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Howard Winant, *THE WORLD IS A GHETTO: RACE AND DEMOCRACY SINCE WORLD WAR II*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, xvi + 428 pp., £32.00 (cloth).

Howard Winant's account of 'racial formation' theory, as a framework for understanding the 'racial dynamics' that connect 'macro' social structural inequalities with those of 'micro' signifying action, is arguably the most innovative sociological account of contemporary racism to have emerged in the last fifteen years or so. This new volume, conceived as an 'extended historical essay', linking the past with the racial present, is a formidable intellectual *tour de force* whose aim is to 'develop the racial formation approach in a world-historical perspective' (p. 21). While the earlier work owed something to the influence of poststructuralism, particularly via the memorable formulation of race as 'an unstable and "decentered" complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle' (with Omi, M. (1986) *Racial Formation in the United States*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 68; rev. 1994), the approach here re-situates the *methodenstreit* dilemma of historical sociology within a descriptive and analytical framework, informed by Gramsci (racial hegemony, racial project, resistance, war of position and manoeuvre), Du Bois (double consciousness) and Myrdal (circular and cumulative causation). This theoretical currency allows Winant to propose a radical and challenging account of the relationship between the 'undead racial past and the much anticipated but far from realized racial future' (p.6).

Winant's argument is that we are currently adrift in a 'racial interregnum' where everywhere the 'momentum of the struggle against racism is stalemated' (p. xiv). While there has been a decisive 'break' (conceived as an Althusserian 'ruptural unity') from the past, dated to World War II, the advances towards racial democracy promised by this historic challenge to 'white supremacy' have not been realised. Rather, we are witnessing a shift from racial domination to hegemony (305-8) in the re-construction and consolidation of a 'new world racial system'. The key to understanding why this should be so lies in understanding the relationship of the post-break, racial dynamics of national 'racial formations' and the discredited global 'racial project' out of which they were formed. 'Imperialism's creation of modern nation-states, capitalism's construction of an international economy, and the Enlightenment's articulation of a unified world culture [...] were all deeply racialized processes' (p. 19). Given that race was both 'cause and consequence' of the rise of the global-historical system of exploitation which made possible western modernity, it remains, for these very reasons, a fundamental component of social relations and the systems of inequality upon which social and political life is organised. There can be no post-racial social order when that social order is itself still fundamentally connected to the institutions and relations that race made.

The significance of the post World War II racial 'break' therefore lends the book its logic and structure, looking backwards and forwards across this juncture. Part I, composed of five chapters, sketches out the framework for a 'historical sociological theory of race' as the 'key causative factor in the creation of the modern world' (p.19).

The claim that race was one of the central ingredients in the circular and cumulative causation of modernity hinges on the presence of racial dynamics, key processes of racial formation, in all the main constitutive relationships that structured the origins and development of the modern world

system [...] new forms of *empire and nation*; the organization of new systems of *capital and labour*; and the articulation of new concepts of *culture and identity* (p. 21).

Here Winant seeks to incorporate the key dimensions of competing accounts, such as poststructuralism and political economy, within a racial formation framework that privileges 'race' as the relational flange of economics, politics and culture. Chapter two and three trace the contours of this massive system of human exploitation, from the fifteenth to the close of the nineteenth century, by reasserting the centrality of the Atlantic system and the exploitation of Africa and the Americas (p. 27) Chapter four presents an analysis of the precursive dynamics of resistance and its consequences, while chapter five explores the aftermath of slavery and the emergence of contemporary anti-racism and anti-colonialism movements. Throughout this exploration, Winant demonstrates a formidable grasp of a vast range of secondary sources and entrenched debates yet manages to weave these elements into a persuasive sociological-historical framework.

It is in Part II that Winant sets out a contemporary comparative global sociology of 'racial formation' analysis through detailed chapter length case studies of the United States, South Africa, Brazil and Europe, after the 'break'. Prior to the period of 'break' the social fact of race and racial inequality was taken entirely for granted. Post-break world racial dynamics are historically unique because they take place in the context of explicit challenge to that 'commons sense' forged over half a millennia. However each of the racial formations examined are distinctive in their emergence into the post-break world and in their relations to the system of racial domination of the past. Winant's analysis is exhaustive and subtle, combining empirical detail with theoretical elegance. A central theme of this section of the book is the extent to which the proto-revolutionary features of the 'break' and the gains achieved can lend themselves not to the overthrow but the *re*instituting of racial inequality by another name.

Contemporary claims for a post-racial pluralistic social order may be able to point to partially institutionalised anti-racist procedures, policies and practices but, argues Winant, a thoroughgoing racial democracy requires the *democratisation of race itself*. That is, attempts to go beyond race, to discount its social significance are doomed to failure precisely because race is and has been, for over half a millennia of world historical time, the constitutive basis of all social identities. A renewal of political anti-racism and the 'radical democratic project' require the explicit recognition of race as the basis of social identity. Anything short of this allows the racial order to reconstitute and realign itself by another name.

Winant's book is a testament to radical scholarship, provocative and often impassioned, sometimes poetic, always analytical, it demands to be read. Whether one agrees with Winant's account of race depends where you stand in relation to the structure/agency dichotomy. Surely the mark of the originality of Winant's view is how it reconceptualizes the way we understand that relationship, in terms of race?

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