A daydream of alternative subject formation- The Exotic White Man - companion story to The Fabulous Adventures of the Mahogany Princesses

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Abstract
Not my object, my thing, my fantasy. I'm looking- but I can't fix him in my sights. More and less human than us, he reddens easily. The scuffs of living come up tender on his skin. Not a story of the past, but still some map of pain. His surface cracks under pressure, grabs destruction from heat, weeps mucous tears. No lubricant to ease this brittleness - being wet just means being more sore.

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A daydream of alternative subject formation – The Exotic White Man
– companion story to The Fabulous Adventures of the Mahogany Princesses

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More and less human than us, he reddens easily. The scuffs of living come up tender on his skin. Not a story of the past, but still some map of pain. His surface cracks under pressure, grabs destruction from heat, weeps mucous tears. No lubricant to ease this brittleness – being wet just means being more sore.

Even as he flakes away and falls apart, the white man can’t see himself. The world’s audience can’t recognise another’s glance. Unaware, he lets it all hang out. Flaunts his paunch, scratches his crotch, wipes body ooze on his surroundings, convinced the marks don’t show. Settling down for the performance, sinking into smugness, slumping as if the body belongs to someone else. Certainly no picture. Who’d look at that?

This weakness is touching. A clumsy child, finger in nose. So vulnerably oblivious. My job is to soak up the mess without accusing the source. Endless care and no more tears. My charge is too innocent for accountability, too pre-responsible for blame. The piss-stains on the carpet are nobody’s fault. People with no sense of self deserve protection. I meet the bargain and hold the trust. The fiction of the one-way look, a master lie to live by.

I’m laying out the pieces – one by one, side by side. I touch, sniff, lick each fragment, curating carefully. The contract has come back round and I’m paying what I owe, the care that I have received. Who knows you better than me, recorder of your delicate places, vessel of your wounds. I hold what your life could never be. In me your fears are carried back as trophies, what hurts belongs to someone else. Trust me because I remember what you have been.

Looming in out of vision, she felt that she had won. Impossible to
focus at this range – no barriers until, too late, they were broken. She knew that in his mind’s eye he held a picture-reminder of her, a prompt for the frightening moments when looking didn’t work. She knew that he remembered those other spaces where she was his object – that it was this memory of mastery which got him hard, guided him across her warmth. To him touch meant colour, form, responses filtered back through the thing he knew. Sensation as picture.

This was his weakness. She held his expectation, stroked and petted. Touched carefully, knowing he thought in pictures and stories, that her special skills were lost in his translations.

The artist is somewhat prone to see the foreigner as a comic creature. Our features were odd, our pinkish colour somewhat revolting, our kinder moments endearing. And this was how we were seen, odd creatures from far away who were sometimes quite charming, and sometimes hatefully cruel. In this book we shall have to take ourselves as others found us.²

Boy flesh – unfamiliar meat. Less pliant, less movement. The polite words flick by – wiry, gaunt, artistic, sensitive androgyne, gawky manchild. Of course, that wasn’t it. Nothing like the thrill of the new. She wanted to remake him as an image of herself. Her mirror, her object – vessel to her dreams, mould to her body. In him she saw a slip, a twist, an inside-out version of the world she knew. The same, the same, the same. Same picture, same story. A confirmation of her hopes and fears screening out the possibility of anything different. What he lacked was proof of what she had. Against him she puffed up, splayed out, shone.

Sometimes he turned his head as if pulled by recollection. Some other place from before or to come. A home elsewhere. She dried up in the breeze from that movement, the thought that she didn’t centre the world. The idea of a place beyond their two cracked her heart wide open, and out flew the safety of her name.

Crisis and Management

I’ve been thinking about stories and leaps of imagination. So far education has told me that some contracts are in place as a historical legacy – ’postcolonial’ discussion in particular traces the most ugly shadows of the past as seemingly endless repetition. This kind of history traps us all in the same old binds. Learning can be no more than a ritual retelling of these familiar tales of evil. Transfixed by how bad things have been, it seems disrespectful to think of alternatives, to put that painful past behind us.

I recognise that colonial histories cast long shadows – and more importantly that plenty of brutal colonial relationships are not yet done with – but I also think that learning should be about new possibilities.
So this is an exercise in imaginative leaps, because we all need to believe that breaking colonial contracts is possible.

Something strange is going on with the white boys – a change, a crisis, a dissolution. I’m starting from this widespread recognition. Whatever we call it, what happens to them has implications for us all. How can we name ourselves without this normative reference point? Who are we going to be when the post of everyone’s other isn’t open any more? Whose crisis is this?

I’m also beginning to think that it is impossible to do the right thing in academic talk about ‘race’. Nothing you can do will please an audience still in love with the romance of the avant-garde. Too eager to please and the sweetness annoys – too angry and the accusation embarrasses. I’m assuming that you want to be hurt just enough, in keeping with the discipline of ‘race’ talk in UK education, the contract where the Masochist says ‘hurt me, hurt me’ and the Sadist says, ‘No’.

I want to tease in the spirit of this contract, but I also want to let this contract go. No point in framing more arguments about the evils of the world – we know it and don’t want or need to hear it again. There is no point to replaying destructive cycles of accusation – it’s too familiar and stuck in old bad habits, even if it is what the audience came for.

So instead – an informed prediction, a joke curse, a story that is almost true. I’m not trying to convince you of what I say – just stretch our ideas of what is feasible. I’m starting from two high-profile media-hype stories – one about protests against the export of veal calves in Britain and the other about white people not replacing their own population. I like to think that both stories are about white supremacy and its imminent demise – but, as I warned, it takes a stretch of imagination to see this.

Cows

The success of the European peoples has been closely tied to their biota – and cows figure heavily, milkily, big dewy eyedly in this picture.

I’m starting from two bits of family folklore – not for authenticity, but admittedly to tease a white audience just enough. Like most folklore these stories are attempts to make sense of the inexplicable – and like all interpretations drawn from empirical observation, they tell you as much about the cultural framework of the observer as anything else.

i) Whitefolk are raised on beefsteak and milk which makes them big, heavy, resilient to disease. They are clumsy but strong – we are better looking but sickly.

ii) Whitefolk love animals more than their own children, certainly far more than us, dark-skinned echoes of their own form. I’m trying to
understand why.

The protests against the exports of veal calves bring together for the first time the respectable white population and policing designed for the less than human – black, striking, travelling. Even the police recognise that there is something strange about this. An article for a police publication by Detective Inspector John Woods is quoted in *The Times* in which the writer warns, in relation to animal rights protests and media coverage of policing,

‘Nightly pictures prove a large proportion of the protesters are white, middle-class, middle-aged and female. They are from a section of society who could normally be expected to offer total support for the police’.³

In the winter of 1994/95, reading the papers would make you think that the spontaneous demonstrations against the poor conditions in which calves were transported to France for slaughter heralded the dawn of a new era of popular protest in Britain.⁴ In the beginning at least, these were ‘regular people’ – not the assorted undesirables who normally encountered the British police force’s increasingly tooled up methods of crowd control. These were ordinary folk – people for whom being apolitical was a virtue – and they had been forced into protest because of the strength of their feelings. And the issue which had fired them up was the treatment of animals.

I used to think that this was another unpleasant reminder of white perversion – incomprehensible priorities, designed to add insult to the bloodbath of black injuries. Now I think that some other logic is at work – a mutation which is just now creeping into view.⁵

*The Demise of the White Race*

White people are dying out – they know it and they are scared.

This story can take various forms, but the common theme is that the social relations of whiteness are not conducive to reproduction. The development of whiteness, as identity and way of life, suddenly reveals a built-in obsolescence, unable to sustain itself. I want to acknowledge here the contribution of some kind of ‘gender shift’ to this process – the whole range of disputed developments around reproductive technology, feminism, sexual practice, and assorted fallout – as a way of indicating that the people most in crisis are *white boys*. White girls are placed very differently in relation to scare stories about white obsolescence – after all, their wayward behaviour has also contributed to the demise of the white race.

The scare stories have been around for some time. Something like Peter Brimelow’s book *Alien Nation* makes explicit the WASP anxieties which us Cultural Studies types have been whooping over for years.
Here we get *Falling Down* in statistical form – hard facts to fill in existing neuroses. All of those wishing prophecies fulfil themselves – shifts in domestic arrangements oust men from their lazy homes of privilege, the demise of the military-industrial complexes of the cold war makes much skilled white male labour obsolete, including a whole swathe of white-collar workers, wage-labour becomes more dispersed, part-time, casual, service based, female, black, the world turns and the white men seem to have no place any more. All of this becomes violently apparent in any attempt to map the mixed terrain of the contemporary US city.

The US story takes place in relation to a global story in which white people are ageing and not replacing their young, while everyone else splurges out too many people to maintain. However, despite losses, the odds are in favour of the dark-skinned. You have the machinery of the state, capital in old-style heavy and flighty flexible finance forms, the food, the comfort, everything we might recognise as power. We have only ephemeral cultural productions which you covet and immense fecundity which you have lost.

But none of the other assets can make up for losing the ability to make babies. Think of this as a moment of crisis – not gender dysfunction but a by-product of recognising gender as dysfunction, a revelation made possible by a very particular societal formation, type of economy, geo-historical moment. And the possibility offered is a chance to practice the belief that white supremacy is not inevitable. Sometimes white dominance can seem endless and inevitable, springing from nowhere, destined to last for eternity. Even reading books, or perhaps particularly reading books, can make you feel like this.

*Biography and Imagination*

Lately I’ve been reading a book which isn’t like this. *Ecological Imperialism* by Alfred Crosby plots euro-ascendance, particularly in the Americas, as a by-product of ecological factors. ‘The first maize could not support large urban populations; the first wheat could, and so Old World civilisation bounded a thousand years ahead of that in the New World’.

This is luck – your main staple can yield more from early cultivation than those of other climates. To Crosby, this dietary bonus is increased by another bit of luck – the ability to digest milk into adulthood. It is this visionary and unpopular determinism which makes me love this book and want to follow through its suggestions – a way of thinking about the accident of white domination which looks for concrete advantages, the things which have made the difference. Crosby expands his suggestion, ‘The metaphor of humans and domesticated animals as members of the same extended family is especially
appropriate for Northwest Europeans'.

This is the minority of the human species and of mammalia more generally who can maintain through to maturity the infantile ability to digest quantities of milk. Not everyone can do this – although again this is down to luck and climate, rather than to the survival skills of a master race. However, the dietary advantages of wheat, meat and milk allow population expansion when numbers are what really count. And that’s not all ...

Old World domestication of a variety of animals also gave rise to ambiguous gains in other areas – disease and immunity.

‘When humans domesticated animals and gathered them to the human bosom – sometimes literally, as human mothers wet-nursed motherless animals – they created maladies their hunter and gatherer ancestors had rarely or never known’. 

If you can extend your population through improved diet, the losses of new sicknesses can be absorbed and new immunities developed. People die, but the race prospers. The extended family of north European milk digesters and their sleep-in livestock grow so numerous and resilient that they want to spread out to other parts of the world. Other people recognised this interdependence and its threat, Crosby writes of Maori reaction to white settlers that ‘jealous of the high birth rates of the missionary families, [they] accused the Christians of multiplying like the cattle’. 

I think that it is worth laying aside our learned-long-ago scepticism about the role of ‘nature’ in human society – the ‘determination’ which Crosby is describing involves a whole hodge-podge of chance interactions. This is not about in-built superiority, of whitefolk, cows or wheat – no one component makes sense alone, resilience springs from the whole interactive caboodle. Crosby explains this again and again from a number of angles, perhaps anticipating a widespread wariness of any argument which seems, however carefully, to trace European ascendance to ‘nature’ in any way.

For a clearer example of the portmanteau biota as a mutual-aid society, let us consider the history of forage grasses, because these weeds (remember, a weed is not necessarily an obnoxious plant, only an opportunistic plant) were vital to the spread of European livestock and therefore to Europeans themselves.

We are not talking about the superior genepool of caucasian *ubermensch*. Crosby is at pains to distinguish his thesis from this kind of old-style racist argument. Whitefolk win coincidentally as part of a particular biota at a particular moment – in themselves they are nothing, their prosperity dependent on weedy little weeds and a host of other seemingly insignificant players in their immediate food/immunity system. It is important to remember this when portmanteau biota seem to take on racial names, feeding back into
The Exotic White Man

another mythology of white ascendance and biological back-up. Crosby
explains again,
‘What does “Europeanized” mean in this context? It refers to a
condition of continual disruption: of ploughed fields, razed forests,
overgrazed pastures, and burned prairies, of deserted villages and
expanding cities, of humans, animals, plants, and microlife that have
evolved separately suddenly coming into intimate contact’.

Whitefolk win at a certain moment because of accidents of diet and
how foodstuffs are cultivated. Prosperity is measured in meat. Trollope
explains the attractions of Australia for the working class of 1870s: ‘the
labouring man, let his labour be what it may, eats meat three times a
day in the colonies, and very generally goes without it altogether at
home’.

There are few more tangible ways of measuring quality of life.
Now the cycle has come around.
These same ‘accidental’ features are wiping whitefolk out. The red-
meat culture of high immunity and high production spawns cholesterol
anxiety – new economic organisations demand new systems of body
care. The sedentary living of the post-development world in the late
twentieth century cannot thrive on meat three times a day. Yesterday’s
luxuries become today’s addictions. In 1987 in the US, in a report by
the Surgeon General, 1.5 million of the total 2.1 million deaths in the
year were connected to dietary factors, including too much saturated fat
and cholesterol. As we are reminded in untold magazine diets, red
meat is a prime culprit. Now red meat three times a day will almost
certainly kill you.

White Dinosaurs and Extinction Hype

White obsolescence sells airport paperbacks (my favourite kind of book
– the last kick of visionary metanarrative and the heroic autodidacticism
of modernity).

Let’s concentrate on two main takes – as indications of wider debates.

1) Take one is Alien Nation by Peter Brimelow – Mr White apocalypse
and media darling, in a craggy Englishman-abroad kind of way. His
concern is to halt the dark-skinned non-anglo immigration and to
maintain the anglo way of life in the US. This is old-style racist
paranoia – there are more and more of these bestial people and they are
going to swallow us up, steal what we have and give nothing back in
return. Nothing much new about this – except the hype and the future
projection.
Brimelow goes for the gullet in his account of impending
catastrophes, ‘There is a sense in which current immigration policy is
Adolf Hitler’s posthumous revenge on America’.
He explains that in the aftermath of the Second World War the ‘US political elite’ (his phrase to connote decision-makers in a wrapped up undemocratic power structure) responded to the horrors of fascism with a concern to abandon racism and xenophobia in the new world they hoped to build. To Brimelow it is this concern which culminates in the Immigration Act of 1965, technically the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendment.

And this, quite accidentally, triggered a renewed mass immigration, so huge and so systematically different from anything that had gone before as to transform – and ultimately, perhaps, even to destroy – the one unquestioned victor of the Second World War: the American nation, as it had evolved by the middle of the 20th century.15

Those unquestioned good guys of the United States, in their open-hearted desire to be fair to everyone, have unwittingly opened the door to their own destruction. The Brimelow line is hardly original – it echoes a whole cacophony of white backlash sentiment from North America and other parts of the wealthy developed world. Like all good pundits, Brimelow plays off this existing popular understanding – that’s his angle, saying out loud what everyone (supposedly) already knows and feels.

Race and ethnicity are destiny in American politics. The racial and ethnic balance of America is being radically altered through public policy. This can only have the most profound effects. Is this what America wants? 16

Brimelow articulates some kind of widely felt gut feeling among (white) Americans, it seems. Why else the hype? He makes that peculiar kind of racist sense which bills itself as both everyday commonsense and beyond reason, the unarguable populist strategy which says both that this is what everyone with any sense knows and that these sentiments stem from primal depths which cannot be articulated or disputed.

essentially, a nation is a sort of extended family. It links individual and group, parent and child, past and future, in ways that reach beyond the rational to the most profound and elemental in the human experience.17

Brimelow describes the nation as a unit which functions through affective bonds – with an implication that these bonds are being broken apart in the United States. However, despite all the bluster about speaking unwelcome truths, Brimelow is hard pushed to say what exactly he (and the rest of long-suffering and sensible America) is frightened of. His explicit concern is that whites are becoming a minority – white people in the US are living longer and having fewer children, assorted dark-skinned groups (and particularly ‘newcomers’) are having plenty of children and have a much younger population to
start with. 'So the true impact of immigration is the proportion of immigrants and their descendants in the American population'.

Brimelow explains the significance of this trend, in case we do not recognise the enormity of this shift,

So what impact will all this have on America? In one word: profound. ... The Government officially projects an ethnic revolution in America. Specifically, it expects that by 2050, American whites will be on the point of becoming a minority.
My little son Alexander will be 59.

However, what exactly this profound change means remains unclear. This, presumably, is a call to that set of relationships beyond reason which joins families, nations, societies and historical eras in a network of interdependency. The fear is that 'our' own nearest and dearest will live with the consequences of white minority status - yet what these consequences are is never said. The prospects are too horrific to contemplate, yet sensible people know what they are, despite fudging from official bodies. 'The Census Bureau is apparently afraid to estimate the fateful day when American whites actually cease to be a majority'.

Clearly, Brimelow feels that the loss of white majority status is a big deal and that predicting just how close it is will cause public (ie. white) outcry. And given his talent for riding the hype machine, his hunch is probably right. White people are probably quite worried about the non-replacement reproduction levels of their population, and the expression of this worry can take a number of dangerous forms.

2) Take two is more liberal, and takes in a broader sweep. In Preparing for the Twenty-First Century Paul Kennedy describes a global population in which whitefolk get older and sparser, while the dark-skinned continue to multiply and die young. Kennedy is fearful for the 'environment' rather than any more explicit invocation of white privilege - but those fecund black masses still give him the 'willies'.

Kennedy begins with an analogy between the Europe of the late eighteenth century and more contemporary accounts of crisis in the West and beyond - the jumping off point is Malthus and a sense that the mismatch between population growth and technological development is a continuing dilemma and dynamic in the world.

As the better-off families of the northern hemisphere individually decide that having only one or at the most two children is sufficient, they may not recognize that they are in a small way vacating future space (that is, jobs, parts of inner cities, shares of population, shares of market preferences) to faster-growing ethnic groups both inside and outside their national boundaries. But that, in fact, is what they are doing.
Poorer, darker people have more children and are younger all round; older, paler people have a more technologised and comfortable lifestyle, but are running out of people. Kennedy reckons that the interplay between these sets of trends is what will determine the future of the human race. Whether we survive (for Kennedy this seems to mean everyone, not only or primarily whitefolk), how well we all live—these things depend on the management of the different population crises of the rich and poor worlds. Towards the twenty-first century, all our destinies are tied. 'The environmental issue, like the threat of mass migration, means that—perhaps for the first time—what the South does can hurt the North'.

Kennedy is indicative of more recent eco-sensibilities in the West. No longer the preserve of the freaky margins of white life, green populism has meant that towards the new millennium doomsday is figured in terms of ecological disaster—a nightmare which has taken over from self-inflicted nuclear annihilation as number one topic for progressive primary school project work and popular paperback apocalypse. Kennedy echoes many of the same concerns raised by Brimelow—he is also worried about the impact of demographic changes. However, unlike Brimelow's explicit fear that anglo culture and dominance is coming to an end, Kennedy sees oncoming disasters as crises of sustainability. The problems he foresees are global—although he acknowledges that their horror is that events in the unlucky South of the world now are shown to have repercussions for the formerly complacent North.

I'm interested in the way that Kennedy presents white obsolescence as an ecological disaster—or at least as a by-product and/or contributory factor in these dangerous trends. He does let us know that ageing is not the only problem facing the peoples of the developed world,

While life expectancy for older white men and women has increased (much of the rise in health-care spending has gone to those over seventy-five), that for black women and especially black men has fallen. Because of this widespread poverty, Oxfam America—famous for its aid to developing countries—announced in 1991 that it would also focus, for the first time ever, upon the United States itself.

The much talked about 'greying' of America is heavily skewed towards the white population (this is Brimelow's point). Not only are poorer, darker sections of US society not keeping up with this mixed blessing of affluence, some communities are dying younger—in a sick reminder that poverty is often a key linking feature of diaspora identity, an unwanted affinity between scattered peoples and left long ago homelands. To Kennedy this is an echo of global trends which are destructive for everyone—such wide disparities in resource allocation are not so much unjust as unsustainable. And right now arguments
about sustainability and globally felt ecological costs seem more effective than familiar calls for justice. Kennedy tries to put things in terms of everyone’s interests, ‘A population explosion on one part of the globe and a technology explosion on the other is not a good recipe for a stable international order’. 24

But, as with Brimelow, it isn’t clear what disaster he is describing here. After all, stability is an ambiguous concept – and many people wish that many things would not stay so insistently the same.

Despite the many thoughtful and thought-provoking ideas raised by Kennedy’s book, in the end he too wishes that those dark-skinned people would not have so many babies, an argument which is hard to make without some echo of racist logic. He wishes that the dark women of the poor world would get ‘feminism’, learn the positive dysfunctions of gender.

In general, women in developing countries with seven or more years of education (and presumably from the better-off classes?) marry approximately four years later than those without education, have higher rates of contraceptive use, and enjoy lower maternal and child mortality rates – so both they and their offspring have better chances in life. This clearly implies that a change in the status of women would significantly reduce population growth in the developing world. But how likely is that in those parts of South Asia, Africa, and the Muslim world where gender restrictions are so pronounced?25

Isn’t this the kind of first-world white feminist line we all learnt better than in the eighties? The kind of thing which fuels so much postcolonial study? The twist in this rendition is that here the first world declares its own interest – the spread of this enlightenment is good for white survival.

Brimelow and Kennedy write from very disparate perspectives, yet in their different ways they are both voicing concern over changes in the complexion of the world population. Either way, these stories say that the demise of the white race is bad for the planet – we will never manage without them.

Looking on the Bright Side

In response to all this hysteria what I am suggesting is the need to practice perverse imagining, to try and see the possibilities hidden in scary events. The less powerful you are, the more important this is.

Also, how can we learn if we don’t entertain other possibilities? Admittedly, this is a hard one to repackage as victory. If it was just numbers we would have won long ago. But with a stretch of imagination, maybe we can see beyond the horror stories.

Here are some unlikely ideas about what might happen – perverse imaginings.
1) Forever everyone has been hoping for miraculous technological innovation – feed your numbers and lots of other stuff becomes possible.

2) The resource-rich people-short world will need care – the answer to who will nurse the formally strong signals a karmic victory. What goes around comes around.

3) As one world order collapses, exhausts its own logic, begins to eat its own, maybe population size will again become a significant advantage.

Kennedy, in fact, outlines this possibility, summarising a range of debate,

while there may be short-term costs associated with looking after and educating lots of young children, over the longer term there will be a larger population of productive workers between fifteen and sixty-four years old. Given the ingenuity and inventiveness of human beings, the more of them there are, the better; if on average there are two or three really creative people in every hundred, better to have a population of 100 million than 1 million.26

More likely, there will be no victory, just a shift – a new collection of wounds. For the dark world the challenge is to imagine ourselves without the demeaning counterpoint of whiteness, to stop being transfixed by the ogres of the past.

White Meat

The European biota has built the baseline from which white power can stem – good diet, extended population, technological development, world domination. At certain times, numbers have been crucial – meat and milk make all the difference.

Of course, now that time has passed. Addiction to meat is killing white people. Yet breaking the meat contract can’t work either. The era of this biota is over – that kind of expansion can’t win in those locations any more. Whitefolk wish to safeguard their own standards of living, trade reproduction for technological enhancement, live longer themselves rather than squandering resources on needy dependants. Those choices come out of the historical prizes of meat. But the prizes of meat cannot be reaped today – the era of expansion they fuelled has gone.

The sentiment of desperate animal-loving (so prevalent in contemporary Britain, as already discussed) is a warped recognition of the caucasian-cattle interdependence – but not eating their eco-friends can’t save the white race now. Belatedly white people recognise their close kinship with their domestic animals, and using the clumsy tools of western rationality/the enlightenment, can only recognise these others
as versions of themselves. You respect cows by thinking of them as people – extending criteria of need which are still denied to most of the world’s dark-skinned population.

Of course, this is a misrecognition of what is in decline – the problem is not the treatment of cows but that cows are no longer an eco-treasure towards the 21st century.

**Michigan Militia**

You don’t have to look too far to find signs of white crisis these days. The bombing of the Federal Government building in Oklahoma on 20 April 1995 has been another event to shake the white psyche. *The Times* of 24/4/95 tells us that the ‘Search For Alien Scapegoats Leads Americans to their own Backyard’,

On Thursday night, America went to sleep with the depressing assumption that the nation had been attacked by evil foreigners. On Friday it awoke to the terrifying news that the worst terrorist attack on US soil was probably the work of Americans.⁷⁷

This is another take which doesn’t fit my meat story. It seems that white obsolescence brings up these contradictory responses – both anxious care of the metaphorical family of domesticated animals and white-on-white violence. Although early media coverage stressed that the bombers were ‘Americans’ not ‘foreigners’, it soon became apparent that here ‘American’ was an easy code for a certain kind of US citizen, redneck patriot of the American heartland, the reliable white backbone of a violently divided nation, until then.

The news that the suspects were almost archetypal products of America – an army veteran from upstate New York linked with a Michigan farmer and his brother – left the media, and America as a whole, temporarily stunned.⁷⁸

The framework of us and them, the logically same and those dangerous others, can’t explain the obsolescence of the white race. This is death from within, self-destruct not victim of attack.

Recent strains of white violence almost recognise this. The new white disaffection – the whole whingeing syndrome of WASP victimage – cannot be pinned on the trespasses of an alien enemy. Again, the logic of the same is hard to escape – the root of this pain cannot be ‘us’, it must be ‘them’, different, other, elsewhere. But the familiar argument twists to accommodate new fears and new situations – ‘our representatives are our enemies’. The fictions of democratic representation obscure this important battle between ‘people’ and ‘state’, apparently. ‘Anyone who talks about communism doesn’t get it. The enemy is fascism in the White House’. So – bomb people like us – the bizarre spectacle of white self-destruction as a protest against
white self-destruction.

I do think that something shifts with Oklahoma – the tearful declarations about America’s loss of innocence with this event are, surely, indicative of something. Frightening as this bombing was, these levels of violence are not unknown in human history or, even, contemporary events. What freaks people in this instance is the relationship between perpetrators and victims. For white America, it seems, Oklahoma has become a symbol of a warped aggression, directed inwards, towards its own. In the dysfunctional family of whiteness, rogue sons are running riot. Far more than teenage high-jinx, these boys act like they have got nothing left to lose – a nihilistic anti-heroism more usually associated with dispossessed populations. Since when has the violence of the powerful been terrorism? When white America starts killing its own in acts of terrorism (as opposed to venting its righteous aggression in racial violence, sex crimes, domestic beatings, child abuse, profit-motivated crime, road rage and military occupation) something is cracking in the house of the powerful. For the rest of us this is a realisation of the truly irresponsible violences of a dying people. Old enemies stay dangerous and become more ruthless and unpredictable.

In response to these events, the question for us all, anglos and others, troubled whiteys and expectant dark-skins, is:

Will we survive white obsolescence?

I can only understand events around veal exports as an irrational politicization – what kind of recognition of common interests is this? Surely even whitefolk cannot believe that this is the most significant issue of injustice in contemporary Britain, the one worth risking life and limb, the struggle which will lead to universal freedom, or even the more modest goal of self-empowerment. So I can only read veal as a veil for some other unspeakable fear, a sense of coming catastrophe. And I think it makes sense to view Oklahoma as part of the same crisis, related death throws from an agitated people. The white world senses its loss of ascendancy, but can respond only with desperate actions which contribute to the demise.

In our interconnected world of eco-horrors and high-tech networks, more than ever the actions of the rich white world (still now holders of capital, sources of information, entertainment and arms, all-round big influences in many people’s lives) have repercussions for us all. I’m not interested in reforming white subjectivity, families, populations - but I am interested in surviving the fallout from the death of the white race ... a challenge to all our imaginations.
NOTES

3. 'Supporters alienated by macho policing', *The Times*, 27 January 1995, p. 5e.
5. For opinion pieces in the right wing press about these events see Bernard Levin, 'Animal Liberation Affront', *The Times*, 10 January 1995, p. 16c; Margot Norman, 'When the Protesters Come Out of Their Crates', *The Times*, 16 January 1995, p. 17a. Both pieces express bewilderment at the strength of feeling over this particular issue and suggest that animal rights protests are a symptom of wider disaffection and feelings of powerlessness.
9. Crosby, p. 239.
22. Kennedy, p. 96.
23. Kennedy, p. 303.
24. Kennedy, p. 331.