

Unconscious dominions

The cover of *Unconscious Dominions* deserves special mention. It displays a painting by Picabia titled *Face of a man and head of a horned animal*. It is appropriate to Freudianism: over a man's image is superimposed an anxious animalistic creature, peering fearfully out at the world. This book is an attempt to explore how and in what ways the psychoanalytic subject – as a universalised 'construct' consisting of unconscious, ego and superego, which was created by Freudian psychoanalytic theories – is also a colonial creature.

Julia Read

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Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jenson, and Richard C. Keller (eds.) 2011. *Unconscious Dominions: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma, and Global Sovereignities*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, ISBN 978049792 (pb)

Unconscious Dominions is an edited collection brought together by Warwick Anderson, Professor of History, who conducts research in values, ethics and the law in medicine at the University of Sydney; Deborah Jenson, Professor of Romance Studies with involvement in global health and Haiti humanities at Duke University; and Richard Keller, Associate Professor of Medical History and Bioethics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. *Unconscious Dominions* is thus an international and interdisciplinary collaboration, and the contributors – also international – represent predominantly (but not only) psychoanalysis and colonial studies, history of medicine and psychiatry, human sciences, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and ethics. This is an extraordinarily wide-ranging collaboration; the area of interest is a nascent one that clearly has potential.

The volume represents an attempt to explore the psychoanalytic subject – a universalised 'cathartic figure' created by European high modernism, as a colonial creature. The project thus carries with it a number of other questions, such as, how did it happen that people around the world came to recognise this figure in themselves and others? Will it be possible to retrieve and imagine other possible selves under increasing globalisation?

Sigmund Freud is known as a product of his time, but scholars have paid less attention to the implicit colonial assumptions of early practitioners and theorists of psychoanalysis. For example, Freud's famous description of female sexuality as a 'dark continent' was part of his whole conceptualisation of 'primitive' societies and the origins of civilisation, which was Eurocentric.

The Introduction by the editors positions psychoanalysis as a mobile technology of both colonialism and its critics. Insights from psychoanalysis shaped Western ideas about the colonial world, the character and potential of indigenous cultures and the anxieties and alienation of colonisers and sojourners. Moreover, engagement with the empire came to shape subjectivities amongst both colonisers and colonised. Yet the character of this intersection has scarcely been explored or examined. This book is thus concerned with the specificity of the relations of psychology and globalisation, seeking new historical depth and political nuance for psychoanalytic elements of postcolonial history – a project of retrieving and also uncovering.

Ethnohistory, colonialism, and the cosmopolitan psychoanalytic subject

The research reported in *Unconscious Dominions* is organised around two goals: (1) focusing on the history and practices of psychoanalysis in the colonial period and (2) referencing this 'colonialised' psychoanalysis in postcolonial critique.

First, Hans Pols recounts Freud's analysis of a famous case, the "Rat Man", to explain how processes of abjection, narcissism and defence, fundamental to our becoming human, can cause recurrent splitting in our relationships. When these psychic

processes are embedded within cultures and institutions, they constitute major hazards, and with globalisation these are multiplied. Pols suggests any democracy to come will not come of its own. It will emerge, recur, or appear as a movement, or a series of such, that slowly comes to know itself as its (recurrent) coming into being gives rise to counter-movements determined to annihilate it. Current developments in the Middle East come to mind!

Alice Bullard's chapter on late colonial French West African psychiatry illustrates how European psychiatrists drew on assumptions of the "primitive" as a referent, often without connection to psychoanalytic data, in Africa and Algeria. The colonised individual was not seen as an individual psyche by analysts, but viewed through a Western conceptual frame of cultural analysis flavoured by racial stereotyping. This extends to the present in many places with regard to people outside or at the bottom of local hegemonies.

Joy Damousi's chapter discusses the psychoanalytic anthropologist Geza Roheim in Australia. It was believed that Australian Aborigines did not have depth of feeling or complex adult emotions because they were primitive. Roheim was no exception; but although he was unaware that much of what he observed was due to the effects of dispossession and discrimination, he perceived the indigenous self as a complex, intricate and multi-layered subject worthy of analysis and interrogation, not to be dismissed as simple-minded or childlike. This signifies an important early contribution to challenging colonialist assumptions.

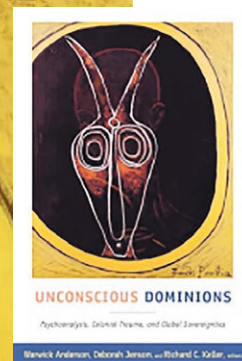
Christine Hartnack's chapter on Freudian and Bengali Hindu synergies in British India contrasts with the previous three. The reception of psychoanalysis in India was self-motivated and not imposed, and originated in continental Europe, not Britain. Moreover, cultural resistance in India could gain in strength by drawing on pre-colonial modes of thinking and behaviour. Girindrasekhar Bose was a charismatic psychoanalyst, a member of an elite caste of the dominant Bengali Hindu community, and founder of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society and Indian Psychoanalytical Institute. Patients were members of the British-educated urban elite and were among those most exposed to a dually British and Indian world where British and Indian cultures merged, co-existed, competed or clashed.

In Bengali beliefs, wishes play an essential role in the sourcing of psychic disturbances. Bose gave the concept of wishes a central place in his oeuvre. A major difference in relation to Freudian theory was that, in Bose's view, resolution of psychic disorders could come about not by sublimation but by the recognition and gratification of repressed wishes. In the Bose model, psychoneurosis is the result of a conflict between repressing and repressed forces; thus, the essential task of the psychoanalyst is to liberate these repressed elements. Bose and Freud corresponded for sixteen years, and eventually Freud acknowledged that he had neglected the existence of opposite wishes and realised he must work them into his system.

Hartnack points to differences between Bose and Frantz Fanon – of Algerian Front fame – to show that colonialism and its effects are not monolithic. India, for example, was exposed to Mogul domination in the past and developed a "rich patchwork" history of cultural influences. Fanon, another anticolonial and critical psychiatrist, had a very different life experience. As an African-Caribbean he was always an outsider, first in France and then in Algeria, confronted with racism, prejudices against non-Muslims, and resentment against intellectuals who came as members of the colonising mission. Bose was not limited to the binary concept of "Black Skin, White Mask"; he strove rather to establish connections and could make a lasting contribution.

Mariano Plotkin's chapter explains that in Brazil things happened differently indeed with regard to the influence of Freud's ideas. In Brazil, psychoanalysis was 'read' through the filter of the Brazilian elite's preoccupations with race, race relations and national identity. There were three overlapping areas of reception of psychoanalysis: its reception in medical circles, its impact in the artistic avant-garde *modernista* movement, and its influence on social sciences.

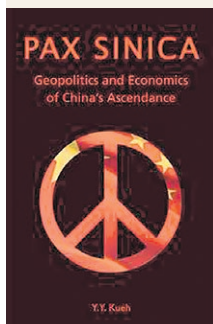
From the late 17th century, the Brazilian economy depended on black slaves imported from Africa in enormous numbers to work on sugar and coffee plantations. Due to widespread interbreeding, the construction of a national identity in Brazil was thus closely connected to the existence of a large mixed-race population. In the early 20th century the mostly illiterate



Encountering a new economic powerhouse

Grasping the nascent international agency of regional powers with global aspirations has become a dominant topic in the study of world affairs. The rash of attention for the emergent dynamics of international interactions has been facilitated by the break-up of the Cold War order, which has allowed a number of actors to extend their international roles and outreach. In this respect, thinking about the shifting contexts of global politics has often gravitated towards the realms of fiction and fantasy.

Emilian Kavalski



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THIS SEEMS TO BE PARTICULARLY THE CASE when grappling with the emerging international agency of China—an actor whose conceptualization in world politics often straddles the invention/reality divide. Beijing's enhanced confidence and ability to fashion international relations seems to attest both to the transformations in and the transformative potential of Chinese foreign policy attitudes.

Y.Y. Kueh's study, thereby, offers a much needed and an extremely erudite analysis of China's emerging international agency. The point of departure for Kueh's comprehensive reconsideration of China's external outlook is the suggestion that it is Beijing's very ability to maintain consistent levels of economic growth that have allowed it to demonstrate an enhanced confidence and ability to fashion international relations. In particular, Kueh asserts that it is economics that underwrite the geopolitical clout of any actor. The claim then is that the global financial crisis rocking both the American and European segments of the allegedly ubiquitous Global North reveal not merely fissures, but profound underlying flaws of the Western models of development and governance. As Kueh presciently observes, this does not mean that the West should in any way

be perceived as defeated or obsolete. In fact, according to him such vocabulary indicates problems with the way in which we have been schooled to observe, explain, and understand the changing patterns of world politics.

Instead, what Kueh has in mind is that while Western actors still maintain their primacy in a number of spheres of international life, a number of alternatives are springing up. And it is China, according to him, that offers one of the most exciting and innovative models. Labelled as "Pax Sinica", Beijing's model for domestic development and governance underpins what many perceive to be a gradual shift to the East in international life. Such "Pax Sinica" can therefore be seen as an eventual replacement of "Pax Americana", which has dominated global affairs since the end of World War II, which in turn itself replaced the preceding imperial "Pax Britannica" that dominated the nineteenth century (p. vii). It is the elucidation of the content, scope and implications of this Chinese model that distinguishes Kueh's prescient engagement of China's global roles.

What "Pax Sinica"?

The term "Pax Sinica" is usually associated with what some used to call the Chinese world order dominating East (and large parts of Central) Asia from around the year 300BCE to about the mid-1800CE. "Pax Sinica", therefore, was promoted as a type of normative order which maintained both Chinese influence and the Chinese worldview. This order was sustained through the complex institutional arrangement of a tribute system which ensured subscription to the centrality of China in international relations. For Kueh, "Pax Sinica" is not necessarily an institutional arrangement – neither formal, nor procedural. Instead, "Pax Sinica" is a set of practices. These practices span the military, economic, and cultural sphere. As a result,

what emerges is a strategic intention framed by particular and contextual interactions. Therefore, "Pax Sinica" should not be perceived as something fixed and inflexible that others will have to comply with and abide by, but a fluid practice whose meaning emerges in the process of Beijing's interaction with other actors.

Kueh reveals as a major oversimplification the tendency to interpret "Pax Sinica" merely as an ambitious and aggressive strategy for either regional or global domination through the establishment of a Sinocentric order. In fact he suggests that the tendency to read "Pax Sinica" as a modern-day Chinese quasi-imperialist vision of regional security governance reflects Western strategies of narrativizing historical experience. For Kueh, the reference to "Pax Sinica" infers a movement away from neo-colonial approaches to international politics that will "help sustain peace and prosperity in the Asia Pacific" (p. 371). In other words, "Pax Sinica" intimates socializing practices through which Beijing engages in informational, procedural, and symbolic transference and diffusion of its norms in the context of bilateral and multilateral interactions.

In this setting, Kueh suggests that Beijing's global outreach reflects China's attempt to construct itself as a responsible, as well as a reliable, international player that offers a viable alternative to existing models of global politics. It is for this reason that Beijing has generally resisted engaging in direct subversion of established institutions and international regimes, and has more often than not complied with their standards and/or has sought inclusion through membership of their organizational clubs. "Pax Sinica", therefore, can be treated both as a shorthand for and a confirmation of Beijing's insistence on its peaceful rise to international prominence.

Whither "Pax Sinica"?

Kueh is quite blunt that "it seems simply surreal to envisage Chinese superpower emerging in the foreseeable future to replace Pax American in its totality" (p. 371). Yet, such assertion should not be taken as an indication that "Pax Sinica" is not in the offing. The fact that it has not replaced practices that have come to dominate international relations during the last sixty years, does not mean that it does not exist or that it is not viable. Instead, as Kueh's work demonstrates, alternatives need to be studied, engaged with, and understood. It is in the process of accumulating such knowledge that these alternatives become not only more comprehensible, but also less threatening. Kueh's study of "Pax Sinica" seems to achieve for the case of the fledgling Chinese model. Not surprisingly, therefore, his book will be welcomed by students, scholars, and policy-makers alike.

Emilian Kavalski, Institute for Social Justice, ACU-Sydney.
(emilian.kavalski@acu.edu.au)

former slaves began to move into the cities, producing an urban underclass that fed industrialisation and rapid urbanisation. Housing conditions and public health deteriorated. The government only became involved in public education in the 1930s. This was the context in which psychoanalysis arrived in Brazil.

A positivist-somatic paradigm was then fashionable, which included a degeneracy theory: the idea that mental and physical diseases were inherited. In Brazil the seeds of degeneracy were thought to be in the black and mulatto populations. The reception of psychoanalysis in Brazil was thus linked to local elite perception of 'exotic' and 'wild' elements of their own society. Early reception of Freud's ideas was closely linked to education and a neo-Lamarckian emphasis on evolution through inheritance of acquired good characteristics that could be introduced from outside. Psychoanalysis became quickly institutionalised in Brazilian medical circles.

There was a growing perception since the 1920s among the avant-garde that psychoanalysis was not only an innovation in psychology and psychiatry but also an essential component of cultural modernity. Modernism became a powerful movement in Brazil. Modernists used psychoanalytic concepts and ideas differently from psychiatrists. For artists psychoanalysis provided a tool for the construction of an aesthetic and ideological movement that exalted exotic and wild elements of Brazilian culture as creative forces.

The reception of psychoanalysis was positive amongst both medical and avant-garde components of Brazilian society for quite different reasons. The social sciences provided a third space for its reception. Brazilian universities were only created in the 1930 with foreign assistance. Modern social sciences – together with transnational research agendas and mechanisms of validation and funding – were introduced and institutionalised earlier in Brazil than in other Latin American countries and were at the centre of university projects aimed at creating a new breed of national and local intellectual and technical elites.

Thus in spite of differences in their approaches, doctors, educators, social scientists and avant-garde artists in Brazil all found in psychoanalysis an instrument for their social and cultural projects, in a uniquely Brazilian way.

Trauma, subjectivity, sovereignty: psychoanalysis and postcolonial critique

The first chapter in the second part of this volume, by Hans Pols, describes a psychoanalytic interpretation of the Indonesian Struggle for independence. The psychiatrist Pieter Mattheus van Wulfften Palthe had been associated with the medical faculty in Batavia before the Japanese occupation. He was able to observe the events after the Indonesian declaration of independence first hand. His interpretations were influenced by Freud's "Totem and Taboo", which relates how revolting hordes kill an all-powerful father, only to resurrect him in the form of a totem to which they vow unconditional allegiance. According to van Wulfften Palthe, in the Dutch East Indies, the all-dominant father figure had vanished twice, not because of the murderous acts of revolting hordes but as a consequence of unrelated events. In 1942, the Dutch quickly capitulated to the Japanese imperial forces; in 1945, the Japanese surrendered after the US dropped atomic bombs on Japan. In both cases, van Wulfften Palthe argued, Indonesians were left without an object to which they could project their ambivalent feelings of aggression towards the Japanese, which they then transferred to the Dutch when they tried to retake their colony. Relying on general ideas of the primitive mentality of the indigenous population, crowd psychology and psychoanalysis, van Wulfften Palthe located the ultimate reasons for the Indonesian struggle for independence in factors entirely extraneous to the Dutch and the way they had governed their colonial empire.

Pols remarks that Van Wulfften Palthe stood firmly in the tradition of psychiatric commentary on colonial affairs by emphasising the infantile character of the Indonesians. He delegitimised the Indonesian resistance against the resurgence of the Dutch rule in the colonies by explaining it as the outcome of neurotic processes and the irrational, erratic and violent behaviour of hordes. In his perspective, the hatred against the Dutch originated in the few weeks after the Japanese capitulation. In other words, it was not based on the exploitative nature of colonial society, which had existed for over three centuries.

The second chapter in the second part, by Deborah Jenson, is about Haiti. Her concern is intercultural between European

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and creolised scientific/cultural spheres, specifically as it concerns the evolution of the psychoanalytic notion of trauma. She traces the notion of trauma, beginning with early medical commentary on an African sleeping sickness, or "hypnosis" in Saint-Domingue, to the proposition by American physician Benjamin Rush that slavery in the West Indies produced melancholy and madness, to a decisive late-18th-century creolised unfolding of mesmerism in the colony, to hypnotic modalities in French reactions to the Haitian Revolution and the upheavals of Napoleonic imperialism, and finally to the origins of both psychoanalysis and trauma theory in hypnotic therapy. Thus her chapter follows a tortuous trail to place Saint-Dominique/Haiti on a "geopsychanalytic map".

Richard Keller's chapter, "Colonial Madness and the Poetics of Suffering" tells the story of Kateb Yacine, an Algerian novelist, poet and playwright. We most often imagine medicine as a healing art, a means of alleviating pain. This is a scenario in which medicine is a primary source of – or at least coextensive with – suffering and trauma. Keller's chapter explores iatrogenic forms of suffering, examining the complicity of medicine in the structural violence of the colonial situation, one in which medicine cannot be imagined as anything other than a force of oppression. Fanon (mentioned earlier in relation to Harnack's chapter) is compared with Kateb.

Didier Fassin's chapter, "Ethnopsychiatry and the Postcolonial Encounter" is about ethnopsychiatry in France. He accuses ethnopsychiatrists of reification of culture and fascination with difference. He describes how women are patronised when their economic and mental conditions are labelled cultural difference.

Unconscious Dominions has been meticulously edited, which is unusual these days. The bibliography is extensive. It should be read by researchers and practitioners in the social sciences and psychiatry, by historians and students of culture of all stripes, and by anyone who is interested in cultural interaction, intercultural communication and international understanding.

Dr Julia Read is retired, but was most recently attached to the University of Melbourne's Graduate School of Education as Co-Supervisor of D.Ed. candidates.
(mandjread@optusnet.com.au)