' corporation (2013, n.p.). Certainly, state intervention to rescue or regulate private corporations in the wake of the 2008 crisis, and the vigorous growth of some state companies in recent years, particularly in Brazil, Russia, India, China and developing countries, has renewed interest in such 'public-private hybrids,' of which the East India Company is a model (Robins 2013, n.p.). Just as the US government felt compelled to support the failing banking industry and key companies such as General Motors for the national good, in the nineteenth century the British government effectively nationalised the East India Company rather than lose its significant contribution to national wealth. Company shares were converted to government bonds, of which its parliamentary shareholders held a significant stake, and its infrastructures of land tenure, trading, and military support continued under the British Raj from 1858, as capitalism continued under formal colonialism (Robins 2006, 6).

Ghosh's Ibis trilogy makes an important link between colonial India, which is the nation and literature most privileged in postcolonial studies, and China, which does not feature in the discipline at all. Ghosh's *oeuvre* is a reminder of the forgotten areas of British imperialism, set in such locations as China in the Ibis trilogy; Burma, Malaya, and Thailand in *The Glass Palace*; and Egypt in *In an Antique Land*. The ongoing interest for postcolonial writers of revisiting the colonial contact period in lengthy historical novels stakes a claim for the continual significance in the present of the historical introduction of capitalism to the colonies. As all history reveals as much about the concerns of its time of writing as it does of the past it records, confluences and parallels between past and present political economies in historical fiction, particularly epics, are integral to the social realm and cultural imaginary these writers wish to convey. The broad panorama and multigenerational epic timeline of Ghosh's novels offer valuable longitudinal studies of the impact of the irruption of the capitalist world-system in colonial times and its continuation in its present neoliberal manifestation. This *longue durée* approach

reveals recurring structures of political economy and patterns of inequality both within a country and across colonial spaces, offering, in effect, an overview of the spread of globalisation through important routes and nodes in its web, mapping the international movement of capital—monetary, human, and ideological—in the first era of globalisation.

Ghosh's exploration of the British Empire in East and South-East Asia significantly broadens the postcolonial outlook to encompass the opium and spice trades; however, Britain's colonial endeavours must also be situated in the larger geopolitics of pan-European international relations of the colonial period. While most postcolonial analysis pays heed to the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, scholarship has altogether less to say about the allegiances and tensions between the colonisers, whose political wrangling at home was often enacted as dramas played out in the colonies. This academic bias is perhaps understandable when the subject of analysis is social and cultural influence, such as British education, religion, and cultural values imposed on and translated in British colonies, but it becomes untenable when applied to geopolitical factors such as strategic territories, extraction of resources, and investment and debt structures.

Positioned outside of the Anglocentric domination of histories of Western capitalism and of the British Empire, as well as the English-language dominance in postcolonial studies, the Dutch East Indies, viewed through the work of Indonesian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer, focuses attention on the wider geopolitical environment of the first age of globalisation. Pramoedya's Buru Quartet novels,¹² *This Earth of Mankind* (1982), *Child of All Nations* (1984), *Footsteps* (1990), and *House of Glass* (1996), map the history of Dutch colonialism in the East Indies from the Dutch East India Company's trading monopoly to Indonesian independence. Based on extensive archival research, Pramoedya's relentless advocacy of the power of the written word for nation-building is tempered by his imprisonment under both the colonial regime before independence and the second national government under Suharto throughout the 1970s, and his subsequent house arrest until 1992. Although he wrote in Bahasa Indonesia, Pramoedya's works were banned in Indonesia from their time of publication until 2005; he is most widely read outside of his country and in translation, of which Australian diplomat Max Lane's English translations were among the first.

The four-part historical epic traces the tumultuous rise of Indonesian nationalism amid and against Dutch colonialism, which Pramoedya

situates within a global context of power relations and political posturing among the colonial players in South-East Asia, which include Britain, France, Spain, Germany, and the USA, with Japan further waiting in the wings. Pramoedya's novels resonate particularly with Ghosh's Ibis trilogy because of the similar motivations and strategies used by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the British East India Company in Bengal and Canton. Both India and the Indonesian archipelago were ruled for over 200 years as royally sanctioned monopolies before being taken over by the state as administrative colonies. The British and Dutch charter companies, formed barely a year apart, were closely modelled on, influenced by, and competed with each other. Pramoedya's fictional portrayals of the violent insertion of Dutch colonial forced cultivation methods onto the land and into the cultures of the Indonesian isles echo Ghosh's representation of Bengali cash-crop monocultures. Like Ghosh, Pramoedya renders as fiction speeches and popular economic arguments of the colonial period, in which the historical language rings anachronistic although the arguments sound familiar to the modern reader. In their ability to make the past resonate in the present, such epics bridge the gap between different yet simultaneous forms of colonial capitalism, and between early and present forms of capitalism.

Pramoedya spells out the connecting threads of economic dependency that tie the Netherlands to their resource-rich colony and to the other European empires. For example, a fictional version of Dutch parliamentarian and radical liberal H. van Kollewijn makes a cameo appearance to explain 'that the first decades of the *Culture System*, also called Forced Cultivation, had saved Holland from the bankruptcy it faced due to the huge debts that were incurred through the wars in Europe in which Holland too was involved' (1990, 38, italics in original). In such passages, Pramoedya emphasises the Dutch East Indies' role in the global flows of colonial-era commerce, which extend far further than a simple relationship between the Netherlands and the East Indies. In other examples of international connectivity, the Indies are involved in the opium trade through Chinese guilds circumventing the British monopoly by smuggling Burmese opium overland through networks of ethnic Chinese Indonesians (1996, 2). The islands are constantly on their guard against American ships working out of the Philippines kidnapping Javanese to supply the South American mining industry (1996, 59). They are alert to the implication of Japan's 1904 colonial ambitions in Manchuria, Russia, and Korea, as Meiji-era Japan joined the European imperial drive to claim

foreign territories so that '[t]he non-European world, even to the smallest island in the ocean, had been swept up' (1990, 136). Made anxious by the Philippine–American War (1899–1902), the narrator of the final tome is aware of the precarity of colonial rule, and likens the insecurity in the early 1900s with earlier changes of colonial masters a century earlier¹³:

You must all pay more attention, gentlemen. If not ... we could have a second Philippines here in this pearl of a colony of ours. We could be kicked out. Another one of the Western countries will come in, perhaps America, perhaps Germany, or perhaps even England. ... It seems that none of you pays attention to colonial developments outside the Indies. That is very bad, gentlemen. Colonial affairs in Asia are all interconnected, like links in a chain. (1996, 48–49)

The speaker's admonishment of his audience of Dutch colonial administrators and nascent Indonesian nationalists might equally apply to the contemporary reader. The reminder to always consider the global politics of colonialism as well as its local manifestations unique to each site is a refrain throughout the novels. For Pramoedya, ending the final novel of his quartet before Indonesia's independence allows him to keep to the fore the uncertainty of the next stage of colonialism. Thus, his text brings back into focus the moments before this bifurcation, reminding readers of continuities and confluences later forgotten. Pramoedya's work may be considered postcolonial for its recuperative act of centring the colonial experience and indicting colonial abuse and injustice, yet his work is innovative for the way he does not lose sight of the very real Eurocentrism at the heart of empire, a mistake postcolonial analysis often makes in its haste to recuperate and validate heretofore silenced voices.

As Pramoedya understands, colonies are possessions to be fought over, delegated, and even swapped among the European powers according to geopolitics in faraway Europe: 'colonialism was not simply a local problem but an international one' (1996, 228); '[e]verything that is born here on Java is nothing but the echo of what happens on mainland Asia, and now Europe too' (1996, 264). Far from a one-way flow of influence, however, European geopolitics is also a source of inspiration for growing nationalism in the Asian sub-continent. Pramoedya outlines East Indian workers' movements organising around the Irish concept of boycott (1990, 261) and close interest in the Chinese nationalist movement, which resulted in the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty and the

founding of a republic in 1912, tracked throughout the quartet of novels. Similarly, Ghosh, in his earlier novel *The Glass Palace*, points to colonial interest in the conflict between European Russia and Asian Japan in the 1904–1905 Russo–Japanese War as fuelling Indian and Burmese nationalist movements, twinning support for Japan’s imperial victory with the early Swadeshi movement, boycotting British-made goods, and burning imported Lancashire cloth (105).

As pawns in a larger game, analysis of the colonies is incomplete without concomitant analysis of the dynamics in and between their imperial masters. This includes Japanese imperialism and its challenge to European empires, which culminated in the invasion of South-East Asia in the Pacific War, which Ghosh portrays in the Malayan section of his novel *The Glass Palace*.¹⁴ Of more prominence is the power-brokering within Europe over the Ottoman Empire, which led to World War One and resulted in a shift in, rather than an end to, colonial management, particularly in the Middle East. Whereas the great majority of World War One histories centralise only European politics,¹⁵ Pramodnya’s frequent reminders of other colonial contestations happening simultaneously yet off the pages of his books helps recall the importance of imperialism within Europe’s internal colonies of the Prussian, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman Empires. Both Ghosh (2001, 201) and Pramodnya (1996, 159) mention the Sarajevo assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that sparked World War One for its impact on their respective colonial economies. Outside of the apparent colonial connection, however, the Balkan question represents Europe’s own site of colonial contest between the competing empires, as well as an early example of a successful national independence movement. Similar to the external colonies, the Balkans were swapped between European powers, partitioned, remapped, and carved up with little regard to the area’s own interests: ‘a plaything of the great powers’ (Romein and Wertheim 1956, 85). As one policy historian states, ‘[t]he failure of the powers to agree on Serbia’s status—that is, whether she was “oriental” or “European”—was in a sense one of the major factors that led to the war’ (Trachtenberg 1993, 25). Lenin, who wrote *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* during the war, labels it ‘an annexationist, predatory, plunderous war ... for the division of the world, for the partition and repartition of the colonies, “spheres of influence” of financial capital, etc’ (1999, 27). Rosa Luxemburg, in her excoriating, poetic *Junius Pamphlet* 1916, enumerates the multiple ways in which the German bourgeois profited from the industries and supply chains that provisioned the

war, as '[b]usiness thrives in the ruins' (Chap. 1, n.p.), booming in an 'imperialist war [covered] with a lying mantle of national self-defence' (Chap. 7, n.p.). While the war certainly took a heavy toll on all participant nations, the post-war redistribution of colonial spaces concentrated colonial sources of wealth in favour of the Western allies. Germany's colonies were predominantly split between Britain and France,¹⁶ while Russia and the extensive Ottoman Empire were carved up, with Britain and France taking over protectorates in Egypt, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon at the precise moment when the potentials of oil were discovered.

In order to fulfil its own remit as the discipline dedicated to historical empire and its contemporary repercussions, postcolonial studies has much work to do in tracing the continuities rather than the ruptures between past and present forms of colonialism and across all its many sites. Ghosh's and Pramoedya's historical fiction return to view the economic functions of the colonies within the global commodities market by foregrounding British and Dutch economic theories more familiar to readers today than to the Indian, Chinese, and Indonesian characters confronted with them for the first time. The fiction demonstrates great knowledge of the wider geopolitical plain on which colonial history played out, which includes the conditions underpinning World War One and the influence of nationalist movements such as in the Balkans, Ireland, and China. Drawing attention to the geopolitical economic history of the colonies for their role within the European-led world-system challenges the shape of postcolonial studies to think past centring the margins as its main objective. It is only by following the historical trajectory of capitalism's spread that Britain's past trading relationship with China and the prominence of Indian opium production becomes evident. Both Cameron's and Bush's ignorance of this economic history signals the extent to which the narrative of capitalism has been written out of popular history, an oversight that postcolonial historical fiction does much to rectify.

CAPITALISM IN SETTLER COLONIES

The above study of colonial history emphasises how the motivations of empire were informed and shaped by the concepts of classical economics that already dominated discourse at home in Britain and Europe. All forms of colonisation revolved around the expansion of British trade: exploring shipping passages, claiming and developing new land in farming, plantations, and mines, and new industries and forms of commodity

production, as well as widening the base of the mercantile industry of finance, insurance, transport, and distribution (Zahedieh 2010, 392–393). These different expressions of imperialism cover all forms of colonisation, including white-settler nations, extractive and commodity colonies, and protectorates of strategic location. Although certainly colonisation was experienced differently in each unique space, they each shared a common quest for profit by instigating capitalist relations. All colonies are marked by negotiations for the commodification of land, natural resources, and human labour, as well as the financialisation of intangible concepts such as risk (insurance, speculation) and futures (credit, bonds, indentured labour). The capitalist underpinnings that drove the East India Company's rule in India to facilitate trade, and which motivated British naval warfare to annex the strategic-position colonies in Hong Kong (1841), Singapore (1867), Cyprus (1878), and Egypt (1882), are also evident in the white-settler colonies such as Australia and New Zealand.

Postcolonial study of the white-settler colonies has tended to centralise the relationship between settlers and indigenous peoples through which to analyse cross-cultural interaction and the building of national identity. Questions of class inequality within the settler group and social hierarchies within the indigenous society are, however, underanalysed. Today's spotlight on internal inequality within the nation makes it timely to investigate colonial-era access to capital and its present-day legacies. Structures and mechanisms of capitalist inequality instituted in early settlement have long-lasting repercussions, continuing today in the disproportionate poverty of indigenous peoples within developed nation-states. This section focuses firstly on internal relations within the settler society to tease out the new forms of capitalist-inflected social relations that stratified colonial society and continued British class relations in the new land. The second focus, on internal inequality within indigenous communities, challenges the tendency in postcolonial literary analysis to romanticise indigenous societies as egalitarian, equally victims of an imposed colonial system, and as always resistant to the capitalist processes that have all but destroyed their social and cultural practices. Identifying how, at the colonial moment, capitalism was integrated into pre-contact societies which already contained their own hierarchies is necessary for the explanation of how native comprador elites later propagated capitalist economic structures at the time of independence. Such focus on internal inequality, also known as internal colonialism, allows analysis of the structures and mechanisms by which economic inequality has been sustained from colonial to neocolonial to neoliberal times.

The importance of the colonies to the development of modern economics is evident in the frequency with which many of the classical economists write on the mechanics and ethics of imperialism, well before Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Smith, in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), writes dedicated chapters on the British colonies, in which he resoundingly condemns the East India Company's unethical business practices, its colonial brutality, and its unbridled power as a monopoly. His voice was only one of the many critics of the well-known rapacity of the East India Company's rule in India, which not only concerned early socialists such as Marx and Luxemburg but also featured in the work of much earlier economists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, notably John Locke, David Hume, Daniel Defoe, Malthus, Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill. Both Malthus and Mill were directly involved in the East India Company.

Colonial companies in the settler colonies were not necessarily based on a more equitable business model. Marx critiques Edward Gibbon Wakefield, British speculative investor in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand settlement companies, thus: '[i]t is the great merit of E.G. Wakefield to have discovered, not anything new about the Colonies, but to have discovered in the Colonies the truth as to the conditions of capitalist production in the mother country' ('The Modern Theory of Colonisation,' 839). The quote illustrates the understanding of colonialism as the continuity of capitalist relations already at work in the imperial centre; it further recognises the key role of the private company in expanding investment opportunities by moving capital abroad. In the case of settler colonies, this expansion includes human movement as another form of capital. As Jean-Paul Sartre tersely summarises in his portrayal of French imperialism in Algeria, '[t]he colonist is above all an artificial consumer, created overseas from nothing by a capitalism which is seeking new markets' (2001, 34). While Marx's and Sartre's comments might be interpreted from a postcolonial or an anti-neoliberal perspective as a critique of the colonial speculator's imposition of capitalist social relations on unsuspecting civilisations, for Wakefield the charge is merely common business sense. He heads his theory of colonial settlement, *A View of the Art of Colonization* (1849), with an epigraph from Mill: '[t] here need be no hesitation in affirming, that Colonization, in the present state of the world, is the very best affair of business, in which the capital of an old and wealthy country can possibly engage' (2001, n.p.). There is no hint of imperialism's civilising mission underpinning this comment.

In fact, the human dimension is absent, as profit over people is the unashamedly stated governing logic of this expression of colonial mentality.

Marx's reproach of Wakefield usefully identifies the way in which the capitalist means of production are clearer to see in the colonies because of the suddenness of their adaptation to capitalism, a point also made by Wakefield in his didactic accounts of the emerging colonial political economy that was already entrenched in Britain. The ideological motivations and mechanics of the insertion of capitalist social relations in the colonies are evident, whereas in Britain they had become so ingrained by the early 1800s as to appear normal and thus invisible. In the rapid and often-violent expropriation of indigenous peoples from their land, and their subsequent conversion to wage labourers or their isolation on reserved land, Marx's principles of primitive accumulation are seen in action, with British and colonial government policies and private investment strategies colluding in what Marx calls 'artificial means to ensure the poverty of the people' in the colonies in order to extract the maximum profit destined for Britain, 'in the interest of the so-called national wealth' ('The Modern Theory of Colonisation,' 839).

The irruption of colonial capitalism is perhaps most evident in the settlement of Australia. According to Marxist historians Ken Buckley and Ted Wheelwright, the prison colony, 'which initially contained no capitalists, no free labourers, and no peasants' (1988, 1) established a working capitalist structure within one generation. There was in effect no capitalism from the First Fleet arrival of convicts and salaried army officers at Sydney in 1788 until the arrival of free-settler immigrants with start-up capital around 1820; until then the penal colony was financed and provisioned by the British government. Yet by 1800, 30 officers and officials were the dominant landowners (35); by the mid-1800s, 42 squatters owned a further 13.6 million acres (3); and by the 1880s, 500 large land holdings accounted for half the land of New South Wales (9).¹⁷ While some ex-convicts were awarded small land allotments in the early years, this practice was soon stopped following parliamentary petitioners in London, including Wakefield, who argued for the need to keep land prices high in order to deter uneconomical subsistence farming. Instead, he encouraged a model of large-scale farming worked by a surplus labour force (Buckley and Wheelwright, 68–72; Wakefield, 52–55).

From early in its settlement history, the emerging Australian society was split between the officers and colonial administrators who granted land to themselves and a select group of moneyed immigrants, and a

large landless peasantry of convict labourers, ex-convicts, and displaced Aborigines (Buckley and Wheelwright, 34–42). This same government-employed elite monopolised the arriving cargoes of supplies from Britain in a method that Buckley and Wheelwright call Australia's 'first import cartel' (4). Both for land and resources, then, public (state) goods and money shared among a small elite at the expense of an impoverished majority established in the colony a capitalist political economy based on stark economic inequality. The soldiers initially brought to Australia to run the convict colonies were integral support for this emerging capitalism, quelling Aboriginal protest against land dispossession. Similarly, in New Zealand, permanent British troops subdued Maori unrest at having their land stolen or swindled by settler land companies such as Wakefield's. The clash culminated in the New Zealand Wars from the 1840s to the early 1870s, which resulted in confiscation of the land, which was redistributed among white settlers.

The speed at which capitalism was established in the settler colonies speaks to the importance of economic concerns inherent to colonisation, with Britain's eagerness to minimise costs resulting in significant power residing in the colonial elite as well as in the selective, expedient, and unequal application of British law. In his overview of the British Empire, historian Bernard Porter argues that the *laissez-faire*, minimalist intervention of British colonial law was in line with the newly popular economic liberalism at home, which rewarded entrepreneurial enterprise:

The colonists ... were British subjects, in nominally British territories, and under the ultimate protection of British arms; which made them the British government's responsibility. The latter should have kept them on a tighter rein. That it did not do so was a matter of choice, not necessity. The motive was to save the cost, both human and financial, of policing them properly. Behind *that* was the growing spirit of early nineteenth century Britain that all government, including policing, should be kept to a minimum, in order to allow enterprise to thrive – the sort of enterprise that had created the colonies in the first place. (2005, 7, italics in original)

Ghosh's portrayal of the British Canton opium traders' open disregard of their administrator's decrees offers a fictional corollary of Porter's argument. In Cecil Rhodes's settlement of Rhodesia, historian Muriel Chamberlain offers another example of Britain's hands-off approach, motivated by an 'almost obsessed' desire to keep costs low (1999, 52). She writes: '[i]n theory, the British government retained some control

over Rhodesian legislation and could veto any which was racially discriminatory. In fact, however, it did not exercise this right. The prejudice in favour of “the local man knowing best” was very strong at this time’ (53). Rhodes’s company ran Rhodesia until 1923.

Writing from the late 1980s of the new neoliberalism in Australia, Buckley and Wheelwright’s study of the emergence of capitalism in New South Wales directly contradicts the nationalist myths of meritocratic competition that underpin neoliberalism’s proclaimed freedom and equal opportunities for the individual to thrive. Instead, the historians insist on an altogether different set of skills and attributes that dictated economic success in the new colony:

Thrift and abstinence, the economists’ traditional explanation, had nothing to do with it [success]. The essentials were social status and patronage, which entailed access to modest amounts of initial capital, plus a certain degree of intelligence or low cunning. Luck played a part and ruthlessness was another useful attribute, especially in the case of ex-convicts who started with nothing but were able to make their first gains through petty trading which was beneath the dignity of their social superiors. (34)

For both Porter and Buckley and Wheelwright, injustice and inequality go hand in hand, a stance that in their era labelled them Marxists but today reads equally well as neoliberal critique.

The injustice and illegality of many of the structures and processes that typify settlement colonisation and subsequent colonial-era administration is the mainstay of postcolonial studies and its literary analysis. Nowhere is this injustice more blatant than in the colonisers’ treatment of indigenous peoples. And yet, in a number of postcolonial novels that revisit the early contact years, the pervasive violence that marks dispossession, marginalisation, and degradation into emotional and material poverty is portrayed as not only of whites to autochthones but more generally of rich to poor everywhere. Analysis of the generation and distribution of material wealth in the settler colonies makes evident the poverty in which a vast number of people—both native and lower-class settler—lived throughout the nineteenth century and up until the Great Depression of the 1930s, when inequality peaked. Many years before Piketty’s percentile breakdown of capital inequality revealed the high concentration of wealth and the absence of a middle class until the mid-twentieth century, Buckley and Wheelwright cited the findings of

Australia's 1915 census, which showed that the top 10% of income earners received 40% of all national income, and the top 5% owned 66% of national wealth, with the vast majority of people owning nothing at all (15).¹⁸ Focusing on this historical economic inequality debunks the tenacious myth that the settler colonies were—and are—classless and egalitarian within the white majority.¹⁹ Structures of historical capitalism are the precursors of contemporary inequality, which follows the same patterns in the neoliberal era.

In *That Deadman Dance*, Aboriginal Australian writer Kim Scott portrays the contact between Aborigines and the first generations of settlers in Western Australia. A bestselling, prize-winning novel that is recommended high-school English reading on the national curriculum, Scott's fictional narrative paints a vivid picture of the emergent economic and social structure historicised by Buckley and Wheelwright, with his characters filling the Marxist critics' class schema uncannily closely. The first part of the novel, set 1833–1835, portrays the shift from military outpost to colony. Dr Cross, a retiring military surgeon who uses his wife's inheritance, his rank, and his connection with the colonial governor to purchase land for himself²⁰ advises the new governor on how to develop the harbour town by attracting settlers with capital and by encouraging trade with the itinerant sealing and whaling ships. Wealthy settlers, he continues, will 'create a mutual demand and supply,' 'secur[e] against want,' palliate inflation of the 'extravagant prices of the necessities of life,' and 'attract the labourer, who is of paramount importance' (37). The type of capitalist immigrant Cross intends is represented in the novel by new arrival Geordie Chainé, who arrives on the boat with 'two prefabricated houses. He had money and stock, tools and enterprise, which he'd been promised was enough for him to be granted land' (18). With the right permits and official recognition, Chainé quickly sets up business and his entrepreneurship expands constantly throughout the novel, hiring more and more people to work for him in his various businesses, which include a bar, a farm, whaleboat crews, and merchandise.

The need for labourers to work for settlers such as Chainé, identified in Cross's recommendation and also considered at length in Wakefield's theory of colonisation, is exemplified in the novel by Killam, the only working-class white character given an inside narrative perspective. A low-rank soldier who struggles to get a foothold in the capitalist economy, Killam supplements his meagre government income with the most basic forms of profit-skimming from privileges he accesses through his

army duties: petty stealing, bartering, and smuggling. Thus, while working on the state vegetable garden, he holds back a little 'surplus' (185) to trade for himself (121). From his customs-officer duty to row out to the whaling boats, he smuggles grog which he resells in his shebeen. Yet such informal economy is quickly taken over by those with permits and official recognition. Thus, the new governor takes over the garrison garden for his private use (185), and Chaine buys the first official town liquor licence and employs Killam to work in it for a low wage. Killam's entrepreneurship is thwarted, a phenomenon identified by Buckley and Wheelwright as typical: '[o]nce rigidities of structure set in, there was very little opportunity' (41). Describing himself as '[j]ust a man trying to make his own way. Trying to advance his-self' (186), Killam recognises that his own brain and brawn are not enough, and in order to make a profit rather than merely scraping by, he needs luck, capital, patronage, and labourers to work for him (187).

The social structure of first-generation settlement that Scott portrays reads as a textbook illustration of Wakefield's theories of emergent capitalism. Structuring the novel through the various narrative viewpoints of characters representative of each social class allows readers a window into the motivations underpinning colonial relations. The social-realist voice used for white-settler perspectives conveys several aspects of capitalist logic: forward-thinking scheming for social advancement; calculations of labour and capital in terms of expenditure and rewards; and the matter-of-fact rationale that excuses morally dubious behaviour as necessary and logical to meet these ends. These patterns are seen to repeat on each level of the class hierarchy: Chaine exploits Killam, and the latter, aping Chaine's business strategies in his efforts for upward mobility, reproduces the same social relations to those lower down on the social scale.

In the use of unfree convict labour, colonial Australia practiced a form of internal colonialism by submitting people of their own ethnicity and nationality to the exploitation and subjugation more commonly understood in the unequal power relations between the coloniser and the colonised. Importing capital class relations entailed, to a certain extent, importing a form of British class relations into settler colonies. Ellen Meiksins Wood argues that 'traditional imperialism had much in common with certain domestic class relations' (2). Both class and colonialism create and maintain hierarchical relations based on economic forms of coercion that are backed up by political, military, and judicial forms of control (4). The term 'internal colonialism' is useful for the way in

which it registers structures of economic inequality within a nation, ethnic group, or community, while retaining in focus the colonial roots of these iniquities—which are also concomitantly capitalist roots.²¹ In their unpaid work and restricted movement, convicts were subject to the discriminatory practices and attitudes of British colonists, who imported British relationships and hierarchies of class, gender, and region, with particular marginalisation of the Irish, as well as the significant yet undervalued non-paid labour of women.

In one well-known example of internal colonialism in Australian historical fiction, Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* (2005), the freed convict and new landowner Thornhill replicates the harsh treatment he was subjected to as a convict labourer, to lord it over his former friend and fellow convict assigned to him as indentured prisoner (175). Contradicting Grenville's tale of Thornhill's upward mobility, however, the historical record suggests that most unskilled ex-convicts did not have access to land ownership. Constrained by the social stigma of their criminal background to a life of low wages and itinerant and insecure work, discrimination from the moneyed settler community often resulted in precarity or poverty that lasted several years or even several generations. Peter Carey gives a poignant example in *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000), a hard-hitting novel that portrays from the victims' perspective the relentless persecution of three generations of the Irish Kelly family by colonial administrators, police, social superiors, and members of their own Irish underclass. In each case of unjust or illegal maltreatment, which offer multiple instances of Buckley and Wheelwright's formula for upward mobility, the Kelly family loses out in order for others to profit. Throughout the novel, the Kellys' struggle for land tenure represents the broader class struggle of the emergent society. Inequality is inscribed in the quality and quantity of land, from the large stations occupied by wealthy squatters to the marginal land of small selection leases, bought by precariously employed labourers and ex-convicts such as Ned Kelly's father. This class struggle is played out, quite literally, on the land, which must be adequately cleared, fenced, and stocked, or else it will be confiscated. The Kelly family's failure to conform to genteel Anglo farming expectations is interpreted by the administrative powers that persecute them as reflecting a moral failure, and they are deemed unfit to represent the landed class on which Australia's nationhood is based.

Like Killam's efforts in *That Dead Man Dance*, each of the Kellys' efforts of entrepreneurship are thwarted by those who maintain their

advantage through political connections, capital, and illegal means, which reveal the unlevel playing field of capitalist competition and lock them in the poverty trap. The fact of historical inequality and the ruthless means for gaining land are still acknowledged in Australia's contemporary narrative of national cultural identity. In Baz Luhrmann's movie epic *Australia* (2008), the station worker Fletcher kills his boss, takes over the role of cattle baron, and justifies his hostile takeover attempts of the neighbouring farm thus: 'Your land? My family worked this property for three generations. My father died making people like you rich. Faraway Downs belongs to me.' The construct of the 'great Aussie battler' comprises not only an embattled position against the hostile land but also a fight for upward mobility against imported British class structures. What both the novels and the film suggest, however, is that the poor can only win the battle if they are prepared to cheat, steal, or kill; in stark contrast to the sportsman-like notion of 'fair play,' the playing field of economic success is shown to be rigged. The sympathetic portrayal of such battling characters as Killam in *That Deadman Dance* and Ned Kelly in *True History of the Kelly Gang* exposes the foundations of the nation as neither wholly heroic nor utterly barbaric. Rather, the 'average' Everyman settler is a willing hard-worker turned into a petty criminal by the competitive scramble encouraged within the logic of possible upward mobility.

Analysis of the reproduction of British class structures in the newly settled Australia tends to be overlooked in postcolonial analysis in favour of sustained attention to socio-cultural relations between settlers and indigenous peoples. The benefit of the above economic analysis, however, is that it exposes the structures and mechanisms of capitalism's tendency to inequality even within the largely culturally homogenous British settler society. This optic allows analysis of settler relations with Aborigines to be inscribed within the same logic of accumulation, dispossession, and hierarchical labour relations, seeing herein how the indigenous were co-opted into a place on the bottom rung of the capitalist ladder. On the sliding scale of inequality, multiple instances of oppression compound from the top to the bottom of the socio-economic scale. Thus, Chaine exploits Killam, who in turn exploits his two unpaid labourers—Aboriginal youths taken from their homes to be raised as domestic labourers for settlers, literary examples of what became later known as the stolen generations. Far from opting out of the capitalist social relations in which they struggle to get ahead, the poor white

settlers in turn discriminate against Aborigines, transferring British domestic class relations to the newly colonised, a step made easier by the legal dispossession of Aborigines who were denied not only land ownership rights but also voting rights (no universal suffrage until 1962) and access to the formal labour market (no minimum wage until 1968).

Scott's careful delineation of the economic pressures of the new colony in South Australia, from the richest settlers to the poorest convicts, enables him to trace in close detail the incremental degradation of settler-native relations that lead to their violent dispossession at the novel's end. Whereas the novel starts out by portraying close, mutually satisfying relationships between whites and Noongar, this changes as the balance of power tips from the first settlers relying on Aborigine hospitality for land and food to the increasing persecution of Aborigines as the white population grows to overtake the indigenous numbers. As the novel progresses, the original inhabitants are increasingly shut out of the sharing of resources, just as Killam and Ned Kelly are in the white community. As capitalism takes root as the dominant and exclusive system of social relations, all other options offered by the 'blank slate' of creating a new settlement, or by recourse to Aboriginal values, are foreclosed. A passage near the end of the novel—narrated by Chaine's daughter, who embodies the European conception of development as progress, inculcated by her successful entrepreneurial father—captures the shift:

Laws were being enforced now, thankfully. Natives must be clothed and without spears if they were to enter town. ... Bobby had got into trouble because the policeman and his native constable had tried to prevent the old man with Bobby from entering town. The old man claimed it was his right, that it was his town! Papa laughed recounting it, said it was true in a way. And it was also true, as Bobby apparently claimed, ... that the old man had received a ration of flour from previous authorities, and had even been dressed, accommodated and fed at government expense. Why? Because he was the landlord. (376)

Explaining further that such measures 'may have been expedient at one time, but [are] no longer necessary' (376), the earlier right to take food from gardens, farms, and storehouses as an acknowledged return for use of tribal land is rescinded so that Bobby Wabalanginy and Menak are arrested for trespassing and stealing. Bobby is imprisoned and Menak is sent to a native camp (377), a systematised restriction on Aboriginal movement that Scott develops in his earlier novel *Benang*.

The privileged white child's condescending tone in the above passage mimics her father's attitude, which exemplifies the common racial stereotyping of the unintelligent native that pervades colonial discourse. Contrary to this aspersion, however, Menak has not misunderstood his entitlement to payment as acknowledged landlord; rather, the colonists have changed the rules to render null and void the exchange system previously agreed upon. Similarly, Bobby's extraordinary abilities as cross-cultural broker and interpreter between Noongar and settlers are not up for question when he is treated as a criminal at the end of the book: the settlers' trumped-up charges against their former helper are an expedient way to get rid of a no-longer-necessary go-between. One of the achievements of Scott's narrative is to capture empathy between Noongar and settlers—mutual curiosity and a great deal of learning from each other in the early days of settlement. Yet, as these fluid relations solidify into unequal capitalist relations based on rigid structures of owner–renter, employer–employee, and citizen–criminal, the novel can only end unhappily, with Bobby and Menak relegated to prisons or native reserves, forcibly excluded from the new society their cultural brokering helped establish.

The focus on the dynamics of economic transactions in colonial contact encounters demonstrates native understanding of and interest and involvement in colonial economies until they were forced out—not by fair competition or lack of merit, but by the same mechanics of capitalist inequality outlined by Marx, Wakefield, and historians Zahedieh and Porter, and also experienced by many working-class white settlers, as represented by Killam and the Kellys. In the similar settler context of New Zealand, Mark Williams summarises nineteenth-century Maori political leaders' attitudes to capitalism to claim that the Maori 'were eager to adapt the opportunities provided by technology and capital to their communal forms of life. It was settler protectionism that denied them access to loans for the development of tribal land, not the inherently "communitistic" structure of their own society' (2006, 221). Instead, '[t]he economic benefits of globalisation in the late colonial period were reserved for Pakeha [white settlers]' (213). Historical novels by indigenous writers such as Scott provide valuable counter-narratives that combat the erroneous Western conception of the backwards indigene by portraying native adaptability, ingenuity, and constant negotiation between tradition and change. The complex and sophisticated indigenous life-worlds fruitfully counter Western conceptions of indigenous pre-modernity at

the same time as the novels' pathos lies in representing the subjection of these socio-cultural structures to the dominant capitalist social relations.

Both fictional and non-fictional accounts of indigenous openness to modernity include active involvement in capitalist practices, beginning from early colonial contact. Scott's novel explores Aboriginal interest in the incoming technology and in adopting aspects of European culture, such as in trading, farming, and joining whaling crews. Similarly in New Zealand literature, Maori writer Witi Ihimaera—in *The Matriarch* (1986) and in *Whanau II* (2004), two of his several historical epics portraying a long history of Maori resistance—describes Maori entrepreneurship, including quoting a historical document by a British missionary that the Maori 'have attained a [business] intelligence beyond what might have been expected in so short a period. Their motto is now: "Ploughs, sheep and ships"' (1986, 50; 2004, 63). Hamish Clayton's historical novel *Wulf* (2011) details the flax-trading 'empire' of Ngati Toa chief Te Rauparaha, for whom Clayton uses the now-outdated nineteenth-century moniker 'the Southern Napoleon' (181–182). These novels corroborate cultural theory such as Stephen Muecke's work on Aboriginal 'indigenous modernity' (2004, 138), James Clifford's claim for the 'hybrid authenticity' of highland Papua New Guineans and North-West Coast Native Americans (1997, 185), and Anne Salmond's argument for Maori incorporation of Europeans into their own settlement, trading, and farming patterns. Such examples of indigenous adaptability might be construed as a form of colonial mimicry, however, not of identity and culture, to which the term is usually applied, but of capitalist practices. This trend in indigenous studies to record a long and active history of indigenous capitalist practices has recuperated native agency and attention to cultural adaptability from the earlier negative discourse of passive victimhood and an assumed reluctance to change that carried echoes of the now-debunked primitive–modernity dichotomy. However, to celebrate indigenous peoples as talented capitalists is in itself problematic, suggesting capitulation to the 'there is no alternative' mindset that normalises capitalism and thus construes indigenous winners and losers in capitalist terms of competition and individual merit, which is the topic of Chap. 4.

Kiana Davenport's historical epic *Shark Dialogues* outlines the steps by which indigenous Hawai'ians were brought into the capitalist world system, showing the dynamics between the encroaching Americans and Hawai'ians, as well as between Hawai'ians themselves and in their

interactions with other immigrant groups.²² Davenport details military and police intervention and government policy decisions that support the economic interests of the elite despite intensive protest. Thus, she offers a Hawai'ian example of the state, military, and legal support structures necessary for capitalism already seen in regard to the British invasion of Bengal, the Canton opium trade, and Australian settlement. Again, imperial aggression is couched in an ideology of progress, democracy, and equality, first broached in the Hawai'ian sovereigns' protest against US annexation. Hawai'ians lost exclusive land rights in 1848 when King Kamehameha III 'let himself be persuaded by white merchants and ex-missionaries to "abolish feudalism and make land-rights equal"' (Davenport 1995, 46). Once Americans owned land and thus voting rights, they increasingly lobbied for annexation with the USA to combat Hawai'ian sovereign power. When, in 1892, Queen Lili'uokalani attempted to make a constitutional change to allow all Hawai'ians to vote, not just landowners, she precipitated a military coup led by the 'white elite' (66)—notably sugar barons—which overthrew the monarchy and established a white-led republic that, despite being condemned by the US government, was not disbanded.²³ As with the First Opium War against Canton, the military operation against Hawai'i was not state led but engineered and executed by the private sector. This pattern by which private wealthy investors influence political, legal, and military action in their favour is familiar from the Bengal Permanent Settlement, the Canton opium trade, and in Australian requisitioning of Aboriginal land.

Davenport uses her epic schema, which spans from a Dutch orphan immigrant to New York in 1655 to sovereignty demonstrations in Honolulu in the 1990s, to show the replication and repetition of colonial-era control mechanisms throughout Hawai'i's history. Her application of contemporary business jargon to an epic sweep, from the 1790s gunboat diplomacy of the American military opening of Hawai'i for trade to the twentieth-century sugar cane and pineapple processing, bridges the assumed gap between historical and contemporary Hawai'ian agitation for plantation and factory workers' rights, ecological activism, and the 1990s Hawai'ian independence movement. Thus, the reader is told, 'in 1853 there was no middle class. White traders and merchants were becoming millionaires in Honolulu' (48–49). The trans-Pacific opium trade, illegal traffic in Chinese coolie labour, and the buying up of indigenous land are described as strategies of wealth accumulation (27, 45). Honolulu in 1834 was 'the business center of the islands' (45);

‘white monopolies control every aspect of the sugar and pineapple business. Banking. Insurance. Utilities. Merchandising. Transportation. Shipping. Labor’ (88). Labour inequality is described in a cluster of phrases that blur imperialist and capitalist motivations, applied to different labour groups and across the economic sectors. For example, 1892 indigenous Hawai’ians’ and indentured Asians’ “slave work” on plantations’ (66) becomes, in the 1970s, ‘economic slavery of [Hawai’ian] people’ (196) and ‘[h]undred-thousand-acre ranches owned by rich *haoles* in Palm Springs,’ men who ‘owned you for three bucks an hour. ... indentured’ (225, italics in original). Davenport’s repetition of such language emphasises the continuity of economic practices throughout the historical time frame. Across time and space, she claims, ‘[t]he pattern kept repeating itself’ (225).

The emphasis on indigenous economic agency negates the split between pre-modern and modern through indigenous peoples’ active participation in capitalism, which includes efforts to align those imported Western values with aspects of their pre-existing traditional cultures. Indeed, all civilisations contain systems of valuing and distributing resources, such as in sharing and trading, of which capitalism is merely the most recent, notable for its incursion into all aspects of social life. Indigenous adoption of and adaptation to Western capitalism—and, to a lesser extent, capitalism’s local shaping to indigenous practices—attests to the durability and mutability of this economic system. Indigenous modernity also muddies the question of indigenous victimhood by showing their own collusion with the new system: more or less reluctantly, under varying degrees of coercion, and unevenly experienced by different social groups within indigenous hierarchies. Just as pre-contact traditional societies contained structures of trade and value, so too did they contain structures of social inequality, with forms of exclusion and domination. In her discussion of the uneven repetition of capitalist logic across the world, Doreen Massey rejects the logic by which small nations or colonies are seen as belatedly inserted into globalisation as passive or unwilling victims (167). In every traditional society, there are agents who benefit from the new capitalist regime, or who embrace its logic as an extension of their own structures of trade and distribution.

Traditional hierarchies such as chieftainship, kin-based functions, roles of women and children, and slavery are thrown into sharp relief as they are adapted to fit the new political economy. In Clayton’s novel, as in the historical record, Te Rauparaha is portrayed as a ruthless and cunning

leader, usurping conventional Maori protocol and inherited hierarchy to claim land and domination over neighbouring tribes. His flax-trading empire built on the slave labour of conquered tribes buys him British muskets, and his bargaining power and negotiation skills are great enough to co-opt a British merchant brig to launch a guerrilla raid on a distant southern tribe. Te Rauparaha's mastery of capitalism's prerequisites—wealth, contacts, political influence, military support, underhand tactics, and luck—are acknowledged and respected by the British traders who narrate this early, little-known episode of New Zealand's history. As an experienced veteran of British mercantilism, Clayton's sea-faring narrator comprehends the Maori chief within the terms of trade familiar to him:

[T]here was no such thing as innocent trade, for whenever a European ship sailed from these islands laden with flax it sailed with a hull bloated on native blood. And because of that we could admire Te Rop'raha for the way he'd controlled his dealings with Europeans, the way he'd used the great shifts and flow of people around him to fashion an empire. (182)

The admiration for Te Rauparaha in the narrator's voice suggests an altogether different basis for understanding the Maori-Pakeha relationship than that of cultural distinctness, positing trade as a *lingua franca* that binds rather than separates. While the novel artfully refrains from making moral judgements of Te Rauparaha's actions, the reported documentary of his Tuhoe massacre makes it difficult to condone his brutality. This puts the postcolonial reader in an unaccustomed position of siding with the white narrator and disliking the Maori chief, who is presented in national history as a warrior and a hero, embodied in popular culture as the author of the famed All Blacks' haka.

While New Zealand Maori writers have almost unanimously represented Maori society as a positive source of cultural inspiration, cohesive against an outside Pakeha Other, Tina Makereti's *Where the Rekohu Bone Sings* (2014) portrays unequal hierarchies within nineteenth-century Maori society. The novel traces a long history of Maori persecution of Chatham Island (Rekohu) Moriori, including a profound silence and lack of acknowledgement of the 1835 Ngati Tama and Ngati Mutunga raid of the Chatham Islands, massacre, and subsequent enslavement of Moriori survivors. Beginning in the 1880s, the novel outlines a rigid hierarchy in the Maori community. Mere's grandfather, a tribal chief,

negotiates land from Wakefield's New Zealand Company purchase to ensure a livelihood of farming and trading with the Pakeha, while at the other end of the social spectrum, Iraia, a 'half-man-servant-slave' (Chap. 3, Sect. 2, para 2) is poorly treated by the family. The child of a Moriori slave, Iraia is malnourished, poorly clothed, and lives outside in a shed, an uncomfortable 'reminder of [the] dark times' (Chap. 3, Sect. 4, para 5). While the novel is sympathetic to the immense effort of the Maori to retain their land, culture, family cohesion, and personal dignity in the face of colonial pressure, Makereti does not shy away from addressing the injustice of social inequality and its contemporary repercussions, notably the effacing of Moriori ancestors from tribal genealogy and the denial of land rights and tribal support for their descendants to the present day.

Indigenous and postcolonial studies have thoroughly addressed the importance of land ownership in indigenous cultures as symbolic of continuity and life, and for its spiritual role, including in native cosmology. Much less analysed, however, is the connection between land and material wellbeing. The original source of primitive accumulation on which capitalism is based, in Marx's terms, and the primary form of wealth, in Piketty's schema, land ownership was the primary site of contestation between settlers and indigenous peoples during colonisation. Property remains today the dominant form of investment wealth in New Zealand, as elsewhere, and the ability to live rent-free, to produce, and to generate income from the land is a key source of savings and revenue, one embraced by Maori iwi. In the above example, Mere's family land ownership forms a base of emotional belonging and tribal togetherness, a concept known as *turangawaewae* that is instrumental to cultural identity but also ensures a level of economic comfort that stretches into the young generation of inherited landowners in the novel's twenty-first century present. By contrast, Iraia's material dispossession and ethnic marginalisation continues in the nineteenth-century storyline, when he moves to the colonial city of Wellington, where he is again relegated to living in a shed and working as a day labourer on the docks. Like their ancestor, his descendents in contemporary New Zealand have been emotionally and materially shunned by their Maori family, without an inheritance right to family tribal land, an exclusion corrected in the story's close as his descendents are 'gifted' their Maori family land on the Chathams, originally appropriated as spoils of war from their Moriori ancestors.

More explicitly than in Makereti's novel, in *Shark Dialogues*, internal inequalities within traditional Hawai'ian society are also converted into the capitalist structure of accumulation and dispossession. While Davenport clearly shows that all Hawai'ians have suffered loss of sovereign autonomy, some characters fare significantly better than others. That the novel's pivotal indigenous couple, Pono and Duke, own a coffee plantation is testimony to a nineteenth-century Hawai'ian character's summary: '[y]our husband is successful. Your children will be privileged' (48). Duke is descended from Hawai'ian royalty, his ancestor a doctor to King Kamehameha the Great (327), and thus privy to royal privileges and networking within the colonial and indigenous elites. Pono is a descendent of a Tahitian daughter of a high chief, whose dowry of black pearls provides the venture capital for her entrepreneurial Yankee husband to make his fortune in real estate, plantations, slavery, and the coolie trade (36, 40). Pono and Duke live in a coffee plantation manor house filled with oil paintings, globes and maps, East Asian furniture and silks, Persian rugs, and European books, while outside the plantation workers pause in their labour to bow to them, as descendants of royalty, perhaps, but more directly as their bosses (106–107).

In its tendency to emphasise the damage of colonialism on non-Western societies, postcolonial literary criticism often misses the complex, contradictory differences present within the local community, which include unpleasant aspects of pre-existing traditional culture. In the examples of colonial India and the Dutch East Indies, Ghosh and Pramodya represent the friendly complicity of zamindars and *priyais* with the colonial elite, and show how these indigenous plutocrats upheld the unequal and unfair colonial policies under which they retained a certain amount of prestige and power. Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* clearly registers the different layers of domination and subjugation of external and internal social hierarchies. At first glance, the following monologue by the Burmese queen deposed by the 1885 British invasion that seized control of the teak industry reads as a typical postcolonial positioning of the native as victim of colonisation:

[W]e who ruled the richest land in Asia are now reduced to this. This is what they have done to us, this is what they will do to all of Burma. They took our kingdom, promising roads and railways and ports, but mark my words, this is how it will end. In a few decades the wealth will be gone – all the gems, the timber and the oil – and then they too will leave. In our

golden Burma where no one ever went hungry and no one was too poor to write and read, all that will remain is destitution and ignorance, famine and despair. (88)

In a few short sentences, Ghosh links colonial plunder of the material and cultural wealth of pre-colonised Burma to postcolonial material, intellectual, and spiritual impoverishment. Indeed, Myanmar (Burma) today occupies a very low position on the Human Development Index: underdeveloped, riven by ethnic strife, corrupt, its failed attempt at socialism through military dictatorship ridiculed by heavy economic sanctions. While the Queen's premonition might be said to have been realised, her sense of victimisation masks her role as royalty in upholding gross inequality within pre-colonial Burmese society itself, which includes a caste-like hierarchy of social position, including a trade in child servants (20), held in place by the Queen's reputation for cruelty, which includes executions, exile, and fratricide among the royal family (31, 38).

Whereas Davenport employs the language of neoliberalism to mark the similarity and continuity of political economy from past to present, Ghosh traces the same trajectory with the term 'imperialism,' which he applies in turn to the Burmese monarchy, British colonialism, the immigrant Indian elite of plantations and industrialists, and the post-independence Burmese military junta. Thus, the monarchy hordes the riches of Burma's ruby mines as a sovereign right to the wealth of the land (43), and the Indian merchant minority in Burma is described as 'rich Indians liv[ing] like colonialists' (240), who believe in 'the pattern of imperial rule and its policy of ensuring its necessity through the division of its subjects' (243). The radical change announced by the 1962 military coup is derided: 'in fact, it is they who invoke the old imperial laws and statutes to keep themselves in power' (543), the regime's censorship 'growing out of the foundations of the system that that had been left behind by the old Imperial Government' (535). The epic novel documents dramatic inequality that continues despite radical changes to different political systems of monarchy, colonialism, and socialist military junta.

These historical novels describe in detail the complicity between some parts of indigenous society and colonial capitalism, and the merging of internal structures of social hierarchy with those of the new regime. Attributes such as greed, individualism, and blatant acts of injustice, usually ascribed to the rapacious colonisers, are also found within the local

community: indeed, Buckley and Wheelwright's list of the keys to economic success in early Australia, namely status, patronage, intelligence, low cunning, ruthlessness, and luck, equally apply to the local rulers and wealthy in other colonies. In *Sea of Poppies*, Neel's wealth comes from opium profits and maintaining 'half-starved coolie farmers' on his land (123); Deeti's predicament comes from her brother-in-law's patriarchal legal rights that allow him to take over her land or marry her, on the death of her husband. In response to these blatant inequalities, both Neel's servants (110) and Deeti's hired hands (162) cheat their bosses and steal whatever they can to improve their own modest situations. In *The Glass Palace*, the deposed royal family can only stand aside as the townspeople enter the forbidden citadel to loot the riches cached there (30–34). In Pramodnya's *Footsteps*, the native elite *priyayis* and *bupatis* boast of their inherited rights to 'govern over thousands of people, to be honoured, to be bowed down to' (292), and the mixed-race Indos are the local middlemen, 'the trusted tools of the sugar companies who ensure that no Native can ever better his income even when he deserves it' (312). Davenport uses Hawai'ians' participation in the money economy to deflate the pro-sovereignty movement's separatist rhetoric of Americans versus Hawai'ians. Her characters' criticisms are harsh, and come from both cultural outsiders and insiders: '[y]our cause is lost. It was lost the day you started trading with the white man' (353); '[w]e were lost when we were born because we're Polynesians, intelligent, competitive, vain. We coveted things *haole* owned. They gave us progress, we gave them land' (385, italics in original); '[w]hen environmentalists go up against billion-dollar businesses, business ... always ... wins. ... But they didn't steal the land, Vanya, Someone—a farmer, or rancher, or Boards of Trusts—someone *sold* that land' (384, italics in original). In such passages, Davenport does not permit her Hawai'ian characters to sustain a comfortable narrative of victimhood which would allow them to hold the moral high ground in their sovereignty claims. In this novel, all characters are conflicted and troubled, which allows Davenport to subvert and twist stereotypical plotlines such as those of redemptive love, maternal instinct, attachment to land, and solidarity through hardship.

Each of these epic historical novels conveys a complex world in which unresolved tensions stand to break down assumptions of clear-cut behaviour patterns of colonisers and colonised. Implicating the main characters in capitalist processes of alienation and subjugation complicates the

colonial–neocolonial–postcolonial divide, refusing to imagine a neat split between coloniser and colonised, oppressor and victim, modern and pre-modern. Rather, these binaries are broken down by the presence of capitalist practices—and desires—on both sides. These novels’ portrayals of characters who occupy different ranks of their own social hierarchies, from local royalty and chiefs to workers and slaves, ask the reader to pay attention to the unevenness with which capitalism impacted on the colonised. The flows of finance, forms of land ownership, and control of production, extraction, and trade adumbrated in this chapter were pivotal to colonisation. These structures, which inserted colonial spaces into the global world economy, endure today in the modern age of globalisation. In linking the colonial past with the neoliberal present, these novels reveal historical variations on contemporary forms of global finance, the behaviour of big business, and economic geopolitics, as well as forms of injustice and inequality suffered by the poor, often at the hands of the rich in their own culture and community.

RACISM AS CAPITALIST IDEOLOGY

Postcolonial fiction is a valuable source of insider perspectives from under-represented cultures and communities, whose responses to capitalism are rarely registered in other social sciences based on written documentation, such as history, law, politics, and economics. In its large corpus of works, postcolonial literature offers a significant body of work that usefully reveals the patterns, structures, and mechanisms of capitalism and its tendencies toward exacerbating inequality, embedded in political economies of different periods and nations. The function of ‘writing back’ to the imagined centre, which has been largely accepted in literary studies as a corrective amendment to national literary canons, might also be read as such in other disciplines with a similar gap in their records. The historical novels discussed in this chapter narrativise the incremental steps by which European, predominantly British capitalist structures and ideology were imposed on colonised peoples, who variously resisted, adopted, and adapted a system that increasingly encroached on all aspects of society. Fiction does not merely document the impacts of free-market economic practices on indigenous peoples, however; its subjective, often-multiple narrative perspectives emphasise the violence of capitalism’s impact, such as its fracturing impacts on social cohesion, changes to family and community culture,

and psychological and physical rending of the body. Far from describing culture-centred reasons for indigenous economic underperformance, the novels locate inequality and its injustice as intrinsic to colonial capitalism itself. The colonised who accept the tenets of capitalist commodification, privatisation, labour relations, and competitive accumulation find that, despite their efforts, they struggle to succeed in capitalist terms due to overt and covert discriminatory practices. Those who resist face military, judicial, and political repercussions from the colonial state apparatuses, as well as pressure from social and cultural expectations and obligations from within their own societies. Drawing on colonial historical documents and local oral histories, these postcolonial historical novels portray the explicit marginalisation and forcible exclusion of the indigene and autochthone instigated by the British government, colonial administrations, and private settlers and traders.

As a form of cultural expression, fiction reminds readers that the economic is deeply embedded in the social and cultural. Indeed, the financially motivated injustices that create economic inequality can only be expressed through cultural values and practices. As capitalism is an all-encompassing social system, the shaping of appropriate cultural values is crucial to normalise and uphold the principles of the political economy. Of particular relevance to the colonial capitalism registered in these historical novels is the language of racism in the colonies and the concomitant emergence in nineteenth-century Britain of a new definition of poverty as a crime—the result of individual failure in a competitive meritocracy that celebrates opportunity for upward mobility. The classical economics-based attitudes toward poverty reverberate in the neoliberal present, in stereotypes that tie the poverty of ethnic groups that are economic underachievers to a language of backwardness and laziness.

In his critique of the Western bias of international aid and development discourse, Chang documents the attitudes of visitors from developed countries toward the less developed:

My impression as to your cheap labour was soon disillusioned when I saw your people at work. No doubt they are lowly paid, but the return is equally so; to see your men at work made me feel that you are a very satisfied easy-going race who reckon time is no object. When I spoke to some managers they informed me that it was impossible to change the habits of national heritage. (*Bad Samaritans*, 182)

This is an Australian management consultant about the Japanese in 1915. About a century earlier, before German industrialisation, the British also considered the Germans a slow, dull-witted, dishonest people with abominable roads and a tendency to excessive emotion (184). As Japan's and Germany's post-World War Two industrial and technological boom resulted in a shift in global power in their favour (they are currently the third and fourth largest economies by Gross Domestic Product), today's characterisation of these nations is altogether more positive: the above-quoted historical stereotypes are ridiculous because we can today imagine their very opposite, with Japanese criticising Australians for their laid-back lifestyles and Germans complaining about poor transport in the UK. In these above examples, the positive factors are those conducive to extracting maximum profit margins, such as punctuality, seriousness, efficiency, discipline, and organisation.

The merging of negative judgements of race and work ethic is familiar in past and present stereotypes about indigenous and minority cultures, from colonial-era missionary prospectuses calling to civilise pagans in Africa to contemporary media reports and political campaigns in rich countries decrying benefit-draining immigrants, enacted in 2016 in the UK's Brexit 'Leave' campaign and in Trump's successful election bid for the US presidency. Chang uses the above historical examples to argue that culture is deployed to excuse the failure of neoliberal policies, such as the 1980s Structural Adjustment Programmes throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, and current austerity measures in Spain, Portugal, and Greece. The cultural argument claims that the fault lies not with inherent problems of capitalism's tendency to inequality but with the individual's character, extrapolated to overarching faults in national organisation that hinder productive efficiency (Chang 2007, 186). Unable to imagine that the neoliberal system is at fault, it is easier to believe the people are to blame.

The idea that economic success or failure is related to personal or cultural traits is a particular characteristic of the modern political economy. Already by the mid-1800s, Marx was able to mock the value-laden assumptions that align wealth with merit, and poverty with laziness. He attacks classical economics' analyses of inequality by demoting their argument to a fairy tale narrative, as if it were myth or fiction:

In times long gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their

substance, and more, in riotous living. ... Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labour, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly although they have long ceased to work. ('The Secret of Primitive Accumulation,' 784)

Marx's satirical tone ridicules the underlying yet unvoiced assumptions of the market as a level playing field, a fair but competitive system in which individuals are judged by their ability to succeed. Instantly recognisable to the contemporary reader is the cluster of judgements around the laziness of the poor and intelligence of the rich, which Marx identifies and satirises for the quasi-religious, doctrinaire-elevated status they hold in early modern economics. It is striking how little has changed in the 150 years since Marx's facetious summary of attitudes toward wealth and poverty. Perhaps the only major difference is that today's super-elite are anything but frugal, and it is, indeed, in part the visibility of their wealth and conspicuous consumption that fuels protest movements such as Occupy and anti-austerity, which are in turn denigrated as excesses of energy more usefully expended in work. In his ensuing theory of primitive accumulation, Marx claims the reality behind the decoupling of the producer from his own means of production has less to do with inherent personal character than with expropriation, the use of force, and robbery, terms common to the theorists of colonialism and writers of fiction analysed in this chapter.

The assumed separation of the discourse of culture from that of economics makes it difficult to discuss racism as a structuring device that propagates and excuses economic inequality. The common public rejoinder to racism is to dismiss racist claims of the assumed cultural inferiority of the Other. Rather, the bias has been inverted to instead celebrate ethnicity and identity exactly for their different forms of knowledge, social structures, and values. The problem with this neat inversion, as Walter Benn Michaels smartly reveals in *The Trouble with Diversity* (2006), is that the significant work over the past twenty or more years to espouse racial equality does little to remedy the economic inequality that continues to disproportionately affect ex-colonised peoples. In Michaels's words, '[w]e would much rather get rid of racism than get rid of poverty. And we would much rather celebrate cultural diversity than seek to establish economic equality' (2006, 12). The recent shift away from the

politics of identity to those of inequality may reinvigorate analysis of racism for its materialist dimensions.

For Immanuel Wallerstein, the mutability of this widespread and long-held cultural explanation for economic wellbeing is closely linked to the changing use of racist discourse that emerged in the colonial era. He defines racism as 'a cultural pillar of historical capitalism' (80), a way of confining, managing, and reproducing a hierarchical workforce. This is not to say that racism is an invention of capitalism or of colonialism, although trans-Atlantic slavery was certainly pivotal in its modern formation. Rather, it developed a very specific meaning in these two inter-related domains. In Wallerstein's configuration:

Racism was the mode by which various segments of the work-force within the same economic structure were constrained to relate to each other. Racism was the ideological justification for the hierarchization of the work-force and its highly unequal distributions of rewards. (78)

Examples of this relational use of racist judgements about Western superiority and the inferiority of the colonised abound in the historical fiction discussed in this chapter. In each case, the cause of inefficiency in labour and production, and lack of motivation for financial gain and reward, is attributed to a lack of desirable personality traits applied to the ethnic group as a whole.

Stereotypes of natives as animal-like, child-like, or effeminate abound in the fictional portrayals of racist slurs in the fiction analysed in this chapter. In each, racism reflects a hierarchy in which power is measured more by economic wealth than by race itself, making it thus possible for non-whites to wield racial put-downs against other ethnic minorities, or even against poorer members of their own minority culture. In Scott's representation of early colonial Australia, *That Deadman Dance* gives voice to a common colonial view of Aborigines as child-like, a perception that helped justify their role as domestic servants and household labourers: '[t]he native girls they kept now, the servants, might almost be family also and yet one must—as Papa said—impose one's will. They were forever laughing and playing without purpose, and it was almost impossible to get things done' (392). Setting work and play in contradiction, the narrator goes on to criticise the infantile native as lacking a work ethic, 'the necessary discipline to defray one's immediate and short-term gain, and understand self-sacrifice' (392). Across the Pacific and updated

to neoliberal times, Davenport's Hawai'iian characters condemn this same perception, as wealthy foreign tourists characterise the locals in the 'benign stereotype of the childlike, tourist-loving, bare-foot, *aloha*-spirit natives' (*Shark Dialogues*, 338, italics in original), while their sovereignty-movement protests are similarly scorned: '[c]ertain groups of wealthy *haole* laughed, calling Hawaiians lazy do-nothings, seeing their all-night vigils as a form of entertainment, their demonstrations as a joke' (312, italics in original). In both examples, Hawai'ians are viewed as incapable of or uninterested in their economic wellbeing, with their assumed spirituality, sexuality, and cultural expressions imagined as existing wholly outside of material daily reality. Furthermore, from colonial Australia to modern-day Hawai'i, work is formulated in rather puritanical terms, as unpleasant and serious and thus incompatible with laughter or fun, which, in making light of work, diminishes its importance or indicates lack of effort or value for money for the employers (in Scott) and customers (in Davenport), who are the conveyors of the above racist attitudes.

In Ghosh's historical fiction, racist judgements against the native working body are framed in even more dehumanising terms, as animals and machines. In *The Glass Palace*, the Eurasian plantation overseer adopts the role of a 'strict headmaster' and a 'snappish sergeant,' swearing and threatening the Tamil workers in a daily theatrical enactment of their social hierarchy: '[y]ou dog of a coolie, keep your black face up and look at me when I'm talking to you' (231). Challenged over the necessity of such behaviour, the Anglo-Burmese plantation owner's excuse is to describe the working environment as antagonistic, requiring strict control enacted in a simulated fight with reluctant workers and nature alike. Thus, the plantation is 'a vast machine, made of wood and flesh. And at every turn, every little piece of this machine is resisting you, fighting you, waiting for you to give in' (232). Ghosh's chosen vocabulary here purposely evokes Marx's understanding of capitalism's co-option of nature and the labouring body into a machine, a role that extends to labouring animals, in the elephants and their *oo-sis* trainers, traditionally used in religious festivals and ceremonies, now 'made to work for human profit' (74). The idea of a more equal or at least ethical treatment of plantation workers, and of the value of traditional forms of knowledge and systems of value, in the *oo-sis*'s 'hoary wisdom' (75), are rejected in derisive language. Thus are sympathetic characters—and readers—chastised for thinking outside the logic of the persuasive capitalists.

The way that Ghosh's British, Indian, and Burmese capitalists consistently privilege economic use over other social relationships, including family, and cultural functions, such as art and religion, provides a literary embodiment of the well-documented epistemological split in the histories of modern economics and aesthetics. The Romantic-era privileging of artistic value as distinct from commercial value, combined with the gendering of literary output, specifically the novel, as belonging to the cultural sphere of the domestic, the feminine, and the unpaid, establishes art as an easy target of derision for capitalists intent on privileging financial over other concepts of 'value,' 'wealth,' and 'asset.' Ghosh succinctly captures the easy co-option of this gendered cultural judgement to a racist target in *River of Smoke*, in a heated debate over the future of the opium trade in the Chamber of Commerce meeting of opium traders:

It is surely apparent to you, is it not, that effeminacy is the curse of the Asiatic? It is what makes him susceptible to opium; it is what makes him so fatefully dependent on the government. If the gentry of this country had not been weakened by their love of painting and poetry China would not be in the piteous state that she is today. Until the masculine energies of this country are replenished and renewed, its people will never understand the value of freedom; nor will they appreciate the cardinal importance of Free Trade. (492)

The gendered language construes the economic sphere as a masculine public domain of entrepreneurial trade, while art and literature reside in a private, feminine space of leisure. Attributing as feminine traits the 'weakness' of opium addiction and dependence on government thus assigns by way of contrast the role and duty of independent and individualistic men in the spread of free-trade capitalism espoused in the new discipline of modern economics, emerging at the time hand in hand with colonial expansion and distancing this modern 'science' from its earlier roots in ethics and theology. Unsurprisingly within the logic of this gendered racism, Charles King's attempts to side with the Chinese Emperor on banning the opium trade result in aspersions of his homosexuality.

In Makereti's *Where the Rekohu Bone Sings*, mid-twentieth-century Maori children, having internalised the racism to which they have themselves been subjected by the Pakeha mainstream, bully their own poorer relatives, landless servants, and labourers who have darker skins and are descendants of a Moriori slave:

When we were kids, we didn't know what a Moriori was. Then they had this book at school – a school journal – it said Morioris were ugly and stupid, that the superior Maori race came to Aotearoa and overpowered them. ... We teased her. Called her dirty, darkie, Moriori slave ... from people who were too ignorant and slow to fight. She was our cousin, but it felt good to have someone lower than us. We had always been the lowest at school. (Chap. 7, Sect. 2, para 8)

The children bully their poorer cousin by framing their taunts not in terms of her current lack of wealth but in reference to a long-past conquest that in their Maori eyes shows their superiority over Moriori. This elision unwittingly traces the history of Moriori impoverishment from their original dispossession from their land and subsequent enslavement by the Maori to multiple generations of landlessness and constant moving for insecure menial work. As these intangible economic motivations and repercussions remain invisible to the children, their racist slurs of dirtiness and lack of intelligence are attached to a perceived Maori heroism in war. The above passage, recalled by an adult by way of apology for discriminating against the Moriori strand of their extended family, attributes to children the overt forms of racism internalised in social and cultural exclusion by several generations of adults. Within the delicate family politics of admitting fault for historical wrongdoing, the memory is framed in such a way as to blame the dominant Pakeha education system for having taught the children such racism, in the school journal article about Moriori. The novel hereby dodges the need to respond to the children's perception of the latent racism practiced within their own Maori community. While the examples from Australian and Hawai'ian contexts firmly attach racism to guilty white parties, the New Zealand example suggests a difficulty for the Maori in naming racism within their own culture, as perpetrators as well as victims of racist ideology that enables and excuses class-like hierarchy of inequality within their own communities and even families.

Common across these citations are notions of indolence or low intelligence, often coupled with connotations of deviance or criminality. The culture to which they are compared is in each case considered superior by dint of its wealth and power, which permits a dominating role from the wealthier character to teach and discipline the weak, a hierarchy which is clearly condoned in the relationship between employer and employee. Weakness is portrayed as feminine or child-like, and resistance

and lack thereof are both construed as indicative of inferiority. Non-resistance, by the playful female Aborigine servants, in *That Deadman Dance*, or the Indian indentured labourers, including Kalua the Dalit in *Sea of Poppies*, shows a ‘natural’ servile will. Resistance is cast as belligerent criminality, to be put down by police or military intervention, such as Bobby’s imprisonment for theft in *That Deadman Dance*, police dispersal of Hawai’ian environmental protests, and the British Opium Wars to quash Chinese attempts to staunch the opium trade.

Through the range of cultures exemplified here—Chinese, Burmese, Indian, Hawai’ian, Maori, Moriori, and Aborigine—any possible truth to these racist aspersions cannot be ascribed to cultural specificity. Rather, they are in each case applied to groups who are subordinate in economic terms, a point Sartre also identifies in pan-colonial explications of the native: ‘yellow, black or white, they always have the same characteristics: they are lazy, sly, and thieving, live off nothing and understand only force’ (143). Responding, here, to Frantz Fanon’s critical analysis of the Algiers School of psychiatry, as founded on a conception of the North African as criminal, aggressive, impulsive, and ‘incapable of self-discipline’ (Fanon 1963, 299), Sartre anchors this colonial mentality in colonialism’s profit-driven bottom line. Writing within a Marxist frame of the capitalist logic of exploitation for accumulation, Sartre writes of the Western construction of the native twenty years before Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), considered foundational to postcolonial theory.

The above quotes from fiction show the inextricability of culture and economics in engendering racism, which is in each case applied to ethnicities exploited by the dominant national or ethnic group for the former’s land, resources, or labour. In the above literary examples, Hawai’ians and Aborigines have been dispossessed from their land, valuable commodities of opium, teak, and rubber are extracted for export, and in all cases except the Chinese the autochthones are exploited for labour: Hawai’ians and imported indentured Indians on plantations, Burmese in forestry, and Aborigines and Moriori as domestic slaves or servants. The correlation between race and economic function concurs with Wallerstein’s claim for the ethnicisation of the workforce in historical capitalism (76–77), with the cluster of moral judgements relating to race and to economic output blurring into one and the same. As analysed at greater length in Chapter 4, these representations of historical racism toward the losers of early capitalism have modern-day equivalents. In particular, the US Black Lives Matter campaign against police violence, and the 2011

UK riots during which black youths were disproportionately targeted by police, alongside media misrepresentations of ‘feral’ gangs and criminals, illustrate the facile blurring of race, poverty, and crime.

The continuity of class-based racism in the core capitalist countries today further illustrates the way that coloniser–colonised relations merely re-enacted socio-economic hierarchies already present at home. Synchronicity with the past is also elaborated by Jeremy Seabrook in *Pauperland: A Short History of Poverty in Britain*, which traces the changing attitudes to poverty throughout the rise of capital social relations since the Industrial Revolution (2013). The changing discourse of poverty evolving in nineteenth-century Britain meant that the British poor were described in similar terms and ascribed similar characteristics as the colonised abroad, as indeed illustrated in Chang’s historical examples of Australian and British views of the Japanese and Germans. As Walter Mignolo puts it, in the context of capitalist motivations of colonial racism, ‘the very concept of poverty was invented and introduced in the rhetoric of modernity to hide the fact that the poor are indeed lives that are dispensable and as such they are either discarded or when necessary made indispensable as labor force and consumers’ (2009, 76). As theories of the modern economy solidified, buoyed by the gathering momentum of the Industrial Revolution and successful expansion into the New World, earlier concepts of social dependence between the classes and the poor’s right to Christian charity gave way to a privileging of self-sufficiency, of independence based on work (Lloyd 2001, 118). As Sarah Lloyd summarises, by the turn of the nineteenth century, the pauper was linked in the popular imagination to ‘the inhabitants of a foreign land as unfamiliar objects of scrutiny’ (114):

Pauperism was seen as individual moral failure, and parish relief, particularly wage supplementation, was condemned for paralysing moral independence and dissolving social ties. Symptomatic of this economic and moral disorder, the pauper’s house was typically represented as dirty, cheerless, indolent, and demoralized. Pauperism chained English labourers to the African negro and Arabian slave; once this link was broken, observers discerned the labourers’ pride and contentment in their cottages, gardens, and families. (119)

Lloyd’s analysis reveals the easy elision of cultural essentialist categories of race with the overtly economic categories of class. In effect, to

call a British pauper a ‘Negro’ or an ‘Arab’ was equivalent to a racist insult, which the indigent could escape by demonstrating domestic British cultural values, with cleanliness, cheerfulness in labour, and hard physical work packaged and publically symbolised in a neat front garden. Changing attitudes to poverty culminated in the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, greatly influenced by the economic theories of Bentham, Malthus, Ricardo, and Smith, which forced the rural unemployed off parish relief into urban factory work, and increased the role of the workhouse as a last resort for paupers, predominantly children, single mothers, widows, and the elderly. Masculinity, by contrast, was linked to the ability to provide for a family, and connoted prudence, moral virtue, independence, and responsibility (119).

The criminalisation of poverty as ‘bad’ and ‘unnatural’ in market terms,²⁴ was embodied in the workhouse, which was conceived as a penitentiary institution. Its explicit aim to deter pauperism resulted in various correctional measures, including hard labour and religious education (Higginbotham 2012, 263–266). Some inmates, particularly orphan boys, were sent to the colonies as domestic labour (Higginbotham, 92–94),²⁵ while even married men and women were segregated, both techniques espoused by Malthus in his 1798 *An Essay on the Principle of Population* to reduce population growth among the poor in order to avoid overpopulation. The domestic form of the workhouse and its overseas form in the penal colonies are often indistinguishable for their function, daily organisation, and the type of people enclosed there. To belabour the similarities between British and colonial denigration of the poor, its criminalisation, and ‘correction’ by penal measures is to underline structural forms of inequality played out in social hierarchy and cultural stereotyping that is common across capitalist spaces and eras.

The problem of what to do with the poor under capitalism and the difficulty of effecting measures to curtail poverty that preoccupied nineteenth-century Britain was even more stark in the colonies, where the indigenous populations held unclear citizenship and did not easily fit into the class or religious hierarchy that structured duties to the poor within British society. Racist discourses thus served to justify unjust and discriminatory practices. The use of indigenous people as domestic labour in settler colonies fulfilled the double function of providing cheap (or free) labour and modelling ‘civilised’ social, cultural, and religious practices which they were expected to adopt. Despite this rhetoric of improvement that fit the belief in capitalism as development and progress, the

biological essentialism of racist discourse ensured that the local population could never work their way out of this economically inferior position. As a way of ensuring a supply of cheap labour, colonial racism was thus as institutional to early capitalism as Wakefield's understanding of the need to keep the cost of land artificially high so as to maintain a class of landless workers.

Indeed, the lack of work rights meshes with a similar lack of living rights. In the Australian context, Buckley and Wheelwright summarise the displacement of Aborigines from their land by squatter settlers: 'racism was as functional for the frontier squatter as the Colt revolver. One cleared the land, the other cleared the conscience' (Henry Reynolds qtd in Buckley and Wheelwright, 3). The most compelling example of this dual method is perhaps the systematic extermination of Tasmanian Aborigines. This practice of dispossession continued well past the initial clearing of the land, spatially embodied in the new colonial city itself, from which the native was commonly excluded or marginalised. In his history of slums, Davis claims:

[T]he British were arguably the greatest slum-builders of all time. Their policies in Africa forced the local labor force to live in precarious shantytowns on the fringes of segregated and restricted cities. In India, Burma, and Ceylon, their refusal to improve sanitation or provide even the most minimal infrastructure to native neighborhoods ensured huge death tolls from early-twentieth-century epidemics. (Davis 2006, 52)

The colonised body is only minimally accommodated into the infrastructure built on their stolen land and built by their labour. This housing inequality, analysed in the context of modern-day slums in Chapter 4, expresses in spatial and architectural terms the same racist ideology that, as Wallerstein identifies, constrains the rich and the poor within the same economic structure to relate to each other.

Representations of these multiple expressions of racist discrimination against indigenous peoples and local communities are the mainstay of postcolonial fiction and its critique. Focusing on examples of cultural specificity, however, often makes it hard to see the larger pattern and its use under capitalism to create and excuse inequality. By here analysing racism through an economic lens, disparate fictional representations of the colonial era all show racism as a common weapon, a feature not only of imperialism but of the rich over the poor everywhere.

Indeed, as Gavin Jones argues in his study of poverty in American literature from 1840–1945, the issues of poverty grappled with in novels by Herman Melville, Theodore Dreiser, Edith Wharton, James Agee, and Richard Wright map the development of contemporary socioeconomic values in the USA: ‘[t]his cultural history of poverty matters now precisely because so many of the dominant opinions and legislative policies regarding income inequity repeat beliefs that were formulated, debated, and frequently challenged in past generations’ (xv). Exporting this optic to a study of postcolonial historical novels of colonial-era capitalism similarly reveals the pertinence, if not urgency, of recognising the past in our present, a background necessary for understanding the foundations of global neoliberalism and its structures and mechanisms of inequality that were instated deliberately and often by force at its colonial institution.

NOTES

1. 2014 statistics from the British Office for National Statistics, ‘How important is China to the UK economy?’
2. In a 2015 BBC article on Chinese artefacts stolen by the British during the 1860 sack of the Beijing Imperial Palace, Chris Bowlby reiterates Britain’s ongoing refusal to address its historical imperial injustices in China. Chris Bowlby, ‘The palace of shame that makes China angry’ (2015).
3. For detail of the repartition of British wealth, see Piketty’s graph of the history of capital in Britain: <http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/files/capital21c/en/pdf/F3.1.pdf>.
4. Benita Parry, in her important critique of the culturalist focus of postcolonial studies that ignores materialism, also cites this passage. See Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (2004, 4). On the Permanent Settlement and famine, see also Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century* (1968, 51–55); Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (2003, 350–357); and Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (1981). Updating Davis’s argument to the Sahel region in the 1970s, Mohamed Lamine Gakou similarly argues that famines were the engineered outcome of a development-led shift to cash-cropping for export that decimated subsistence agriculture. See *The Crisis in African Agriculture*, 39–66.
5. 80% of the Chinese stock market is capitalised by the state. Other nations doing well out of state-owned corporations include Russia, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. See ‘The Company that ruled the waves.’

6. In *Bad Samaritans*, Chang cites Toyota, subsidised by the Japanese government for over 25 years with a trade embargo on American cars to further foster home-grown (19–21); Nokia, subsidised for 17 years (210); and Samsung, subsidised for over ten years (210).
7. For a longer list of British protectionism that shows unequal treaties with the earlier colonies of Ireland and America, see also Chang, ‘Why Developing Countries Need Tariffs,’ 60–61.
8. For an overview of the importance of privately owned land to empire-building, see Dominic Alessio, “...territorial acquisitions are among the landmarks of our history”: the buying and leasing of imperial territory’ (2013).
9. See also R. R. Neild on private interests and early public-company structures in Britain’s Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions: *Public Corruption: The Dark Side of Social Evolution*, 67–73; 90–95.
10. In *Hul: Cry Rebel*, Bahadur notes as an aside that East India College, a private university established by the Company in 1806 to train its India-bound civil administrators, hired Thomas Malthus to teach political economy, ‘which was not yet being taught at Oxford or Cambridge’ (Section ‘October 1830,’ para 21). The import of private business interest in shaping tertiary institutions and their disciplines, which is at issue today in the neoliberal university, is thus seen in early evidence.
11. Indeed, the trading partnership established by Jardine and Matheson continues today as Jardine Matheson Holdings, still operating out of Hong Kong, still predominantly run by descendants of the Keswick brothers tai-pan traders, and still involved in transport, insurance, and property industries. Similar direct lines of wealth have been traced in the recent ‘Legacies of British Slave-ownership’ project at University College, London, one aspect of which has been to follow the investments made by the predominantly British slave-owners paid recompense by the British government after the abolition of slavery.
12. Pramoedya called the tetralogy the Buru Quartet after Buru Island, where he was imprisoned as a political dissident without trial or sentence from 1965–1979. Banned from writing, Pramoedya narrated his stories orally to his fellow inmates, who later helped him reconstitute them on paper.
13. The Dutch East Indies were controlled by the French by proxy (1806–1811) after Napoleon conquered the Netherlands, and later by the British, who waged a naval battle to hold Java (1811–1816).
14. While postcolonial studies ignores Japan’s role in colonial history, the nation itself frames its post-World War Two pacifist rebranding as part of the liberating forces that rid South-East Asia of European colonial masters. See Melissa Kennedy, ‘Theoretical Encounters: Postcolonial Studies in East Asia 2013.’

15. In the case of settler colonies Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa, World War One is often contextualised within the history of nation-building and national independence from the British Dominion. The focus remains, however, on the impacts and outcomes for the colonies, not their role as catalysts that caused the war.
16. Japan, Australia, and New Zealand took over German colonies in the Pacific as mandated dependencies. Understanding Australia and New Zealand as exploitative colonisers in Papua New Guinea, Nauru, the Solomons, and Western Samoa remains underanalysed in postcolonial studies.
17. In an early essay collected in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 'Colonialism is a System' (1964), Jean-Paul Sartre gives similar statistics on French settlement and land appropriation in Algeria: 12 million hectares taken by the French state, 7 million left to the Algerians, and 2.7 million hectares in private European ownership, of which '6000 land owners have a gross agricultural revenue of more than 12 million francs; some of them reach 1000 million' (36). He further states that Europeans owned three-quarters of the prime irrigated land (42).
18. Australia's longitudinal trends accord with Piketty's general argument. Following a low point in the 1950s, income inequality rose steadily, a trend that has accelerated since the 1980s' turn to free-market liberalism. By 2010 the top 10% earned nearly 31% of the national income, a figure approaching that of the 1915 first census. See the World Wealth and Incomes Database for Australia.
19. My point here is to show the similar structures of economic inequality perpetuated in the settler colonies based on the British model of capitalism, and the resulting internal gap between rich and poor within the nation. When comparing poverty rates across countries, on a qualitative level life in the settler colonies may be considered comparatively 'better' than life in Britain in the same period. For example, Buckley and Wheelwright note that the abundance of land, highly-productive rural industry, and scarcity of labour meant that Australian wages were among the highest in the world at the turn of the nineteenth century (9–10). The phenomenon of gross income inequality within the nation, however, remains valid.
20. Scott's choice of career for his character concurs with Buckley and Wheelwright's identification of the large number of surgeons and chaplains in the colonies as the colonial counterpart to industrial capitalists in Britain, which heralded the new possibilities of upward mobility in the emergent middle class (36).
21. The term emerged from Hispanic and Black scholars in the USA to describe race-based inequality in the USA. See Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (1979); Peter

- Calvert, 'Internal Colonisation, Development and Environment' (2001); Michael Hechner, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development*.
22. Pramoedya's engagement with US imperial expansion in the Philippines as colonial, and Davenport's portrayal of Hawai'i's subjection to American incursion as economic imperialism invoke the pressing question of the extent to which the USA was and is an imperial or colonial power. For a useful overview of the argument for US imperialism, see Dominic Alessio, "'...territorial acquisitions are among the landmarks of our history": the buying and leasing of imperial territory,' 79–83.
 23. The US government officially annexed Hawai'i in 1898 as a strategic military base for the Spanish–American War over the Philippines.
 24. On classical economics configurations of the 'good' and 'bad' nature and the 'natural' order of the market, particularly in Smith, Malthus, Hobbes, and Locke, see Ruth L. Smith, 'Order and Disorder: The Naturalization of Poverty (1989–1990).'
 25. Peter Higginbotham, *The Workhouse Encyclopedia*, 92–94. The British practice of unburdening children's homes by adopting orphans and guardians of the state to the colonies for domestic labour continued in the post-World War Two era, known as the Home Children in Canada and under the Child Migrant Policy in Australia.

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