SAVAGE ENDINGS: PRE-DARWINIAN THEORIES ABOUT THE EXTINCTION OF PRIMITIVE RACES

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Well before Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859 many scientists and intellectuals viewed the imperialist vanquishing and therefore vanishing of some or all primitive races as the inevitable result of the "laws" of nature. As early as *The Voyage of the Beagle* Darwin could write: "The varieties of man seem to act on each other in the same way as different species of animals—the stronger always extirpating the weaker" (434). In 1872 in *The Descent of Man* Darwin would give detailed consideration to the causes of the extinction of primitive races. But even before Darwin's around-the-world voyage in the 1830s, three types of supposedly scientific discourse contributed to the extinction debate. The first was "natural history," including both geology and biology. The second was economics, especially Malthus's *Essay on Population* (Darwin acknowledged that Malthus was the main source for his own key theme of "the struggle for existence"). And the third was ethnology, which throughout the 1800s was mainly a discourse about the physical and mental differences among the races—that is, about the superiority of European and the various degrees of inferiority of all non-European races.

All three of these supposedly scientific discourses supported a view of "savagery" as a Hobbesian state of nature in which the strong exterminated or enslaved the weak. For natural historians, economists, and ethnologists alike, savagery itself was often, by definition, a sufficient explanation for the extinction of some if not all savage races. This imperialist, racist, but apparently scientific view was and remains a classic example of blaming the victim: savagery as race suicide or auto-genocide. In tandem with the romantic stereotype of the noble savage there emerged the much more deleterious stereotype of the self-exterminating savage. It is no exaggeration to include this stereotype among the causes of the liquidation of many nonwestern "races" under the onslaught of European imperialism.

Writing about the fossil remains of numerous extinct creatures in South America, Darwin declares: "Certainly, no fact in the history of the world is so startling as the wide and repeated exterminations of its inhabitants" (175). Reading Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* while he was studying these fossils in the 1830s, Darwin found the evidence of the extinction of species inescapable, as did Lyell. Fossils made species extinctions highly legible, and it was the logical next step to view the extinction of primitive races as the result of similar causes. Peter Bowler notes that discoveries of fossils for which there were no living counterparts, coupled with increasing geological knowledge about the "catastrophes" that had altered the earth's surface, aroused great interest in the early 1800s. The most spectacular of extinct species was, of course, the dinosaurs. Although the first recorded discovery of their remains occurred in the early 1700s, they were clearly identified only in 1824, when geologist William Buckland described and named the gigantic carnivore, *Megalosaurus* (Colbert 12). Richard Owen

provided the name for the entire lost species in 1841 (Colbert 32-33), and ever since "Dinosauria" have been "symbols of the exotic nature of prehistoric life" (Bowler, *Fossils* 122).

The "sequence" of extinction among animal and plant populations implied a corresponding sequence, perhaps a progressive one, of their "origins" (see Bowler, *Fossils and Progress*). But the explicit "record of the rocks" bespoke death, not life. In the four chapters that he devotes to the extinction of species, Lyell stresses the propagation and diffusion of rival species as a primary cause of the destruction of weaker ones. Although he does not cite Malthus, Lyell sees the biological realm as a "struggle for existence" among competing organisms. For Lyell, the struggle is neither inherently progressive nor regressive (though it is nonetheless providential, the result of God's sagacious design). Instead, the zero-sum game of nature is interrupted only by the introduction of mankind into the well-designed but otherwise blind interplay of forces (*homo sapiens* is a higher order of being because of its capacity to reason). But in general, according to Lyell, "the successive destruction of species must . . . be part of the . . . constant order of Nature" (265), and even mankind is not exempt from this order, which is just as creative as it is destructive, and which is "a perfect harmony of design and unity of purpose" produced by "an Infinite and Eternal Being" (438).

The stress of *Principles* is much more on destruction than creativity, however, because "it is obviously more easy to prove that a species, once numerously represented in a given district, has ceased to be, than that some other which did not pre-exist has made its appearance" (295), and also because the divine plan is cloaked in mystery. Like other geologists of his era, Lyell accepted "deep time" rather than the biblical account and Bishop Usher's 4004-year estimate of its aftermath (see Gould on Cuvier and Lyell, 112-17). But "deep time" also meant that the origins and destination of life were beyond the reach of science, which could only formulate conclusions about what it could observe. Lyell held that the origin of new varieties within species, if not the origin of species themselves, could sometimes be observed, as could the general causes operative throughout both nature and time. But he opposed the theory of the "transmutation" or evolution of species as presented by Lamarck (see Gould). And he remained opposed until Darwin's *Origin* persuaded him that species did indeed evolve through "natural selection."

Although the "perfect harmony" of nature is for Lyell neither progressive nor regressive, it undergoes, like a huge kaleidoscope, immense albeit gradual changes using and re-using the same materials and causal agencies. Stephen Jay Gould notes that Lyell is a proponent of "time's cycle" rather than "time's arrow": "We may see . . . an advance in design from fish to ichthyosaur to whale, but we view only the rising arc of a great circle that will come round again, not a linear path to progress" (104). This cyclical view of natural history allows Lyell to speculate about the future regeneration of extinct species. "In the summer of the 'great year' or cycle of deep time," Lyell writes, "those genera of animals [might] return, of which the memorials are preserved in the ancient rocks of our continents. The huge iguanodon might reappear in the woods, and the ichthyosaur in the sea, while the pterodactyle might flit again through umbrageous groves of tree-ferns" (67). This is the future as an edenic Jurassic Park.

Whether Lyell's vision of the return of the dinosaurs provided him or any of his readers with reassurance when contemplating the extinction of species, it did provide for Sir Henry de la Beche an opportunity for satire. He caricatured Lyell as "the future Professor Ichthyosaurus," lecturing to other ichthyosaurs about the skull of an extinct "lower order of animals." The skull is human, as the caption emphasises: "AWFUL CHANGES. Man Found Only in a Fossil State.—Reappearance of Ichthyosauri" (Gould 98, fig. 4.1).

Fantasising about the resurrection of the dinosaurs and also about mankind's special status as the only reasoning animal was perhaps consoling, but Lyell's uniformitarianism meant that the causes of the extinction of other species were operative upon humans. Moreover, Lyell often uses the terminology of conquest and colonisation for the processes through which species intrude on each other's space and frequently destroy each other. In one hypothetical example that Darwin in South America must have found provocative, Lyell asks his readers to "suppose every living thing to be destroyed in the western hemisphere, both on the land and in the ocean." "Permission" is then "given to man to people this great desert, by transporting into it animals and plants from the eastern hemisphere. ... Now the result ... of such a mode of *colonizing* would correspond exactly ... with that now observed throughout the globe" (252; emphasis added). Lyell reinforces the metaphor of colonisation in various ways, including his frequent use of "races" as a synonym for "species"—perhaps most tellingly in the phrase "lost races" (255).

Before 1859 the subject of "lost races" was more the province of antiquarianism than of geology. But in Britain alone there were many remains of extinct ancient societies, legible in much the same way as fossils. The "prehistoric" ancestors of the British race or races were seen as mysterious lost tribes, who in some accounts were none other than the lost tribes of Israel. Writing about "the very high antiquity of the Wiltshire barrows," Sir Richard Colt Hoare declared that there was no evidence "respecting the tribes to whom they appertained" (qtd Daniel 28). So too the ancient remains at New Grange in Ireland were a mystery involving a lost race or "tribe"; and ditto for Stonehenge. If the ancient history of Britain was a "prehistory," occupied by unknown, vanished races, then it was only to be expected that the fate of modern-day primitive races would also be a story of vanishing into the ruins, if they left any ruins.

To return to Lyell, the literal colonisation of new territory by human populations is, he asserts, a major cause of the "extirpation" of many species and the introduction of new ones. "The kangaroo and the emu are retreating rapidly before the progress of colonisation in Australia," he writes; "and it scarcely admits of doubt, that the general cultivation of that country must lead to the extirpation of both" (272). Lyell does not conclude that the disappearance of "the kangaroo" would lead to the demise of the aborigines, but in *The Voyage of the Beagle* Darwin notes that "the number of aborigines is rapidly decreasing" and links their decline to "the gradual extinction of the wild animals" (433). However, besides the destruction of kangaroos and other food sources, besides the powerful depopulating effect of diseases, besides the violence and bad influence of Europeans, and even besides such savage customs as infanticide, Darwin thought that there was also "some more mysterious agency [of destruction]

generally at work" in Australia and dsewhere, a mystery that he would attempt to solve in *Descent of Man*.

After mentioning the destruction of kangaroos Lyell briefly considers the destruction of "savage tribes," including the aborigines of "New Holland":

> A faint image of the certain doom of a species less fitted to struggle with some new condition in a region which it previously inhabited, and where it has to contend with a more vigorous species, is presented by the extirpation of savage tribes of men by the advancing colony of some civilised nation. In this case the contest is merely between two different *races*, each gifted with equal capacities of improvement—between two varieties . . . of a species which exceeds all others in its aptitude to accommodate its habits to the most extraordinary variations of circumstances. (291)

The phrase "gifted with equal capacities of improvement" suggests Lyell's humanitarian disposition toward primitive races. The disturbing prospect of the extinction of those races, however, is only a "faint image" of what goes on in nature all the time; it is "merely" a matter of the destruction of one "race" or "variety" of mankind by another, and not of the entire species.

Moreover, the "extirpation of savage tribes" by civilisation is how the human species progresses—presumably, from worse to better—even though progress is not part of the general "order" of nature. Lyell concludes: "Yet few future events are more certain than the speedy extermination of the Indians of North America and the savages of New Holland . . . when these tribes will be remembered only in poetry and tradition" (291). Lyell insists that because exterminations both of species and of some human races are going on all the time in the "perfect harmony" of nature, there is no reason to feel guilty about it. Although "the annihilation of a multitude of species has already been effected, and will continue . . . as the colonies of highly-civilised nations spread themselves over unoccupied lands" (276), it is all part of the divine plan: "if we wield the sword of extermination as we advance, we have no reason to repine at the havoc committed" (276).

> We have only to reflect, that in thus obtaining possession of the earth by conquest . . . we exercise no exclusive prerogative. Every species which has spread itself from a small point over a wide area, must, in like manner, have marked its progress by the diminution, or the entire extirpation, of some other, and must maintain its ground by a successful struggle against the encroachments of other plants and animals. (277)

If Lyell intended this argument to be consolatory, one reader whom he failed to console was Tennyson. As is well known, Tennyson's vision of "nature red in tooth and claw" in his great pre-Darwinian elegy *In Memoriam* (1850), is a response largely to Lyell's

Principles with its detailed examination of the "extirpation" of many species and also of "savage tribes." *In Memoriam* offers another version of Jurassic Park, only this time the dinosaurs—"the dragons of the prime, who tear each other in their slime"--haven't returned; they have instead been replaced by that greater exterminating monstrosity, mankind. Tennyson asks the obvious question that Lyell raises but does not exactly answer. What is the destiny of *homo sapiens*? Is it, too—even in its supposedly superior, European form—headed to total extinction? (The apocalyptic theme of the demise of all mankind was also the subject of more than one romantic novel during the 1800s, including Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* [1826].) Or was *homo sapiens* destined to evolve into a higher species? This is the consoling solution that Tennyson reaches at the end of *In Memoriam*, by translating evolution into progress and his dead friend Hallam into the harbinger of "the crowning race." Or instead, was *homo sapiens* destined to subdivide along racial lines, like the Elois and Morlocks in H.G. Wells's *Time Machine*? Whatever the answers, Lyell had brought the evidence of the extinction of numerous animal and plant species to public attention. And he had applied that evidence especially to the Australian aborigines in a way that suggested that their extinction, at least, if not that of *homo sapiens* in general, was inevitable.

In *Dawn Island*, her 1845 propaganda fable for the Anti-Corn Law League, Harriet Martineau depicts a South Seas society starkly different from the happy, peaceful islanders in Herman Melville's *Typee*. Through their savage customs—warfare, infanticide, cannibalism - Martineau's savages have nearly succeeded in exterminating themselves. As the old priest Miava says: "The forest-tree shall grow; the coral shall spread . . . but man shall cease." Luckily, however, the "Higher Disclosure" arrives in the form of a British ship carrying miraculous-seeming commodities and the gospel of free trade. The conversion of the natives is nearly instantaneous, their bloody superstitions and customs of savagery giving way to commodity fetishism. Like Martineau's other tales illustrating political economy, *Dawn Island* is a faithful if simplistic rendering of ideas drawn from Adam Smith, Malthus, Ricardo, and James Mill. Thus in the fourth paragraph of *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith describes "the savage nations of hunters and fishers" as hard-working but extremely inefficient—so inefficient or "savage" that they are killing themselves off: "Such nations . . . are so miserably poor that, from mere want, they are frequently reduced . . . to the necessity sometimes of directly destroying, and sometimes of abandoning their infants, their old people, and those afflicted with diseases, to perish with hunger, or to be devoured by wild beasts" (104-05). Savagery, in short, isn't just the poverty of nations, it is also the depopulation of them.

In much early economics (as in *Dawn Island*), one antithesis of savagery that is usually synonymous with civilisation is "commerce." Smith, Ricardo, and James Mill treat precivilised peoples either as doomed or as proto-capitalists. "Every man . . . lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant," Smith hopefully opines; hence, every society "grows to be what is properly a commercial society" (22), unless it stalls or regresses in the universal march to capitalism. But if every individual pursues rational self-interest through exchange, then how can any society fail to progress? For Smith there are three types of society: progressive, stationary, and declining. Many

societies fall into one of the nonprogressive modes by failing to shed irrational—that is, savage or barbarian—customs that interfere with the natural impulse toward commerce.

When the early economists don't represent savage customs as impediments to progress, it is sometimes because they are representing savages as having almost no customs, no law and order, no social organisation. According to this old stereotype savages ironically behave too much like capitalists—each looking out for himself alone—to progress toward civilisation. Thus in his 1836 essay "Civilisation" John Stuart Mill identifies savagery with a sort of extreme individualism: "The savage cannot bear to sacrifice, for any purpose, the satisfaction of his individual will" (152). In contrast "the progress of civilisation" is identical with "the progress of the power of cooperation" and "combination" (152). According to Mill:

> [A] savage tribe consists of a handful of individuals, wandering or thinly scattered over a vast tract of country. ... In savage life there is no commerce, no manufactures, no agriculture, or next to none. ... [E]ach person shifts for himself; except in war (and even then very imperfectly), we seldom see any joint operations carried on by the union of many; nor do savages, in general, find much pleasure in each other's society. (149)

On what evidence the young Mill based his portrait of "savage life" is unclear, but he had plenty of precedents, including his father and Jeremy Bentham as well as the other early economists.

The economists' identification of civilisation with money and commerce foreshadows the World Bank, IMF ideology of development. Now as then that ideology is based on a failure of ethnographic imagination coupled with faith in the almighty dollar (or pound sterling). As Marx also insisted, every society, no matter how different from the European model, must either become capitalist or perish. Capitalism, declares *The Communist Manifesto*, "compels all nations, *on pain of extinction*, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production" (477; emphasis added). This is one of Marx's predictions that has proven all too accurate.

Among the early economists the task of analysing the irrationality of savage customs fell to Malthus. The 1798 edition of *Essay on Population* devotes only a brief chapter to "the rudest state of mankind"; his main example is the "clouds of Barbarians" who overthrew Rome. But the second 1803 edition offers a much fuller account of precivilised societies, based on extensive reading in such sources as Captain Cook's *Voyages*. Malthus asks how primitive populations stay in balance with subsistence; his answer rebuts the glowing accounts of noble savages in Rousseau, Diderot, and others (Godelier 134-35, 144-45). Smith viewed population growth as a sign of progress, but Malthus rejected that old idea. For Malthus and later economists, there are two primary forms of negative value, antithetical to national wealth: debt and overpopulation. If it represents investment in productive forces, debt can become positive. But overpopulation is sheer waste. Moreover it was easy to observe population exceeding subsistence in Ireland, and in the slums of London or Glasgow. But savage populations

weren't bursting at the seams. In savagery the problem of overpopulation bizarrely assumed the shape of underpopulation, as on Martineau's Dawn Island. However, Malthus argued that if it weren't for their savage customs, savages would overpopulate just like the feckless Irish. For Malthus savagery is that social condition in which population is brought violently into line with the subsistence available—barely—through hunting and gathering. When famine doesn't do the job, then most of the other "checks" to population are at work, and the preventive checks equal savage customs: warfare, cannibalism, infanticide, human sacrifice. The purpose of savage customs is to ward off the positive checks of nature, especially famine. Savage customs, in short, are strictly functionalist: to level population with subsistence.

For none of the early economists do savage customs instantiate value-schemes superior to or even, in a sense, different from that of capitalist Europe; there is no tropical paradise or primitive communism in any of them (cf. Herskovits 230-31). Savage customs are, quite simply, suicidal, and the primary or even sole cause of the disappearance of savage races. Paradoxically however, in attributing the function of population control to savage customs Malthus also sees savages as behaving, albeit blindly and violently, according to economic reason. By trying to maximise subsistence through even their murderous versions of population control, Malthus's savages like Smith's appear to be proto-capitalists. They are on the road to civilisation—that is, capitalism—though they may exterminate themselves before they get there.[1]

"Under such powerful causes of depopulation," as Malthus calls savage customs, savages in a stationary condition are found only in precarious balance "with the average food supply," while savages in a declining condition are "in great want," with "some of the natives . . . reduced to skeletons" and starving (171). But in contrast to the savage alternatives of famine or self-extermination, the famished masses usually evoked by Malthus's idea of "surplus populations" are European. Like savagery, civilisation is subject to the same "law of nature" that causes population, until checked, always to overpopulate. For Malthus the ultimate measure of progress is not "commerce" or the use of money, but the degree to which a population limits its size through nonviolent self-restraint. Even Europe, however, fails to meet this severe standard, so poverty and starvation are omnipresent, at least among workers and peasants. "To remove the wants of the lower classes" is impossible, writes Malthus; "the pressure of distress on this part of a community is an evil so deeply seated that no

[1] One explanation for the extinction of some or all primitive races from the modernising world is already given by Malthus. For instance, the "constant state of warfare" among the Maoris, Malthus says, would lead to race-suicide if the Maoris could manage it (174). Among the Australian aborigines, the near self-destruction of that race is also the consequence of its savage customs. Malthus claims that the Australians "forcibly repress the rising generation" through "frequent wars . . . and their perpetual contests with each other; [through] their strange spirit of retaliation and revenge, which prompts the midnight murder, and the frequent shedding of innocent blood" (171).

human ingenuity can reach it" (38). Money only adds to the dilemma, because the more money the poor possess, the greater their inducement to overpopulate.[2]

Whether in civilisation or in savagery, the tendency toward overpopulation, unchecked, leads to catastrophe. But bleak though the prospect of depopulation caused by overpopulation may be, for Malthus the deadly workings of "nature's laws" are the results of divine wisdom. Just as Lyell could see even in the extinction of entire species the "perfect harmony" of God's design, so for Malthus the fact that population increases more rapidly than subsistence "tend[s] rather to promote than impede the general purpose of Providence" (132). The "law of population" is at once the spur to industry and to rational self-restraint that Malthus identifies both as the causes of progress and as the main values of civilisation. This is the "dismal science" of economics as fortunate fall. Malthus provided later economists with a scientific theodicy that saw progress as the outcome of catastrophe. They could rationalise the extermination of the Tasmanians, the Mohicans, or the Irish from a seemingly scientific perspective that said, in effect, both savagery and improvidence are self-exterminating, less than valueless. Like overpopulating Ireland, depopulating savagery was so counter-productive that it deserved its suicide. Modernisation into or through the capitalist mode of production was the road that precivilised societies had to travel to reach a condition of positive value, measured by modern money rather than by cattle, yams, or cowrie shells. This is not news, of course: non-western societies are still being bulldozed by transnational corporations and "development" experts insistent upon their integration, whether peacefully induced or otherwise, into the capitalist world-system.

According to James Cowles Prichard, with whom the story of modern British ethnology begins: "Certain it is, that many vast regions of the earth . . . were formerly the abode of tribes which have long ago perished" (167). In his 1839 essay "On the Extinction of Human Races," Prichard does not view all savage "tribes" as warlike, much less as self-exterminating, but he notes that "the extermination of human races is still going on" (168), a tragic fact that he attributes to the relentless "progress" of civilisation. "Wherever Europeans have settled, their arrival has been the harbinger of extermination to the native tribes" (169). It seems likely, Prichard thinks, that another century of the "progress of colonisation" will entirely liquidate "the aboriginal nations of most parts of the world" (169). Prichard sounds the alarm for two reasons. First, he considers it a matter of scientific urgency "to record the history of the perishing tribes." And second, he takes it as a moral imperative to see "whether any thing can be done . . . to prevent [their] extermination" (170). For Prichard the humanitarian imperative may have been more important than science, but it was the other way around for most of the ethnologists who came after him. So in his 1848 *Natural History of the Human Species*, Charles Hamilton Smith, who pioneered "racial typology" in Britain (Banton 52), treats the liquidation of many races as scientifically inevitable even while condemning the

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[2] From the Malthusian perspective the poor are always an overpopulation, an excrescence or cancerous growth of the body politic. In Sidney Godolphin Osborne's memorable phrase, they are "immortal sewerage." Osborne's 1853 essay of that title, written in the wake of the Irish Famine, advocates "the draining of civilisation."

violence that European "monsters" have inflicted upon, for instance, the Incas of Peru (Smith 257).

Smith contends that there are three great, primary races: the woolly haired Negro, based in central Africa; the beardless Mongolian from central Asia; and the bearded Caucasian or European. Conquest and miscegenation have spawned numerous intermediate varieties or "abnormal" races, as Smith calls them; these mixed races may flourish for decades or even centuries, at least through admixtures from the pure races. If isolated, however, these mixed races are doomed to extinction through eventual failure to reproduce—that is, through infertility. Echoing Cuvier, Smith claims that mulattos are or become infertile. Along with miscegenation, infertility was the least violent of the causes of racial extinction, and though the thesis about mulattos was false, it offered a relatively comforting explanation for some vague but large fraction of such extinctions.

Smith is ambivalent about whether the three great races had a single origin, though he is more inclined to monogeny than polygeny. Throughout history the three main races expand, collide with each other in war, enslave or exterminate each other, yet gradually form the intermediate, mixed races. Though he says that mixed or abnormal races tend to die out through infertility or through conquest by the pure races, Smith nevertheless believes that progress depends on the mixing of races (157-58). Smith's basic model of history is the barbarian hordes that swept over the Roman Empire. The downfall of Rome, like the evidence of the extinction of animal species, gives him a precedent for viewing history as a universal "struggle for existence" among warring races. "From the occasional destruction of whole tribes and races," writes Smith, "caused, even in modern ages, by the sword, by contagious diseases, or by new modes of life . . . it is evident, that numerous populations of the human family have disappeared, [often] without leaving a record of their ancient existence" (150). Only the three primary races are permanent, and then only in the great centres where their purity and domination have remained stable throughout history: central Africa, central Asia, and Europe. Beyond these centres members of the three races can only survive as slaves—the fate of Africans in the Americas—or as a "master race," the imperialising Caucasians (124).

Smith, however, does not endorse either slavery or imperialism. For him civilisation is too often a continuation of barbarism by other, more effective means. "[W]e must allow that all men, and all races, bear within them the elements of a measured perfectibility," he writes, "probably as high as the Caucasian; and it would be revolting to believe, that the less gifted tribes were predestined to perish beneath the conquering and all-absorbing covetousness of European civilisation, without an enormous load of responsibility resting on the perpetrators." Nevertheless, Smith adds that the "fate" of the "less gifted tribes" "appears to be sealed in many quarters, and seems, by a pre-ordained law, to be an effect of more mysterious import than human

reason can grasp" (168).[3] This is Darwin's "mystery" about the extinction of primitive races writ large. Smith distinguishes between "conquest that brings amelioration with it to the masses of the vanquished, and extermination, which leaves no remnant of a broken people." But "amelioration" is "only awardable to the great typical stocks, effecting incorporations among themselves," presumably like African slavery in the Americas. Extermination on the other hand is "almost invariably the lot of the intermediate," "abnormal" races, like the American Indians. For complicated reasons Smith thinks that the indigenous "American races . . . are not a typical people," and a key reason is their evident "decay, amounting to prospective extinction," which in turn proves that they are not one of the three primary races (258). This tautological argument does not prevent him from condemning "the white Man's insatiable cupidity" and cruelty. But the Europeans are doing to the Indians only a more effective version of what the Indians were doing to each other well before Columbus. The "stern Indian," "on all occasions where he can glut his passion for bloodshed," does so "unmercifully" (284). In short, Native Americans are self-exterminating; the European invasion only speeds up that lugubrious process.

In *The Races of Men*, first published in 1850 (the same year as *In Memoriam*), Dr Robert Knox echoed many of Smith's ideas. The chief differences are that Knox inclines toward polygeny rather than monogeny and that he rejects any notion of social progress. Foreshadowing Count Gobineau's four-volume *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*, published in the early 1850s, and also J.C. Nott and G.R. Glidden's 1854 *Types of Mankind*, Knox argues that the mainspring of history is the physical and mental inequalities among races; that race hatred and conflict are inbred factors in human nature; that war and imperial expansion are the results of this hatred; that, despite the claims of religion and morality, might makes right; and finally that, where climate does not affect the outcome, the fair, stronger races invariably defeat and either enslave or exterminate the dark, weaker races.

It would be comforting to dismiss Knox as a crackpot. He had turned to ethnological lecturing and writing after the derailment of his medical career by the Burke-and-Hare, body-snatching scandal of 1828. Knox had been a prime customer for the corpses that Burke and Hare supplied, occasionally by suffocation, to use in teaching anatomy. The crackpot label is all the more tempting when Knox gloats sadistically over the prospect of new race wars and killing fields.[4] But Knox had a

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[3] However Smith then stresses "the duty of all to assert . . . the rights of humanity, in their indisputable plenitude; although to us . . . as mere naturalists, it is a bounden duty to confine ourselves to known historical and scientific facts" (168).

[4] In the following passage, Knox comes close to gloating over new evidence for the "transcendental anatomist": "I have seen lately in England the stuffed skin of a Hottentot woman, a great curiosity, no doubt. Now, as the Kaffirs will in all probability soon become extinct, it might be worth while to adopt this method of preserving a few specimens of the race" (182). Despite such Frankenstein-ish passages the fairly lengthy notice of Knox in the *Dictionary of National Biography* accords him a good deal of respect as a scientist, and list several major appointments and honors that he received for his scientific work after 1850. According to the 1870 biography of Knox by Lonsdale, 'Previous to his time, little or nothing was heard about Race in the medical schools: he changed all this . . . Race became as familiar as household words . . . [and his ideas were]

"considerable" influence on theories of race in the 1850s and 60s (Stepan 43; Dubow 27). Darwin cites him respectfully, and he was a key figure for James Hunt and the Anthropological Society which Hunt founded in 1863 (Stocking 247). His biographer Henry Lonsdale says that Knox made "race ... as familiar as household words ... [and his ideas] were disseminated far and wide, both at home and abroad" (qtd Banton 59). Perhaps we should even view Knox as a minor Victorian sage, albeit not the equal of Carlyle or Ruskin. After all, both Carlyle and Ruskin held opinions about slavery, racial inequality, war, and empire similar to Knox's. So did Disraeli, Dickens, Charles Kingsley, and Anthony Trollope; and Matthew Arnold's ethnological claims about the Celtic race share much with Knox's.[5] Arnold's racial theory of culture, including his famous Hellenism-Hebraism distinction, may owe something to Knox (Faverty 73; Young 55-82). In short, whether Knox was a main cause or just one of many contributors to the upsurge of race thinking in Britain from the 1840s on, such thinking was hegemonic or becoming so, even for supposedly liberal intellectuals such as Dickens, Darwin, and Arnold.

Knox's insistence on race as historical causality and his account of war, slavery, and racial extermination can be seen as a crude but nevertheless realistic version of world history. It is at least a materialist (and at least in that way, scientific) version of that history. No more than Marx, moreover, is Knox a jingoist or an advocate of white supremacy. He treats the conquering and colonising Saxon race—his own—with contempt: they are at once money-grubbing pirates, ruthless exterminators of the weaker races, and hypocrites. They are especially hypocritical, Knox thinks, when in the guise of philanthropy they try to protect the weaker races from enslavement or extermination. Knox believes that humanitarian efforts like those of the Aborigines Protection Society are too little too late, and are also an ignorant attempt to interfere with the workings of nature, which for him is most decidedly "red in tooth and claw."

Knox declares that "the fate" of the American aborigines is "in no shape doubtful. Extinction of the race—sure extinction—it is not even denied" (153).[6] What is true of history as race-war in the Americas is true around the world. Everywhere "the destroying angel walks abroad ... striking even at the races of men" (314). "Already, in a few years, we have cleared Van Diemen's Land of every *human* aboriginal; Australia, of course, follows, and New Zealand next; there is no denying the fact, that the Saxon ... has a perfect horror for his darker brethren" (153), and hence exterminates him whenever he can.

In contrast to both Australasia and the Americas, the vast continents of Africa and Asia contain many different races, and some of these, Knox explains, are more

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disseminated far and wide, both at home and abroad" (qtd Banton 59). Certainly Knox was an influence on James Hunt and the members of the Anthropological Society of London, which Hunt founded in 1865[?].

[5] Arnold accepted the main terms of his father's race-based philosophy of history, while seeking to chasten and qualify Dr Thomas Arnold's excessive Teutonism (Faverty 76-77).

[6] By 1850 the inevitable extinction of Native Americans was a well-worn theme, as in Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* or in Francis Parkman, who in *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (1851) writes that the Indian "and the forest must perish together ... we look with deep interest on the fate of this irreclaimable son of the wilderness, the child who will not be weaned from the breast of his rugged mother" (Parkman 63).

resistant to invasion, enslavement, and extermination than others. Central Africa remains impenetrable to the murderous, piratical Saxon. In the world-historical war of races the fair always conquer the dark; but the fair races cannot survive long in and therefore cannot colonise the tropics. The enslavement of the dark races becomes necessary, because whites can't labour in hot climates. The Saxon Boers have occupied South Africa for three hundred years, but Knox argues that all European colonies or former colonies can sustain themselves only through immigration. As in Smith's *Natural History*, transplanted races, whether dark or fair, may be doomed to expire without fresh transfusions of blood. This is the situation in India where the fair, conquering race encounters several dark but very populous and at least semi-civilised races. Both climate and race dictate against the Saxon's permanent settlement of India. The piratical Saxon can plunder India to his heart's content; but he cannot colonise it, which for Knox means both the seizure and the settlement of territory by a conquering race and the enslavement, eviction, or extermination of the original inhabitants.

The pre-Darwinian ethnologists—Prichard, Charles Hamilton Smith, Knox, and others—insisted that the dark races were everywhere in retreat from the onslaught of white civilisation and that many, perhaps all, of the dark races were doomed to extinction. In making this claim, however, they at least questioned easy equations between European domination, racial extermination, and progress. Despite their stress on racial difference as the causal mechanism of world history, and even though neither Smith nor Knox shared Prichard's humanitarian concern, all three are more unblinkingly honest about the global conflict between "the races of men" than are either the economists or the defenders of empire, who tend to view savagery just as they view the starving Irish, as deserving extinction.

Surveying the mighty works of nature in South Africa, its wildlife including its wild races, Knox declares that that portion of the world "had remained seemingly unaltered for countless ages" until the advent of "the Dutch-Saxon and the Anglo-Saxon," with their "fire-arms, discipline, and laws. [Given] this new element, [nature's] works are doomed to destruction, in as far as man can destroy" (311). But that is, Knox believes, all man—at least, Saxon man—is capable of doing: "Man's gift is to destroy, not to create; he cannot even produce ... a new and permanent variety of a barn-door fowl, of a pheasant, of a sheep or horse. This, then, is the antagonism of man ... to nature's works"—including other men (312). Knox's gloomy perspective at least offers a vivid counterpoint to those Whiggish interpretations of the civilising process, according to which the extinction of primitive races and even of the Irish were signs both of progress and of God's infinite benevolence.

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