

## **ROUNDTABLE**

on

**ÉTIENNE BALIBAR and IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN'S  
*RACE, NATION, CLASS: AMBIGUOUS IDENTITIES***

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**ABSTRACTS OF PRESENTATIONS**



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### **My brother's sex was white. Mine, brown.**

Stacey Young in *Changing the Wor(l)d: Discourse, Politics, and the Feminist Movement* (1997: 85)

The book *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* inaugurated for me the Althusserian question of the *overdetermination* (these days it is designated *intersectionality*) of class and race, as also nationalism. It drew attention to the question of racism and sexism, questions not incumbent upon us in the Bengali 'radical Marxist' milieu. Questions of gender were "bourgeois questions". Caste was a "pre-bourgeois question"; it was a feudal remnant; turning to caste was a turning away from the progressivist telos. Those days, class was the *primary contradiction*. The book managed to open my class-essentialist horizon to the *mutual constitutivity* of class, race, gender and nation; and the need for a rigorous overdetermined analytic. It had also alerted me to the fact that economic, political, cultural and natural processes needed to be thought in their overdetermination, where one brings the other into being/existence. Economism, culturalism, psychologism were facets of the same problematic: metaphysics of presence; also the economic is *not* to be reduced or limited to capitalism. Base-superstructure models were thus rendered suspect. Historical materialist hypothesis marked by "the violent consequences of imposing the most fragile part of Marx, the predictive Eurocentric scenario, upon large parts of the globe not historically centered in Europe" (Spivak, 2012: 27) needed to be rethought. The movement from feudal to capitalist, theological to secular, and medieval to modernity, monarchy to nation-state was more complex than one thought. Lamellar inter-connections inhered between what historical materialism had presented as complete historical breaks; "the contrast between the [purportedly] narrow-minded medieval vision of our antiquated traditional roots and the liberal, open spirit of the modern world" may not be so sharp. There were *a thousand intersecting plateaus* to contend with. Marx's suggestion in the Chapter on "Precious Metal and the Rate of Exchange" in *Capital* (Vol. 3): "The monetary system is *essentially* Catholic, the credit system *essentially* Protestant" came alive in a rather different light (Marx 1991 [1894]: 727); attention was also directed at Chapter 52 titled "Classes" (*Capital* Vol. 3), a Chapter that brings Marx's work and reflection on classes or on the question he asks "what *makes* classes" to a seeming halt; the Manuscript breaks off at this point. Why? Why does the manuscript break off? Is it because class cannot be defined in itself? Is it because as one tries to answer the question what makes classes one sees *race makes classes* ("race is the modality in which class is 'lived' " [Hall 1980: 340]; "the overall crisis of post-war society was evident in inner-city decay, poverty, unemployment, bad housing, and problems in the education system. This crisis was often 'lived through a sense of race' [Gilroy 1993: 23]), *classes make race* ("the dreams of racism actually have their origins in ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of nation" [Anderson 1991: 149]); hence "there is no such thing as a pure class or race relationship" (is there then a metonymic slide from one enunciatory subject position to another, the slide marked by ambivalence; "there is no 'ideal type' of classes (proletariat and bourgeoisie) but there are processes of *proletarianization* and *embourgeoisement*. This is the question the book manages to inaugurate not just in "Western Marxism" but also in our part of the world: "what is the specificity of contemporary racism [including the "tenacity of prejudice" and "phantasies organizing race"]? "How can it be *related* to class division within capitalism and to the contradictions of the nation-state?" And, conversely, "in what respects does the phenomenon of racism lead us to *rethink* the articulation of nationalism and the class struggle?" "Why capitalist and socialist formations took the form of nations?" Balibar pushes the envelope further: 'racism always presupposes sexism' (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 49). The interpenetration of ideologies of race and nation was noted by Foucault (1980) as part of his analysis of sexuality. He had argued that nineteenth-century

European bourgeoisies attempted to control sexuality in order to properly manage nations: such control and management were also directed at racially purifying the national population, threatened as it was by racial degeneration and contamination from within – and without (Stoler 1995); as also by the ‘outsider’ within, Jews and homosexuals. Tagore calls this ‘outsider-inside’ the *gravel in the shoe*.

For us however it becomes a question of *methodology* and *not content*; this book does not illuminate the content of our experience; it offers us a methodology as to how one can go about making sense of the content of our experience. This is also because one cannot translate race to caste; the connection between race and class and the connection between caste and class could however be apposite in terms of the eternalist nature of labor forms that the racial other and the caste other has to take part in (certain laboring practices historically accrue to the racial or the caste other making it impossible for the racial or the caste other to escape the chains of such labor forms; it is not a merely a question of what Marx calls wage-slavery; it is a question of being bonded to a labor form). While the laborer Marx talks of can notionally move from one labor form to another, albeit not escaping exploitation, the laborer Ambedkar foregrounds *cannot* exit the labor form in which one is born. Marx’s focus is on the labor process; Ambedkar’s focus is on the lived experience of the laborer, tied eternally to a labor form. The distinction Ambedkar marks between (surplus) labor and the (bonded) laborer could be useful to race theorists as well.

The book takes us to the doorstep of two fundamental supplements to the question of surplus appropriation. Supplement I: Lacan foregrounds the *theft, abduction and stealing* of the slave’s ‘know-how’ (not just ‘surplus labor’, as suggested by Marx), through the maneuvers of the Master in Plato’s dialogues; what we call *episteme* is premised on the *extraction* of the essence of the know-how embedded in the everyday praxis of the craftsmen, of the serfs, of women working in households; theoretical knowledge or what Aristotle calls *theoria* in its historical function is *this* extraction, of the slave’s know-how and everyday praxis, in order to obtain its transmutation into the ‘Master’s Discourse’ (Lacan, 2007). Supplement II: Lacan (2007) also foregrounds the aspect of the disavowal of the slave’s enjoyment/*jouissance* in Marx. One hence needs to supplement surplus value/labor (the class question) with surplus *jouissance* – the slave’s secret *jouissance* in ‘community/race might’; and both with the abducted slave’s know-how that resides in the Master’s Discourse – hence the need for Dalit/feminist/black epistemology. Do the workings of (i) the three (albeit related) understandings of surplus and (ii) the bonded eternalist nature of Dalit labor contribute to the thinking of the overdetermined interface of race-caste, gender and class?

The book also takes us *beyond* thinking about universalism as a concept or an ideal diametrically opposed to particularist identities. The book argues: universalism and racism-sexism are not thesis and antithesis awaiting their synthesis. They are rather an inseparable pair containing reflexes both of domination (domination of ‘universal humanism’ as also of ‘particularized racism’) and of liberation (liberation through the marking of sexual or racial *difference*). We are also alerted to the *fusion* of the two historical narratives which are capable of acting as metaphors for each other: on the one hand, the narrative of the formation of nations at the expense of the lost unity of Christian Europe and, on the other, that of the conflict between national independence and the internationalization of capitalist economic relations/class struggle. This is why the Jew, as an internally excluded element common to all nations but also, negatively, by virtue of the theological hatred to which she is subject, as witness to the love that is supposed to unite the Christian peoples, may, in the imaginary, be identified with the cosmopolitanism of capital which threatens the national independence of every country while at the same time re-activating the trace of the lost unity. Nationalism is also always caught between *universality* and *particularity*. It is universalist because it upholds the notion of uniform citizenship as a human right. On the other hand, it is particularist because it always also focuses on a specific nation (Tagore was however critical of *both* conceptions of nation). Ambedkar, through an invocation of Nagarjuna’s concept of *sunyata*, in *Buddha and his Dhamma* frames the problematic of the universal and the particular differently as also radically/politically. *Sunyata* is not presented by Ambedkar as ‘emptiness’ but as ‘dependent origination’ and ‘an emergent contingent is’; *sunyata* is hence the ground for ‘anti-eternalism’, and by default for the possibility of *transformation*. Building on Ambedkar’s radical re-reading of *sunyata*, as anti-eternalism and anti-eternalism as, in turn, ground for transformation – transformation of the caste-ridden social, one can argue for the political. The book *Race, Nation, Class* also creates ground for a dependent origination and an emergent contingent ‘is’ of race, class, gender. Ambedkar’s anti-eternalism could be a supplement to Balibar and Wallerstein’s critique of racism-sexism.

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## **ABSTRACT:**

First of all thanks to Ranabir and the team for this invitation to be part of a panel discussion on the volume by Balibar and Wallerstein brought out 25 years ago. I feel like something of an impostor because though I actually did the very Indian thing of photocopying the book in 1992 in Hyderabad (in the mode of accumulating the latest texts when they come out) I cannot claim to have really read it. Thanks therefore also for having to read it for this occasion.

As we hardly need to be reminded, the early 1990s was the time characterised by the palpable crisis of Marxism as the "master narrative" of the era in which our generation had been formed, one that was experienced in manifold ways across the globe. In my individual case it was also marked by the growing significance of feminism, which, given, my prior location as a graduate student in the US from 1985-1991, was deeply intertwined and challenged by the US politics of race and ethnicity of those years. In India during the early 90s in cities like Hyderabad, we were also confronting issues of communalism and the re-emergence of caste (in spaces thought of as casteless).

For the purposes of the present panel discussion I have been able to read essays in Part I, essay number 6 in Part II, Part III and class racism in Part IV. Let me at the outset say that the few scattered remarks under the heading of "sexism" (what we would call patriarchy or gender inequality) was the most incomplete if not unsatisfactory, including Wallerstein's short piece on household structures and women's unpaid work. So I am not going to comment further on this minor aspect of their work here, except indirectly by way of some of my concluding thoughts.

Obviously this is an extremely complex volume whose chapters address issues of class, race and nation from different vantage points and in different styles, Wallerstein more descriptively and historically and Balibar more theoretically and well, more French!

It is the discussions on class and secondly, those on race that I hope can be taken forward in this panel discussion. Within the classic Marxist two class structure of capitalist vs worker, it is the complex location of the worker/proletarian that, as Balibar points out, has enjoyed both theoretical and political primacy. (In fact he shows how in Marx's critical discussion in volume one of Capital, the capitalist does not even have any initial presence, other than as the bearer of capital.) Given this imbalance, the most interesting aspects around class related issues for me are to be found in Wallerstein's essays on the bourgeoisie, including for their possible relevance in relation to issues facing us today. In chapter 9 in particular, Wallerstein's observations about the different kinds of bourgeois classes, but more especially his very engaging description of the "topsy-turvy world" of capitalism (page 148) were insightful, especially the account of how capitalists do not want to be bourgeois but rather aristocrats! When we pause to consider the peculiarities of our bourgeois classes and relationships to wealth, rent, land, speculation and so on, Wallerstein's descriptions might prove quite useful. Furthermore, on page 150 there is the all too brief discussion of meritocracy and education in creating the necessary distinctions between the new middle classes (salaried bourgeoisie) and the working classes. My only doubt here concerns his rather optimistic observations regarding the intrinsic instability of meritocracy in maintaining class distinctions compared to older notions of status. Here too it would be worth looking for parallels in the Indian context given the enormous ideological work that is being achieved by the idea of merit in our educational system, views on reservations, and the centrality of education more broadly in the reproduction of India's new middle classes.

For both the authors, the critical purpose of their re-descriptions of class have obviously to do with how they bring in racism. I believe that it would be worth examining more closely Balibar's profoundly anti-essentialist methodology here – one that repeatedly emphasizes contexts and histories for thinking simultaneously about the co-production of class and racism, from fifteenth century Spanish imperialism in America with their genocide of other races, to arguments that capitalism in France now needs the immigrant racial other in an expanding capitalist system in the mode of differential racism. As Wallerstein puts it “racism is the magic formula that reconciles these [i.e. capital's] objectives (p. 33). In the preface, Balibar describes the racism of the modern world as “an institutionalisation of the hierarchies involved in the world-wide division of labour.” (p. 6). In other words what we have here is “class racism” or perhaps capitalist racism, where there is no question of there being two separable structures of class and race but rather that it is only possible to describe one together with the other. From a contemporary perspective such a co-description does not therefore take the form of the problematic of intersectionality (much discussed these days) in the first place. Rather it is the key term “ambiguity” (in the sub-title of the volume) that is put to the greatest use in these discussions.

Let me now come to my third comment. This has to do with what I see as a certain weakness in the volume overall, when it comes to describing capitalism, capitalist crisis and proletarianisation. Both Wallerstein and Balibar do not seem to see or foresee an intrinsic limit in the production of the worker under capitalism (even when descriptions are offered of the fact that large parts of the so-called periphery are performing non-wage labour, or in descriptions of women's non-waged work in the household/self-employment/subsistence (including that of children/the elderly). Rather their attention is focussed almost entirely on the difficult and contradictory location of this worker as an economic class location and a political location, whether in Marx's own writings or in history, and the driving force of the proletariat in transforming capitalism. Here I would like to refer to the work of KalyanSanyal (familiar to you all) and my recent essay (The Woman Question: Reflections on Feminism and Marxism, which came out in EPW 16 December 2017). I believe that in the twenty-first century and certainly in economies like ours, given the path of jobless growth that India has taken and its place in the world system, one has to contend more centrally with processes of *exclusion* from the capital labour relation as intrinsic to its contemporary dynamic. Sanyal has offered one kind of description of this process, whereby large populations are outside capital but within capitalism, and the necessary role of the state in preventing such a situation from going out of control through governmental schemes that claim to address poverty alleviation. So while I found refreshing portraits of the manifold contradictions of the bourgeois classes and the nature of a world bourgeoisie in an inter-state system which do seem quite apposite for thinking about the Adanis, Tatas, the brahminical hold over higher education, and so on, I am less certain about whether their discussions of the contradictions besetting the proletariat will go the distance, even taking their incorporation of racism on board. (In our context these would be not only caste but most especially that of communalism.)

I very much look forward to further discussions on the volume.

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### **Racism and the Contradiction Within**

It is undeniable that there is a thin gap between Nationalism and Racism. It is also true that Nationalism has got different varieties. Hitler's nationalism is significantly different from Gandhi's nationalism. Nonetheless, as historical phenomena nationalism easily lapses into racism (nationalist movements produce dictatorships). It would be worth discovering the psychology working behind nationalist and racist dispositions. I would like to focus on what Balibar calls "Theoretical" or "Doctrinal" racism. Both the internal racism (directed against minority) and external racism (Xenophobia) work on the construction of the other. Also note the distinction between auto-referential (thinking of oneself as belonging to a superior race) and hetero-referential (the victim belonging to an inferior race). If "Racism is a social relation, not the mere ravings of racist subjects" as Balibar rightly holds, then it is incumbent on us to decipher the phenomenology of interpreting the other in a society. Interpretation involves translating the other's thoughts into one's own vocabulary and this resists existence of radically different conceptual schemes. Identity is another important element in the racist vocabulary and this identity is constructed out of my encounter with the other. My identity includes interiorizing the other. This explains why Racism includes both elitism and universalism, the two apparently conflicting tendencies (Think of the slogan "Turn the entire world into Aryan people"). In a racist vocabulary 'rationality', 'culture', 'tradition' are important elements and racism encashes these ideas to glorify the past and attempts to recreate the past in the present temporal mode. A careful analysis of the different connotations of these racist vocabularies imply that a radical failure in understanding the other does not make sense. Shareability in a large area of beliefs is inescapable. Racist exclusivity collapses.

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### **The Persistent Presence of Race in Racism**

*Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* is the result of a series of dialogues between Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein that took place in the late 1980s in Maison des Sciences de l' Homme in Paris. Both men in this volume have concerned themselves with the resurgence of racism and nationalism in Europe that was becoming visible at time when the cold war was coming to an end. Critics such as Anthony de Reuck, have called this collection, "an important collection of essays on two ideologies undeniably central to contemporary capitalism in Europe and elsewhere – nationalism and racism." Others such as Anthony M. Orum found the book disappointing. Orum said that the book "simply does not live up to the reputation of the two authors." He argued that the liveliest part of the book is Balibar's concerns with immigrants but even here "he makes the slightest headway on the topic." Therefore, at the time of its publication the book received mixed reviews because it was the general belief that the authors had made suppositions that were either too radical or did not push their arguments far enough. Therefore before moving any further it is essential to look at what issues did the two authors concern themselves with and how did they situate it within the larger context of global capitalism.

Wallerstein's main concerns are largely with a capitalist economy that generates both an overriding universalism on the one hand and hierarchically ordered sets of racism and sexism on the other that counter the universalism of the capitalist economy. Interestingly Wallerstein concludes that both capitalism and racism work towards sustaining the system by reducing wages for substantial segments of the population thereby clearly portraying the nexus between race and capital in a market driven economy that is often promoted by nationalism. As for his version of emancipatory politics Wallerstein seems to have charted paths out of this conundrum to rescue the Marxist agenda of class polarization so that it would lead to the emancipation of the working class. Balibar's analysis is more subtle and ambiguous and more profound in its impact on radical social thought. He reminds us that racism; nationalism and ethnicity all result from fictive origins and therefore are matters of construction. Both the author's consciously situate themselves within the genre of "Western Marxism" and desires to have a dialogue that is truly international especially in an age when transnational communication is an every day affair. However, it is ironic that in the preface itself the limitation of their dialogue becomes apparent when Balibar confesses that the difference between him and Wallerstein is that "he (Wallerstein) is too 'American' and I too French." (p. 10) .

One of the central concerns of this volume is race and racism. The authors have tried to analyse the characteristics of contemporary racism. The authors and especially Etienne Balibar contends the fact that contemporary racism is merely a continuation of the xenophobic history of Europe. The fact that racism in twentieth century is different is portrayed by the fact that people talk about the "sudden aggravation" of racism or the "rise of racism." Although Balibar is sceptical about forgetting the past histories of racism, he contends that the present variety of racism is a form of "racism without race" as it is not biologically driven. Balibar critiques Wallerstein's argument that racism is an articulation of class relations but even his articulations about racism do not push the critique any further. He agrees that what makes racism today exceptional is the kind of violence that is associated with racism. But his articulations are in no way emancipatory for the subjects of racism. In fact he speaks of popular racism or working class racism but he does not critique the role of capital or the entire framework of resource politics for the growth of racism within working class politics. This turn in racist politics or working class politics is a forced and conscious turn. Balibar discusses how the native becomes marked as a foreigner as a result of this politics. But simultaneously he speaks of racism without race. His own contentions point to the fallacies of

his argument. Without the overwhelming presence of race what justifies this continuum of racially different citizens to become permanent exceptions to citizenship. It is race that denotes who will be the subjects and objects of racism. I contend that it is the resurgence of race that makes racism so potent in contemporary Europe. The recent resurgence of the boat people and their reception in fortress Europe is ample proof of the presence of race in racism today.

My next contention is shared by both Anthony Orum of the University of Illinois and my co-panelist Professor Pradip Bose. They both argue that a major concern of the book should have been on the impact of immigration as “it is precisely the large-scale movement of labourers today, within and between countries that is fuelling racist ideologies.” It is because of the presence of immigrants that one sees how intrinsically race is connected to nationalism in the contemporary times. The authors could have pointed this out to be a universal phenomenon but they did not. Also even though the authors discuss violence they do not call it barbarism or genocide thereby sanitising the kind of violence that is perpetrated against people of colour in Europe. It is race that distinguishes the Bosnian refugee situation from the Syrian refugee situation. The fact that the authors have been unable to push their arguments far enough is proven by the St. Denis riots. The rioters here were French citizens. Yet they were time and again reduced to the status of permanent exceptions. Also the authors were totally unable to consider the immigrants as agentive thereby alienating them a second time. The limitation of the book is that the dialogue could not further emancipatory politics of either the immigrants or the working class and neither could it challenge race in either the nation or in racism.

The sociologist and the philosopher both were able to sow the seeds of brilliant ideas but they abandoned their own saplings. This is what sadly enough makes their arguments less political than what they are.

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### **Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities**

*Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* is a collection of thematically and conceptually related essays by two of the most significant Marxist theorists. These essays are stimulating, insightful, and – unlike a great deal of what passes for political theory today – genuinely relevant to real political struggles. Etienne Balibar has the reputation of being a ‘classical’ Marxist, while Immanuel Wallerstein is known for his world systems analysis, which rejects the concept of mode of production. Yet using these different forms of Marxism, they have produced an important collection of essays on two ideologies undeniably central to contemporary capitalism in Europe and elsewhere – nationalism and racism. The work represents a debate of sorts where specific themes are addressed in chapters by the two authors. Balibar is influenced by the ‘opened’ postmodernist, perhaps anarchist, project which explicates the micro-inscription of subjects in the world power relation where the very subjects become the principle of their own subjection. Wallerstein is committed to a structuralist agenda of delimiting determining factors of the world system which produces determined oppressive relationships. Differences of interpretation are easy to find. This collection of essays show up some interesting contrasts despite the fact that it falls well short of producing the dialogue they claim. The ‘dialogism’ of the volume perhaps gives the writing some its urgency and vitality. However, it also makes the volume somewhat diffuse. But to highlight these is to bypass the value of the book. Neither author believes in the old simplicity that these ideologies are superficial bourgeois creations which function to subvert proletarian class consciousness. Both argue that racism and nationalism are deeply embedded in the social relations of contemporary capitalism and their points of disagreement, as well as agreement, are challenging and illuminating.

The subtitle of the book is crucial: the ever-shifting identities of individuals are continuously at stake in society and in this book. How and why do national, class, sexual, and racial identifications come into people’s minds as meaningful definitions of one’s self and of others? In particular, how should Marxism, with its particular concern with class, class struggle and class consciousness understand the ambiguous, endlessly changing, and multiple identifications/identities of the social actors to whom Marxists direct their arguments and visions of a better world? To these questions, the book provides few formula responses or answers of the old mechanical-Marxist sort. Instead, a fascinating, rich, and diverse set of non-mechanical, old and new Marxist insights are offered and debated. These are better described as reflections, questionings, and brilliant bits of analysis that will be indispensable for the answers to be constructed rather than as answers themselves.

Reflecting postmodern ways of thinking within Marxism both stress that identities are never to be thought as givens; they are always *meanings*, constructed and disseminated by people under particular social conditions. Race, nation and class are then constructs to be understood as both subjective and objective. Subjective in the sense of being among the terms in which individuals define themselves as subjects and objective because particular conditions in society combine to make these the terms for individual self-definition. Subjective self-definitions always have social effects and in this sense subjective identities are themselves conditions; they are objective as well as subjective. The line between subjective and objective, so foundational to the modernist tradition within Marxism, is blurred and deeply problematised. Balibar’s essays seem more comfortable with this movement forward than Wallerstein’s. It is especially notable that this book’s new Marxist ways of thinking about race and nation do not stop short of putting the central Marxist concept of class under scrutiny as well. Outside as well as inside

Marxism, class has been and remains as ambiguous and as variously understood an idea as nation and race. Remember all these issues were raised twenty-five years ago.

Nationalism – the main focus of the book – is theorised by Wallerstein in a manner that recalls Ernest Gellner (1925-1995). In *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) Gellner argued that nationalism is rooted in the division of labour brought about by industrialisation. The demand for an economy unimpeded by barriers to mobility required a homogeneous cultural entity which can provide the basic communication skills for the training, interaction and interchangeability of labour. Nationalism for Gellner, is therefore an instrument of cultural standardisation, linked not to the formation of bourgeois political hegemony, but to industrial growth. This growth, in particular its labour needs, is best assured by a social structure governed by meritocratic principles. In Gellner's scheme racism is dysfunctional to industrial society because it impedes that rational allocation of labour. For Wallerstein, the meritocratic principles have a limited application since the drive for profit maximisation invokes a tendency to pay some people less than their merits command. Racism and sexism organise and legitimate these discriminations. Thus racism and sexism are essential supplements, which stem from the fact that industrial growth is subject to the dictates of capital accumulation. Wallerstein's main contribution to understanding contemporary racism and sexism lies in his claim that both phenomena counter the universalism inherent in the world capitalist economy, and, therefore would appear to work at cross-purposes to modern capitalism. But, quite to the contrary, he suggests that both ideologies have the effect of sustaining the system by providing the ground for reduced wages for substantial segments of population, thereby enhancing the capitalist accumulation of the bourgeoisie.

On the existence of a necessary relationship between nationalism, on the one hand, and racism and sexism, on the other, Balibar is in agreement with Wallerstein. But he arrives at this position from a very different theoretical perspective that owes much to Foucault as to Althusser. He argues that necessary relationship is not external to these ideologies but a product of nationalism's internal contradictions and dynamics, in the formation and reproduction of bourgeois political domination. The ethnicisation of society, which according to Balibar is not natural or automatic, but fictive, is the process by which the state establishes and naturalises the belongingness to the community that it governs. This is not constituted, Balibar argues purely on a linguistic basis, as Benedict Anderson maintains. It is brought about through the articulation between a linguistic community and a community of race. Racism is, therefore, a supplement to nationalism, 'a supplement internal to nationalism, always in excess of it, but always indispensable to it' (p. 54). Is the economic functionalism of Gellner and Wallerstein merely replaced in Balibar, by a form of culturalism, in which discursive formations contain their own determinations? There are some formulations in Balibar's essays which suggest a purely internal logic to nationalism, propelling its universalistic claims to seek validation in discourses. There may be some critics who will happily see here a return of the Hegel that Balibar's *guru* Louis Althusser had chased away from Marxism. In fact Balibar indicates – even if too elliptically – that though nationalism represents an ideological force that has its own history and conceptual field, it also articulates with the mechanism of state practices, such as the control of populations or the moulding of the workforce with specific skills and habits. It is in relation to these practices that nationalism's internal relation to racism and sexism should be further investigated and, for this task, Balibar's essays provide some valuable guidelines.

Balibar then moves on to a concern with immigration, and the impact of immigrants upon societies. Unfortunately, he makes only the slightest headway on the topic. And yet, I believe, it is precisely on this matter that both Balibar and Wallerstein could have made – and perhaps should have made – their most singular contributions. For it is precisely the large-scale movement of labourers today, within and between countries, that is fuelling racist ideologies and stimulating the defense of national boundaries through resurgent forms of nationalism. However as both authors make clear, the futures of capitalism and of Marxism depend in significant ways on how people will variously understand and intervene in the complex overdeterminations of their shifting identities. In the best tradition of Marxist theory-as-practice, this book is itself a significant intervention aimed to influence both these futures and continues to be relevant even after twenty-five years.