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DOWER

The essays in the Dower collection underscore the permanence of tensions historically rooted in race. Dower makes an important point that images espoused by both Japan and the USA vis-à-vis the enemy varied significantly. While the Japanese were “little men” and “monkeys” to the Americans, the Japanese viewed the Americans as “demonic,” “evil.” Interestingly, the Japanese grappled with mixed feelings toward the enemy. In the late 19th century they had borrowed a great deal from the West (ie. technology, sciences). As a direct result, Japan quickly became an imperial power in the region, developing its own Great East Asian Prosperity Sphere. What struck me after reading Dower were the parallels that could be drawn between the US depiction of the Japanese race and the Japanese portrayal of Koreans in the early 20th century. In the years prior to annexation, the Japanese frequently referred to Korean people as “children.” A Japanese Diet member commented that Koreans were like “monkeys who stand and walk upright” (See Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*). Yet unlike the American paranoia over the “yellow peril,” the Japanese never feared the Koreans. In short, Koreans were never “supermen.” An explanation for this key difference may be that Koreans shared a common culture and ethnic heritage with the Japanese. They were inferior, but not wholly foreign. In the same way, Dower mentions that the Americans targeted the Nazis and not the entire German race. The government did not put Germans in internment camps during the war. Such contradictions support Dower’s point that WW2 was a war without mercy, a race war. Most rattling for the Americans was that these “little men,” arrived on the world scene as quickly and forcefully as they did. In this context, they attributed superhuman powers to the Japanese. And as Dower notes, this too qualifies as a form of dehumanization of the enemy.

Another interesting point Dower makes is how the academic community accepted, and even contributed, to this dehumanization process. A pseudo-scientific tone emerged as even *Science Digest* published articles comparing the two enemies: “Why Americans hate Japs more than Nazis” (258). As Dower writes in another work, scientific racism “justified the permanence of colored inferiority through a new theoretical language” (See Dower, *War Without Mercy*). For me, this pointed to the pervasiveness of this racist ideology in American society when even the academics, the champions of rational, objective thinking, subscribed to this kind of rhetoric

I am also curious as to how Professor Dower would view US-Japan relations today, given the state of the Japanese economy (not great). I noticed that the essays were published in 1995—before the East Asian financial crisis, before the terms of the “Washington Consensus” were generally accepted as unavoidable. What are other possible sources for US-Japan friction in the future? For instance, how would the Americans react to Japanese rearmament? When Japan suggested it this summer, Americans did not label the Japanese “monkeys” or even “supermen.” In fact, the former victims of the empire such as Taiwan, Korea, and China, were much more opposed.

GENOVESE

Like EP Thompson, reading Genovese drew my attention to ideas I had until now failed to consider. In his earlier discussion of overseers, for instance, Genovese argues that the American South was not only divided by

race. Rather, he adds the element of class: "The hostility between slaves and overseers reflected a more general hostility between slaves and lower-class whites" (22). Slaves noticed this class inequality in white society: "The slaves saw proud, free white men willingly defer to the great and powerful planters" (93).

Genovese makes another interesting comment about class in his discussion of the legal system that "the slaveholders faced an unusually complex problem since their regional power was embedded in a national system in which they had to share power with an antagonistic northern bourgeoisie" (26). Consequently, slaveholders had to validate their actions not only to slaves; they had the more difficult task of validating themselves ethically to their communities, fellow citizens. Lastly, and most difficult, was validating their actions to themselves. Though Genovese writes that the southerners did not assert "higher law doctrines," the fact that they compared conditions in America to those in the Caribbean hints at a need for moral justification. In all three respects, then, the answer was paternalism. They asserted that slaves were not "chattel" but a "burden," a "duty." They deemed all blacks helpless; the slaveholder was a benefactor, not an oppressor. The slaveholder's belief that paternalism was a mutually beneficial system, however, was challenged when the slaves defected or ran away at the outbreak of war. This debunking of their myth, in turn, explains their anger and grief when it happened.

I heard echoes of EP Thompson in Genovese in his discussion of the condition of the slaves (p.51-52). Though material conditions of life ("standard of life") may have improved, an excerpt by WEB Du Bois comparing slaves to laborers on p.69 shows a darker side: "It was in part psychological...It was the helplessness." Further, Genovese makes an important point that the push for humanitarian reform of the slave system could be seen as more repressive because it attempted to justify the regime. It did not "strike at its essence" (70) but rather sought to prolong it. Genovese, like Thompson, does not take figures and actions at face value. In doing so he adds novel insights elucidating the environment in which the slaves lived.

The section on slave revolts reminded me of the Annales paradigm, where acts of resistance constitute the "event". Genovese's discussion thus far of mutual fear, religion, paternalism and hegemony provide the context for why huge uprisings never occurred. He criticizes the South as a society where "only madmen [were] sane enough" to mount a challenge to slavery (595). And like Braudel in his explanation for why the Mediterranean never managed to bring off a successful revolution, Genovese too tweaks the question and points to the "day to day resistance to slavery" that was found in the "slaves' accommodation to paternalism that enabled them to assert rights," or in the "collective spiritual life" (598).

After reading this section, I asked whether disobedience, regardless of scale, actually reaffirmed the legitimacy of the regime. For instance, Genovese writes: "For the slaves, the revolts, however rare, served a purpose." The masters' realization that blacks were not necessarily "docile," led to the "amelioration of their material conditions." Eventually, the slaves learned to work with the system, not against it. In a similar vein, slaveholders did not always resort to punishment when slaves stole from them: they "chuckled, as if delighted by the cleverness of their mischievous children." For in the end, it confirmed their own superiority as a race and even provided them the much-needed justification that they, as slaveholders, were still "men of honor" (612).