

The Colour of Class Revisited: *Four Decades of Postcolonialism in Zambia**

MICHAEL BURAWOY

(University of California – Berkeley)

Ethnographic revisits have become an increasing practice in the social sciences, designed to advance the understanding of history through the linking of micro processes and societal structures. In this article I revisit my study of Zambianisation on the Copperbelt, conducted between 1968 and 1972. The methodology of the extended case method is used first to re-present the original study and then to reassess it critically in terms of what has happened over the last 40 years. Four types of revisit are considered: revisit as refutation of the original study, revisit as an approach to historical change, revisit as comparative analysis, and revisit as reconstructing social theory. My reassessment relies on other studies of the Zambian mines, but also on ethnographic research I conducted in the US, Hungary and Russia during the same 40-year period.

My teacher Jaap van Velsen used to say, ‘There are two types of ethnographers: those who return to their field-site after completing their research, and those who don’t’. He had only disparaging things to say about the latter, as being morally irresponsible and somehow lacking in humanity. There is, indeed, a moral and human dimension to fieldwork that can lead to continuing engagement, but also good scientific reasons to revisit communities one has studied.

The great anthropologist Elizabeth Colson surely belongs to van Velsen’s first category. Having begun her fieldwork among the Gwembe Tonga in 1946, she has returned regularly ever since, and finally made this community a place for her retirement. But it was not only sentimental attachments that kept drawing her back; it was also to trace the social changes in the community brought about by the construction of the Kariba dam.¹ Anthropologists have made it their business to revisit not only their own sites but also the sites of famous predecessors, and have done so with great scientific profit: Oscar Lewis returned to Robert Redfield’s Tepoztlan,² Derek Freeman returned to Margaret Mead’s Samoa,³ Annette Weiner returned to Malinowski’s Trobriand Islanders,⁴ Sharon Hutchinson returned to Evans-Pritchard’s Nuer,⁵

*I would like to thank Miles Larmer, Marja Hinfelaar, Morris Szeftel and Lyn Schumaker, the organisers of the ‘Zambia 2014: Narratives of Nationhood’ conference, held in Lusaka in 2012, and all the participants, for providing such a stimulating three days, helping me to reflect on research I conducted between 1968 and 1972. Thanks also to my trusted critic Peter Evans for his detailed comments; to Miles Larmer for not only going over the manuscript with a fine-tooth comb but for paving the way for this interpretive revisit with his own study of Zambian mineworkers; to Ching Kwan Lee for sharing her papers on the Zambian Copperbelt; and to Fidan Elcioglu for getting me going with an initial guide to the literature.

1 See, for example, E. Colson, *The Social Consequences of Resettlement* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1971).

2 O. Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlan Restudied* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1951).

3 D. Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*. (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983).

4 A. Weiner, *Women of Value, Men of Renown* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1976).

5 S. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1996).

and Henrietta Moore and Megan Vaughan returned to Audrey Richards' Bemba.⁶ In each case the revisit brought fascinating new insights to the original study, based on the complicated interaction of historical change and altered vision – it is not only the site that changes, but also the perspective the ethnographer brings to the site, itself a product of history. Revisits lie at the intersection of multiple and entangled histories of countries, regions, disciplines and individual scientists.⁷

Still, in considering the scientific dimension, the moral dimension cannot be suppressed. The very possibility of a revisit depends on the social relations established between the ethnographer and her community. These can be quite hostile, as Nancy Scheper Hughes⁸ famously discovered when she tried to revisit her Irish village. Re-entry can even be denied, as happened to Max Gluckman when he was barred from returning to the Central African Federation by the colonial administration. When I departed from Zambia in 1972, after four years' research on the Copperbelt and at the University of Zambia, I too left behind many ruffled feathers, though I was never prevented from returning. Sad to say, 40 years later, the 'Narratives of Nationhood' conference that provided the basis for this special issue of *JSAS* was my first return to the country where I began my life as a sociologist.

Accordingly, I cannot offer a 'realist' revisit to the scene of my fieldwork, like Colson's return to the Gwembe Tonga. Rather it is an *interpretive* revisit, which re-examines my research on the copper mines⁹ in the light of the intertwining of my peripatetic biography and Copperbelt revisits by others, in particular Miles Larmer¹⁰ and Ching Kwan Lee.¹¹ This article has two parts. The first reconstructs the original study in the light of its methodology – the extended case method, first developed by the Manchester School and then elaborated by myself. The second considers four approaches to the revisit: refutation of the original study based on the reaction of participants, historical change since the original study, reformulation based on comparative studies and, finally, theoretical reconstruction.

Re-Presenting the Extended Case Method

I first learned the 'extended case method' at the capacious feet of Jaap van Velsen, who taught me the importance of 'situational analysis' – that is, of *in situ* examination of social processes, but also of locating those processes within their broader economic, geographical and historical contexts.¹² His open contempt for my efforts at surveying miners on the Copperbelt inoculated me against such standard research practices in favour of participant

6 H. Moore and M. Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition, and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890–1990* (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 1994).

7 I have developed the ethnography of 'revisits' in M. Burawoy, 'Revisits: An Outline of a Theory of Reflexive Ethnography', *American Sociological Review*, 68, 5 (2003), pp. 645–79.

8 N. Scheper-Hughes, *Saints, Scholars, Schizophrenics* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001).

9 M. Burawoy, *The Colour of Class on the Copper Mines: From African Advancement to Zambianization* (Manchester, Manchester University Press for the Institute of African Studies, 1972).

10 M. Larmer, *Mineworkers in Zambia: Labour and Political Change in Post-Colonial Africa*, (London, IB Tauris Academic Studies, 2007)

11 C.K. Lee, 'Raw Encounters: Chinese Managers, African Workers, and the Politics of Casualization in Africa's Chinese Enclaves', in A. Fraser and M. Larmer (eds), *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism* (New York, Palgrave, 2010), pp.127–54; 'Notes on a Global Sociology of China' (unpublished paper, Meetings of the American Sociological Association, Denver, 17 August 2012); 'The Specter of Global China: Transnational Embeddedness and the Fractured Power of Chinese Investment in Zambia' (unpublished paper, 2014).

12 For an elaboration of his conception of the extended case method, see J. van Velsen, 'Labour Migration as a Positive Factor in the Continuity of Tonga Tribal Society', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 8, 3 (1960), pp. 265–78; *The Politics of Kinship* (Manchester, Manchester University Press for the Rhodes–Livingstone Institute, 1964); 'The Extended Case Method and Situational Analysis', in A. L. Epstein (ed.), *The Craft of Urban Anthropology* (London, Tavistock, 1967), pp. 29–53.

observation – although I would later learn that the best survey researchers were also astute ethnographers.

So I followed the Manchester School's position on the extended case method and the linking of micro-processes to macro-forces, but in one way I have radically departed from their protocol, namely the centrality of pre-existing theory that I regard as a necessary foundation for any extension from micro to macro. The Manchester School thought that extension comes through purely empirical means, through the study of networks, through intuition or through appeal to analogies, whereas I have long insisted that it comes through the self-conscious development of social theory.¹³

The ambiguity of its theoretical assumptions reveals itself in vigorous debate between Hugh Macmillan and James Ferguson wherein each makes a different claim about the Manchester School's 'modernist' narrative – was it there, was it not?¹⁴ The debate arises only because of the Manchester School's distaste for explicit theorising, its failure to work within a self-conscious theoretical framework and its disposition toward a few homespun aphorisms about the tribesman and the townsman, the peace in the feud and so on. To be sure, there were discernible influences, not least Marx, Durkheim and the Hammonds, and there was a presumption that the African industrial revolution bore some relation – never made explicit – to the English industrial revolution.¹⁵ It was all very elliptical, allowing of different interpretations.

The Colour of Class was guilty of the same sin of theoretical understatement that I now propose to rectify by following the rubric of the extended case method as I have developed it over the last 40 years of practising and teaching field research. I will first show how *The Colour of Class* exemplifies the four moments of the extended case method: the extension from observer to participant, the extension of observations over space and time, the extension from micro to macro, and the extension of theory. Many of the original book's flaws can be attributed to the last extension, that is to the limitations of the theory I advanced to explore the macro-forces at work in the copper industry. This revisit to *The Colour of Class* will serve, therefore, as an auto-critique as well as an assessment of 40 years of postcoloniality.

Extension from Observer to Participant – Covert Entry

Still fresh out of university and bearing a mathematics degree, I arrived in Zambia at the end of 1968, after some six tortuous months as a journalist in South Africa. My first port of call was the South African political scientist, anthropologist and sociologist Jack Simons, then teaching at the University of Zambia (UNZA) in the newly created Department of Sociology

13 See M. Burawoy, A. Burton, A.A. Ferguson, K.J. Fox, J. Gamson, N. Gartrell, L. Hurst, C. Kurzman, L. Salzinger, J. Schiffman and S. Ui, *Ethnography Unbound: Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991); M. Burawoy, J.A. Blum, S. George, Z. Gille, T. Gowan, L. Haney, M. Klawiter, S.H. Lopez, S. O'Riain and M. Thayer, *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000); M. Burawoy, 'The Extended Case Method', *Sociological Theory*, 16, 1 (1998), pp. 4–33.

14 H. Macmillan, 'The Historiography of Transition on the Zambian Copperbelt – Another View', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 4 (1993), pp. 681–712; J. Ferguson, 'Modernist Narratives, Conventional Wisdoms and Colonial Liberalism: Reply to a Straw Man', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 4 (1994), pp. 633–40. The debate is confounded by the failure to distinguish clearly two different 'modernist' narratives: the one concerns situational change and the movement between rural and urban contexts, and the other concerns societal change and the transformation of broad structures of Zambian society. The Manchester School was theoretically strong on the first and weak on the second.

15 See M. Gluckman, 'Anthropological Problems Arising from the African Industrial Revolution', in A. Southall (ed.), *Social Change in Modern Africa* (Oxford, Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1961), pp. 67–82.

and Anthropology. Learning of my interest in becoming a sociologist and that I had contacts with the top brass in the Anglo American Corporation (AAC), he said that a lot was known about the mineworkers but too little was known about the companies and their response to Zambian independence. So I visited Dennis Etheridge, one of the top AAC executives, in search of a job that would allow me to study the management of the mines. At that time the mining companies were flush with profits from the high copper price, and so he offered me two possibilities. I chose a position in the newly created Personnel Research Unit (PRU), part of the Copper Industry Service Bureau.

I worked there for 18 months, examining such matters as absenteeism, labour turnover, accidents and strikes. Most importantly, I played a key role in creating the new job evaluation scheme, which sought to unify the existing dual wage structure, one for whites and another for blacks. This was the main function of the PRU, whose employees were expatriates knowledgeable about the job structure in the mines. They had grown up with two separate job evaluation schemes, but they had no idea how to integrate them without creating havoc with the hierarchy of jobs and, thus, wages. The companies brought in a British firm of consultants, but it was immediately obvious that they, too, were ill-equipped to deal with an industry of 50,000 employees and more than 1,000 distinct jobs. As I watched these discussions unfold, it occurred to me that this was a mathematical problem. Once you created a set of key jobs whose ranking was agreed upon and once you had evaluated each of these key jobs on a series of factors (each with its own scale), you had to weight each factor to establish the requisite rank order of the key jobs. Teams of experts would then evaluate all the jobs in the industry, apply the factor weights and hope that the final ranking of all the jobs would be acceptable to all concerned. If not, you reconstructed the list of key jobs and their ranking and created a new set of weights. The calculation of the weights was a simple task of linear programming that could be easily done with a computer, but only I understood it. In this way I became an observer of the on-going negotiations between management and union.

The job evaluation scheme was designed to bring together the white and black pay scales (with expatriates given a special allowance), but in such a way that it would leave untouched the racial order in the mines. In particular, it was understood that the colour bar – the principle that no black should exercise authority over any white – would have to be reproduced, despite the (post-)independence struggle against racial injustice. Among managers, the colour bar was simply a taken-for-granted feature of the mining industry. Whether, how and why the colour bar was being reproduced became my obsession and the focus of what eventually became *The Colour of Class on the Copper Mines*. Ironically, I became an unknowing agent of the reproduction of the very object I was trying to explain.

However, knowing just how sensitive was the racial hierarchy, I never told the mining companies of my interest until late in the study. This was covert participant observation, the sort of research that would be impossible today with human subject protocols that require the researcher to secure the consent of the participants. Such protocols make it very difficult to ‘study up’: the rich and powerful can hide what they are up to by refusing consent, whereas the poor and marginal have less to hide and fewer means of self-defence. In those days there were no human subject protocols, so I was free to figure out ways to access what was happening in the mines. In the racially divided world of the Copperbelt it was impossible to ask specific questions about the colour bar – it was far too sensitive an issue. I had to find other ways, both more direct and more indirect, to study these processes of racial domination.

Being the technician behind the job evaluation scheme, I leveraged my power into resources for a social survey of mineworkers to be conducted by the young Zambian personnel officers, recently graduated from high school. The Copperbelt was still a very segregated society, and these young Zambians – many younger than I – were the only

Zambians with whom I had sustained contact, although they remained suspicious, given my position in central management. The only place we could meet without drawing attention to ourselves was in the Rokana Club, in principle desegregated but in practice a place still controlled by whites for whites. We met there every week to discuss the interviews and the thorny question of Zambianisation, which affected their own future prospects in the industry.

The mining companies were so pleased with my work in the PRU – especially around the job evaluation scheme – that they sponsored my studies at UNZA, where I worked for my MA in Sociology and Anthropology. Here I developed close relations with Zambian students, getting arrested with them in demonstrations, launching a sociological association and conducting controversial campus opinion polls. In the first summer, I took three of them with me to the Copperbelt – two of them had previously worked at the mines – to explore the workplace through participant observation. Through their eyes and those of the Zambian personnel officers I began to see the process of Zambianisation in a new light.

The Extension of Observations over Time and Space – Zambianisation as Process

When I arrived in 1968, the Zambian government had just put out a report on Zambianisation in the mines, which painted a euphoric picture of expatriates leaving and Zambians taking over their positions.¹⁶ How was this compatible with the colour bar, never referred to in the report? How was it possible to make the figures look so good without revealing the colour bar story that lay behind them?

Let's take the Zambianisation of the mine captain – the highest level of supervision underground. At the time, a few Zambian shift bosses were being promoted to the position of mine captain. What happened to the white mine captain who had been displaced? Simply, he was promoted into a newly created position – assistant underground manager. Even more problematically, he took with him many of the resources of the mine captain, leaving behind the responsibilities for his Zambian successor. This had grave consequences. Without the resources to deliver equipment or to define work schedules, the Zambian mine captain was not able to provide effective supervision of his shift bosses, who began to prefer their previous white bosses despite the humiliation associated with the legacy of colonial despotism. Tensions rippled through the organisation. The successor mine captains were trapped between resentful African shift bosses and a disdainful expatriate assistant underground manager. Their insecurity led many to compensate through ostentatious consumption. They developed a segregated existence with superior class pretensions. Their pay, though greater than that of other Zambians, was still lower than the expatriates', with their substantial allowances. Zambianisation conducted in this fashion had the effect of reproducing the colour bar and protecting white management, but also exacerbating class hostilities across the Zambian community.

Another example was the Zambianisation of the personnel department itself, which I followed over a three-year period. The personnel department had been key to the colonial administration of both black and white labour, overseeing not only industrial relations in the mines but also administering the black townships and expatriate housing. Here the strategy was to Zambianise the entire department in rapid fashion, while stripping it of many of its powers. In particular, it no longer oversaw expatriate conditions, which was given to the previous white personnel manager, now called the staff development adviser, hidden away in some separate office. This, too, led to serious conflicts. The newly created head of the

16 Government of the Republic of Zambia, *The Progress of Zambianization in the Mining Industry* (Lusaka, Government Printer, 1968).

personnel department, the personnel manager, felt isolated and disparaged on all sides – from above by expatriate managers and from below by the senior personnel officers who had been interpreter-clerks mediating between the white personnel officers and black mineworkers. As frontline representatives of management, these clerks had absorbed the brunt of miners' hostility, and now, as senior personnel officers, they themselves bore the hostility of the up-and-coming junior personnel officers, school leavers with far better education and open contempt for their seniors. All sorts of tensions – accusations of tribalism, generational conflict, class hostilities – swirled around this disempowered personnel department.

Here were two cases of Zambianisation whose effects rippled through the mining hierarchy, discrediting the process in the eyes of Zambian workers. The colour bar continued to be the unstated assumption that governed the organisation of the mines – inherited from the colonial order, fostered by the segregation of the mining communities, by the mining companies' unwillingness to pay senior Zambians higher wages for fear of the knock-on effect it would have on all mineworker wages, but also by the shortage of Zambians with formal skills. At independence only 100 Zambians possessed university degrees.

I could have left my study here, with the discovery of the perpetuation of the colour bar, claiming this to be a foundational principle of postcolonial industrial organisation, what Aníbal Quijano might call the coloniality of power,¹⁷ and what we used to call 'neocolonialism'. But that didn't make sense – if government agencies had managed to abolish the colour bar, why not the copper industry? I, therefore, 'extended out', turning to the history of the colour bar and the forces sustaining it after independence.

Extending from Micro to Macro – The Balance of Class Forces

The colour bar is as old as the Zambian mining industry – white colonialists subjected colonised blacks to their dictatorial thumb. As the industry grew, the focus of negotiation was the positioning of the colour line, but not its existence. Thus, commissions of enquiry would propose that certain occupations be Africanised, what was then called 'African advancement'. This often involved dividing up tasks and thereby deskilling them, providing a further justification for lower pay. So the colour bar might float upwards but it never disappeared.

Having explored its history, I then asked what forces held it in place. As we have seen, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, even low-level Zambian supervisors, were less than enthusiastic about Zambianisation, as it generated only trouble for them, and even more difficult working conditions. Workers themselves defined 'African advancement' very differently: it didn't mean upward mobility for an elite but better conditions and wages for all. Thus the union that represented those workers was also largely interested in wage increases, although at certain moments its leaders might support Zambian successors, whose wages were far lower than the expatriates they replaced.

There was no doubt about the interests of expatriate management, solidly behind the colour bar – perpetuation of their *dolce vita*, namely, jobs, benefits and working conditions they were unlikely to find elsewhere. The mining companies present a more complex picture. In principle their interest lay with profit maximisation, giving them an interest in replacing as many expatriates as possible and as quickly as possible. Their decision-making processes, however, were far more political. I discovered – and it really was a discovery made possible only by participant observation – that the mining companies did not, and indeed could not,

17 A. Quijano, 'The Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America', *International Sociology*, 15, 2 (2000), pp. 215–32.

operate with a plan or a strategy, as the environment was simply too uncertain. They faced a volatile copper price, an uncertain technological and geological environment, and an unstable political situation. Accordingly, they would get up each morning, lick their fingers, and see which way the wind was blowing. So long as profit margins held, they saw no reason to upset the applecart of white management by accelerating Zambianisation.

Above all, they listened carefully to the tune of the Zambian government, which, its nationalist rhetoric notwithstanding, also wanted to avoid rocking the copper boat. Copper was a sacred cow, and so they did not interfere in the management of the mines, leaving it in the hands of Anglo American and Roan Selection Trust. As long as revenues were forthcoming, they too would let sleeping dogs lie. The government began nationalising the mines in 1969 as a political strategy to mollify discontented mine workers, but it gave a lucrative management contract to the same mining companies, which meant no major organisational change in the mines. The government did not want to meddle with the source of 95 per cent of its foreign revenue, but was also quite content to have expatriates control the mines. Expatriates on three-year renewable contracts could be easily removed if they created trouble; if Zambians ran the mines, however, they could pose a political threat. For all these reasons, therefore, the Zambian government had little material interest in challenging the colour bar, so long as it was kept out of sight.

The upshot of my examination, then, was to point to a balance of class forces that protected the colour bar and advanced a cautious programme of Zambianisation. Here was the paradox – class interests were responsible for the postcolonial reproduction of a colonial racial order. Tracing the external determinants of the colour bar to broader class forces, rather than to some cultural habitus embedded in organisational forms, relied on a set of theoretical frameworks and political concerns not fully explicated in *The Colour of Class on the Copper Mines*.

Extending Theory – Reconstructing Alvin Gouldner and Frantz Fanon

The strategy of the extended case method is to develop the macro-foundations of a micro-sociology, but this requires both the delimitation of those macro-forces that explain the continuity or discontinuity of micro-processes, and a lens through which to understand the micro-processes themselves. The theoretical work in *The Colour of Class* was never made explicit – the description of Zambianisation and the extension to the context upon which it depended were presented as empirical findings, without self-conscious development of the theory upon which they actually rested. This theory now needs to be restored, for here lay both the originality of the analysis and also its limitations.

I had already developed an interest in Zambianisation when I read Alvin Gouldner's *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy*¹⁸ – a brilliant case study of a gypsum plant in upstate New York. In that book Gouldner describes three patterns of bureaucracy – mock, representative and punishment-centred – a critique of Weber's bureaucratic pessimism, which saw only the last of these forms. At the heart of the book was a managerial succession in which the popular 'Old Doug' with his 'indulgency pattern' of management was replaced by 'Peel', who sought to transform the old regime into a new disciplinary bureaucracy, recruiting people on the base of competence and expertise rather than loyalty. In Gouldner's narrative the succession was a natural one, and the change was a product of the dynamics of succession. Peel, an outsider, had to establish himself through new means. I saw Peel's dilemmas as parallel to those of the Zambian successor desperately seeking a new mode of

18 A. Gouldner, *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy* (New York, Free Press, 1954).

legitimation in which race was insufficient. In fact, the Zambian successor was locked into a difficult situation, what I called a *forced succession*, in which not all the resources of the predecessor were available to the successor.

In effect I was extending Gouldner's theory by focusing on the organisational context within which succession takes place, but I made this explicit only in a much later article – one in which I argued that his case study failed to take into account the broader context within which the succession took place.¹⁹ I amassed evidence from his book to show that Peel's new mode of management reflected its capitalist context and a concern with profits. Similarly, in *The Colour of Class* I argued that the forced succession of Zambianisation could not be understood outside the wider historical context within which it occurred. But this context did not arise *ab novo* from the facts; it required the prism of theory.

Here I invoked Frantz Fanon's analysis of postcolonialism,²⁰ which distinguishes two postcolonial paths: the *national bourgeois* road, in which black replaces white without any change in social structure; and the *national liberation* struggle in which the revolutionary peasantry led by dissident intellectuals overthrows the old colonial order and replaces it with a participatory socialism. Zambia clearly followed the first path – Zambian humanism, sometimes referred to as a form of African socialism, was a thinly veiled justification of unrestrained capitalism. My interpretation of Zambianisation as succession epitomised the national bourgeois road, but, in addition, it had also to be understood in the context of the class forces of the postcolony. Here, too, I was influenced by Fanon, who himself undertook a class analysis of the colony-become-postcolony in order to understand the possible directions history could take. But his understanding of those class forces was based on Algeria, with its large dispossessed peasantry and an agriculturally based settler-colonialism, but no working class with a militant history parallel to Zambian mineworkers. Still, Fanon was largely correct to think of mineworkers as a labour aristocracy, committed to advancing their own interests, while the black bourgeoisie suffered from anomie, as they pursued their upward trajectory. Although there was not much sign of revolution in Zambia, my class analysis took its critical bite from Fanon's imagining of socialism.

Although I did not say as much, I was using my Zambian case as a critique and reconstruction of Fanon, but I was definitely standing on his shoulders. The very title, 'The Colour of Class', alluded to Fanon's national bourgeois road, in which black replaced white. It also clearly gestured to Fanon's earlier book *Black Skin, White Masks*,²¹ in which blacks mimic whites as an expression of deep insecurity and inferiority nurtured by a racist order. Engaging Fanon was the source of the study's virtues but also its flaws. I will now explore these flaws in a series of interpretive revisits.

The Interpretive Revisit as Auto-Critique

I have reconstructed *The Colour of Class* through the lens of the four moments of the extended case method, which now makes it possible to evaluate its argument through four corresponding revisits. In the first revisit, I focus on the ways in which my participation led to a *false homogenisation* of the world beyond and of the state in particular. In the second revisit, the limited duration of the study and its theoretical blind spots led to the *erroneous stabilisation* of the international context, in particular the price of copper. The third revisit

19 M. Burawoy, 'The Written and the Repressed in Gouldner's Industrial Sociology', *Theory and Society*, 11, 6 (1982), pp. 831–51.

20 F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, Grove Weidenfeld, [1961] 1968).

21 F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London, MacGibbon and Kee, [1952] 1968).

appeals to comparative studies of economic transition to wrestle with the *dynamic relationship between the national and the global*. Finally, the fourth revisit *problematizes and reconstructs the theoretical framework* that permitted these oversights.

Revisit as Refutation – State, Knowledge and Power

Having discovered the roots of the colour bar in the lack of political will to rock the economic boat for racial justice, I had to decide what to do with my findings. I had written them up in a report that would become *The Colour of Class*, but I decided to seek permission for publication, since so much of it was based on research carried out while in the employment of Anglo American. If I published the report without permission, would social scientists be allowed in the mines ever again? I decided to take my report to the head offices of Anglo. They were shocked that I had been conducting such a critical study and dismayed that I was contemplating publication. I pleaded with them, saying this was all based on their data, but they would not relent. We came to a compromise solution – I could take the report to the government and see if it would grant permission. The mines after all had been nationalised in 1969, and I should seek permission from the government agency responsible for Zambianisation at the mines. They assumed as well as I that the government would never allow its publication, since I was even harsher on the government than the mining companies for turning a blind eye to the colour bar.

I sent the report to the official responsible for Zambianisation – an expatriate previously employed in the mines – and he proposed a meeting. It was a long meeting – he was clearly looking me over to see if I was a respectable scientist or, as my reputation suggested, a trouble-maker. After a few hours he said that he loved the report and that I should publish it immediately. In a state of shock and elation, I asked him why he was so enthusiastic, which elicited a curious response: this is an objective report and should be published. ‘Objective?’ I asked. ‘Yes’, he said, ‘you criticise the miners, their trade union, the Zambian successor, white management, the mining companies and even the government; you criticise everyone, and *therefore* it is objective’. An interesting notion of objectivity.

At the time I missed the implications of this exchange. Here was an agency within the government seeking to promote racial justice, possibly even at the expense of revenue. This refuted my understanding of the postcolonial state and its relation to the mining companies, since I had argued that an implicit pact existed between mining companies and government to cover up the dark side of Zambianisation. I was only partially correct. The state is not a homogeneous entity, but is itself divided into different apparatuses with different interests. My discovery pointed to a methodological danger in the extended case method, the tendency to homogenise the ‘macro-forces’ that shape micro-processes. The state, like any institution, is an imaginary construct as well as a material reality.²² I never entered the state – as I had the mines – to study the processes that led to its interventions, and so I reified it as having a singular and consistent set of interests. Behind any ‘macro-force’ – in this case the state – are a set of processes that produce that force, processes that should, in principle, be interrogated. One can’t be an ethnographer everywhere, but one can try to reflect critically on the reification of ‘forces’ as one extends out.

I should have rethought my analysis of the state, but I did not. At the time I didn’t have a theory of the postcolonial state, an inexcusable lacuna, but one I can trace to Fanon. In true Marxist fashion, Fanon saw the state as the effect of the balance of class forces, without

22 P. Abrams, ‘Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State’, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1, 1 (1988), pp. 58–89.

interrogating its own distinctive, relatively autonomous, character. He examined the alliance of classes, not the class character of the state – a critical oversight, given the centrality of the state in promoting development or underdevelopment, in reproducing class inequality in postcolonial Africa. Not only Fanon but other Marxists of the time – such as Hamza Alavi, John Saul, Issa Shivji, and others – fell into the same trap of false homogenisation as they debated the nature of *the* ‘postcolonial state’ as though it were a singular entity.²³

My understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge was also found wanting. I was less surprised that the Zambianisation official should embrace my report – presented in the emotive language of Fanon – than by his labelling of it as ‘objective’ – meaning ‘detached’. True, I was absent from the text. That’s how my teachers expected me to write. Van Velsen would regale me with rich and illuminating stories about his fieldwork, but they never entered his published works. The scientist had to be invisible in the product, a position I now strongly repudiate as a false objectivity.

But this false ‘objectivity’ had its effects. The report was duly published by the Institute of African Studies at UNZA (the successor to the Rhodes–Livingstone Institute) and was much discussed in the press and on television, as well as in academic circles. I was not present, but from what I can gather the debate and discussion were very constructive. Most interesting of all, however, was the mining companies’ use of the report to discipline their own managers, ordering them to get their Zambianisation programmes in order. Accordingly, the first Zambian managing director of a mine was appointed in 1974, although we had to wait until 1983 for the appointment of the first Zambian general manager.²⁴ Although by 1980 expatriates were only 4.7 per cent of the labour force, down from 16 per cent in 1964,²⁵ complaints about the colour bar continued. It is difficult to know the effects of the public discussion of Zambianisation and head office pressure on mine management prompted by *The Colour of Class*, but here was a paradoxical situation. A Fanonite critique of capitalism, in particular of the mining companies, was used by those self-same capitalists as a tool to discipline their own employees.

I had thought that ‘speaking truth to power’ would challenge power. Far from it; powerful players can easily deflect, absorb and even exploit criticism, especially if it is not backed up by collective force, such as a social movement or an organisation. The conduct of the research was covert, but I could have collaborated with social forces that shared my interests in the study’s publication. This was, indeed, my first lesson in public sociology.

*Revisit as Historical Change – In the Vice of Copper*²⁶

Miles Larmer rightly criticises me for providing ‘only a snapshot of labour relations at a time of significant economic and political upheaval’.²⁷ Over the last 40 years, I have often spoken about my case study of Zambianisation and the context within which it took place, trying to follow at a distance the changing fortunes of the Zambian copper industry. The inescapable

23 The debate about the postcolonial state was just beginning at the time *The Colour of Class* was published. See, for example, H. Alavi, ‘The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh’, *New Left Review*, 74 (July–August 1972), pp. 59–81; I. Shivji, *The Silent Class Struggle* (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Publishing House, 1973); J. Saul, ‘The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Tanzania’, *Socialist Register*, 11 (1974), pp. 249–72.

24 Larmer, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, pp. 47, 141.

25 *Ibid.*, p.107.

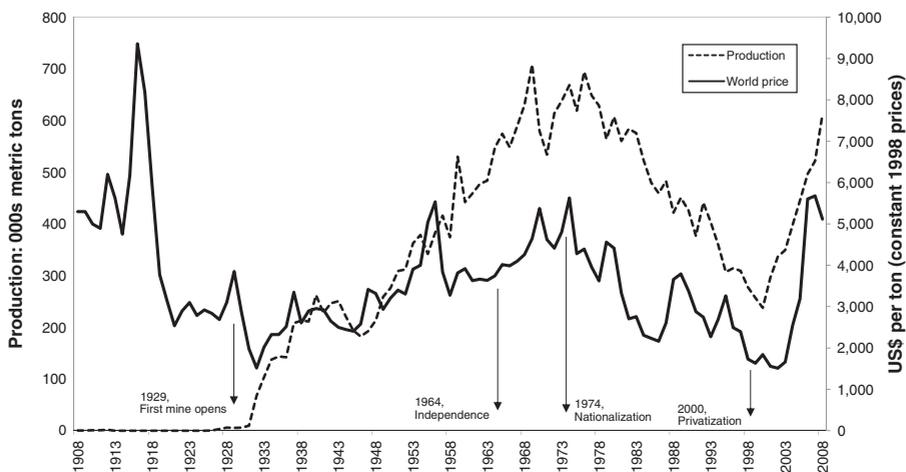
26 This section owes much to A. Fraser and M. Larmer (eds), *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism* (New York, Palgrave, 2010) and A. Fraser and J. Lungu (eds), *For Whom the Wind Falls? Winners and Losers in the Privatization of Zambia’s Copper Mines* (Lusaka, Civil Society Trade Network of Zambia and Catholic Centre for Justice, Development and Peace, 2007).

27 Larmer, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p.11.

conclusion is the continuing sensitivity of the Zambian economy to the volatile price of copper. How could I have not recognised this, especially as it had plagued the earlier history of the industry?

Of course, I did recognise Zambia's copper dependency. Indeed, my analysis rested on the assumption that it had been, and continued to be, an enclave economy, driven by dependence on a single commodity. I did not anticipate, however, the volatility and, in particular, the decline in the price of copper and its consequences. The copper price had been increasing through the 1960s, and it was only after I left in 1972 that it began to fall, precisely after the mining industry was fully nationalised in 1974 (see Figure 1). Thereafter the price of copper followed a more or less continuous decline, and as profits turned into losses, the Zambian government borrowed ever more money on the international market. As the country went ever deeper into debt, the only body that would continue to lend money was the International Monetary Fund. Its loans, however, came with rather drastic conditions, namely the austerity measures associated with structural adjustment. From the late 1970s onwards, the state had to relinquish much of its support for national welfare and was required to withdraw subsidies, in particular for basic food supplies such as mealie-meal, leading to massive protests on the Copperbelt and elsewhere. Desperate attempts to sever relations with the IMF came to nought.

During the 1990s the new Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) government pursued more radical privatisation strategies, but initially did not touch the mining industry, which remained in the hands of the national body Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM). International lenders applied ever more pressure to privatise the mines, and, when the copper price was at an all-time low, the Zambian government caved in and put them up for sale. The sale took place between 1997 and 2001, in the most unpropitious circumstances. Secret deals, so-called 'Development Agreements', were struck that left the state with a range of obligations and the new mine owners (international mining capital) with the profits. Taxation brought in little revenue for the state. Ching Kwan Lee notes that the proportion of government revenue coming from taxation of the copper industry fell from 59 per cent in the 1960s to a meagre 5 per cent after privatisation, due largely to 'the extraordinarily investor-



Unit value is the value in actual US dollars of 1 metric ton (t) of refined copper apparent consumption, estimated from the "Annual Average US Producer Copper Price" as reported in the MP98 and the 2006 MYB. The Consumer Price Index conversion factor, with 1998 as the base year, is used to adjust unit value in current US dollars to the unit value in constant 1998 US dollars. Source: US Geological Survey statistics, in T.D. Kelly and G.R. Matos, comps., "Historical statistics for mineral and material commodities in the United States: US Geological Survey Data Series 140".

Figure 1. A Century of Copper Production in Zambia. Reproduced from: A. Fraser and M. Larmer (eds), *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism*, p. xvii.

friendly Development Agreements signed with these foreign investors'.²⁸ Anglo American, which had always been the longest and most durable investor in the mining industry, bought a major part, but abandoned the investment within two years, when it found it impossible to make profits. There were scandals around the purchase of Luanshya mines by a hazy Indian consortium, the Binani Group, which was charged with asset stripping and then closing down the mine, laying off its workers.²⁹ At this point the Chinese began investing in the copper industry, first in Chambishi and then in Luanshya. Indeed, during this period the mines retrenched half their labour force. Along with the retrenchment, welfare provisions also evaporated – welfare provisions to which mineworkers had become accustomed from the colonial era. Indeed, the colonial era came to look like a golden age.

From the standpoint of the 'colour of class', the privatisation of the mines entailed the restoration of the colour bar, as multinational capital brought back expatriate managers, employed on a contractual basis. This accompanied the casualisation of the labour force and the widespread use of subcontracting. According to Lee, the Chinese paid their workers lower wages but resisted the extensive use of subcontracting and retrenchment, trying to establish a long-term, stable labour force. At the same time, Chinese managers did exhibit a certain 'colonial' mentality when it came to Zambian workers, complaining of their indolence, their unwillingness to 'eat bitterness' and submit to company discipline. Very different from the managers of other international investors, these managers were bonded to the Chinese state, paying their dues as migrants to Africa in the expectation this would advance their careers when they returned home. They were confined to their compounds, living without their families, following a life of 'reclusive asceticism,' resentful of the more freewheeling life of the other expatriates.³⁰

As can be seen in [Figure 1](#), once the lengthy privatisation was complete, the price of copper soared. From 2005 onwards, the new owners made windfall profits on the mines they had bought for a song. The government tried to introduce a windfall profits tax during this period, so that Zambia might glean some revenue from its natural resource, but threats from the privatised companies forced its withdrawal. Then, following the global crisis of 2008, the price of copper plummeted, and Zambia was again subject to the whims of footloose international capital, out to make quick profits. Only the Chinese companies, backed by a state seeking natural resources to fuel its ever-growing economy, were ready to strike compromises with the Zambian state. Their long-term interests in Zambia led them into a more conciliatory relation with the Zambian state, even to the point of accepting higher taxation.³¹

My original analysis overlooked the global dimension of Zambia's reliance on copper, but it was a deliberate omission. *The Colour of Class* sought to tread between two opposed visions of underdevelopment. The first attributed economic backwardness to the cultural traits of the African population, supposedly imbued with traditional rather than modern values and stuck in primordial relations of family and tribe. So much of the development literature associated with such names as Daniel Lerner, Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz was ensnared by cultural explanations of backwardness. The second was the Africanist literature on 'neo-colonialism' that attributed backwardness to continuing dependence on colonising powers and international capitalism. Pointing to external forces beyond Zambia – in particular its vulnerability as a frontline state to the hostilities of settler colonialism in

28 Lee, 'The Specter of Global China', p. 5.

29 G. Jan-Bart and S. Soeters, 'African Miners and Shape-Shifting Capital Flight: The Case of Luanshya/Baluba', in Fraser and Larmer (eds), *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism*, pp.155–84.

30 Lee, 'Raw Encounters'; 'Notes on a Global Sociology of China'; 'The Specter of Global China'.

31 Lee, 'The Specter of Global China'.

Southern Rhodesia, South Africa and Portuguese territories – the new ruling class could hide their own class interests. Opposing both these positions, I focused on the class forces operating at a national level, without examining the limits imposed by international capital. Here, too, I was following Fanon, who thought that the constraints of international capital would dissolve in the face of its dependence on Africa's natural resources, or that somehow the west would be forced to offer up reparations for its past plundering of Africa.³² Or, as in the case of Samir Amin and Andre Gunder Frank, the only chance for 'third world' countries was to seal themselves off from the international system, as though that were possible.³³

This tragic history of Zambia's dependence on copper raises a profound question for the extended case method – namely, what is the appropriate scale of extension? When one moves from micro-processes to macro-forces, where does one stop? For reasons just alluded to, my analysis stopped at the nation-state. Yet, to have anticipated what has happened to Zambia since then, I needed to go beyond the nation-state to examine the volatility of the price of copper, the dependence on international donors and multi-lateral agencies, and the different types of international capital. Still, a danger exists in developing such a global analysis, namely the bleak determinism that accompanies the supposed curse of dependence on a natural resource. The question remains whether Zambia could have more effectively diversified its economy had it deployed alternative development strategies, whether the consolidation of the mining industry into ZCCM offered the potential for redirecting resources into rural development and local entrepreneurship, and whether the projects that it did develop were a function of the class character of the state rather than international constraints. Of particular and broader interest, for example, was why the MMD took the market road to capitalism. This requires a political analysis of the transition to Zambia's Second Republic in 1991, and of the privatisation of the mines in 1997.

Revisit as Comparative Analysis – Politics of the Market Transition

To understand the room for manoeuvre for the Zambian state it is, of course, important to study the character of international constraints, as well the responses of the state to those external pressures.³⁴ When analysing the state's room to manoeuvre, one must also pay close attention to the class interests at work, and how international agencies may first constitute and then operate through such class interests.

Morris Szeftel's analysis of 'corruption' shows how the interests of the state converged with those of international capital.³⁵ Understood as the thousand threads that connect the state to different fractions of capital, corruption is inherent to capitalism, but it assumes different forms in different places and periods. In Africa, 'corruption' was originally viewed as a sign of initiative and entrepreneurship, but with the neoliberal turn it came to be viewed as a key defect of the African state. Yet, as Szeftel shows, structural adjustment intensified 'corruption', by heightening the competition over scarce state resources. More importantly, the neoliberal attack on 'corruption' hid the effects of opening up the economy to global

32 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 102–6.

33 S. Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1974); A.G. Frank, *The Development of Underdevelopment* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1966).

34 See Fraser and Larmer (eds), *Zambia, Mining and Neoliberalism*; Fraser and Lungu, *For Whom the Wind Falls?*

35 M. Szeftel, 'Misunderstanding African Politics: Corruption and the Governance Agenda', *Review of African Political Economy*, 25, 76 (1998), pp. 221–40; 'Between Governance and Underdevelopment: Accumulation and Africa's 'Catastrophic Corruption'', *Review of African Political Economy*, 27, 84 (2000), pp. 287–306; 'Clientelism, Corruption and Catastrophe', *Review of African Political Economy*, 27, 85 (2000), pp. 427–41; "'Eat With Us": Managing Corruption and Patronage Under Zambia's Three Republics, 1964–99', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 18, 2 (2000), pp. 207–24.

economic forces, namely shifting the focus of 'corruption' away from small-scale domestic capital to the benefit of international capital, benefits that hit their peak with the 'Development Agreements' that governed the privatisation of the copper mines.

The collusion of state and mining companies became even more apparent. But was there an alternative? If the Zambian state had so chosen, could it have resisted the neoliberal turn? Here it is interesting to draw attention to the broad parallels between the double transition (political and economic) in Zambia in 1991 and that in the Soviet Union in the same year, and the earlier one in Hungary in 1989.

Zambia began life as an independent nation in 1964 as an open multi-party democracy. It took only eight years and the formation of the Copperbelt-based United Progressive Party (UPP, led by former Vice-President Simon Kapwepwe) for a one-party state to be declared. At the same time the mines were nationalised, and the following years can be represented as a form of state capitalism. As the price of copper fell, as pressure mounted from the outside during the 1980s and conditions in the country at large declined, so the United National Independence Party (UNIP) sought to intensify its control, creating party cells within the mining industry and subjecting the townships to political control. The result was ever more protest from the Copperbelt workers and more broadly from the Zambian Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), led by Frederick Chiluba. An underground opposition emerged, known as the 'movement for a multi-party democracy' that would become a political party and challenge UNIP for national domination. Facing such difficult economic circumstances and deepening pressure from the IMF, Kaunda declared the reign of the one-party state to be over, and called for elections in 1991, which UNIP lost to the MMD, who would hold power for the next 20 years.

The story is a familiar one to observers of transitions from state socialist to capitalist regimes elsewhere.³⁶ Although Hungary was socialist in the way it attempted to assure basic benefits and security for all, the limits it imposed on income inequalities, the state ownership of the means of production, and its attempt to administer the economy, still in the 1980s it was converging on a form of state capitalism as it released markets in consumer goods, allowed the formation of co-operatives, and created fiscal incentives for state enterprises. At the same time, it was becoming ever more indebted to international lenders.

In addition to examining material or objective forces, it is necessary to examine subjective forces, particularly the effect of state socialism on class formation. Here, too, I find striking parallels between Zambia and Hungary. Larmer found mineworkers' demands hinged on the promises of the mobilisation campaigns of the anti-colonial movement, and then on the claims of nationalisation ('now the mines are ours'). They took the rhetoric of the ruling party seriously, and demanded that its promises be realised. As mineworkers watched promises being broken, their standard of living falling and the party-state nurturing its own capitalist class, their demands intensified, leading to the abolition of the one-party state.³⁷

A similar pattern is found in Hungary, which, after all, was supposed to be a workers' state, with equality, freedom and efficiency. Yet everywhere workers found inequality, bondage and inefficiency. Like Zambian mineworkers, Hungarian workers, especially those with a relatively privileged status, such as the steelworkers, called on the party-state to realise its ideological claims. Despite themselves they became socialist in their rhetoric and their demands. Like Zambians, they saw themselves subject to a conspiracy of party, state and trade union. It was a democratic socialism from below that inspired the 1956 Hungarian revolution and the workers' council movement, and it was the same spirit that in part inspired

36 What follows is based on my ethnographic research in Hungarian industries from 1982 to 1989. See M. Burawoy and J. Lukács, *The Radiant Past: Ideology and Reality in Hungary's Road to Capitalism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992).

37 Larmer, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, chapters 4 and 5.

the Polish Solidarity movement of 1980–81. By 1989, however, Hungarian workers had exhausted their faith in any socialism, ready to embrace capitalism because, as they saw it, the market reforms had already given them greater freedom, greater equality and greater efficiency. But these were markets protected by the shell of state socialism, and once the shell was jettisoned in 1989, privatisation and markets turned against the working class. Still, the transition did not come from below, but from above, from within the party–state. In this regard it was very different from the Zambian transition to democracy and market capitalism, actually impelled by working class protest.

For a closer parallel to Zambia, one might turn to the Soviet Union.³⁸ Like the pro-MMD Copperbelt mineworkers, the Soviet coal miners in Vorkuta, in the Kuzbass and in the Donbass became the dynamite that brought down the old order, striking in militant fashion first in 1989 and then in 1991. Central to their platform was the abrogation of the party–state and the introduction of market reforms. Nevertheless, they were the first to be sacrificed by the new order. As industry collapsed and transportation costs soared, so the mines, privatised or not, ran at a deficit, and their townships were drained of funds. As in Zambia, the post-Soviet Russian government had two or three years' honeymoon before disillusionment set in, as privatisation deepened inequality and poverty. As in Zambia, the multi-party democracy became a mock democracy, the new face of what remained an essentially authoritarian state. As in Zambia, working-class security receded with the spiralling wealth of a new bourgeoisie, but whereas Zambia was captive to foreign capital, Russia had its own capitalist class, the famous oligarchs that might as well have been foreigners.

My observations of the response of working-class communities in Russia to the dramatic economic decline parallel those of Patience Mususa.³⁹ She writes of the early death of retrenched Copperbelt mineworkers and of survival strategies of families revolving around women in the informal sector. She writes about the hard labour of women working through the dumps of copper ore, preferred to the dangers and humiliation of transactional sex. My own research into the survival strategies of working-class families in Russia follows a similar line of argument. With the rise of the market and primitive disaccumulation in industry, people retreated to pre-industrial forms of survival, a process I called 'economic involution' that included the return to subsistence production,⁴⁰ and in Zambia (but not in Russia) a partial return to the rural areas.⁴¹

The puzzle in all this, whether in Africa or in the Soviet world, was the enthusiasm with which the market economy was embraced. Why did the MMD, with its origins partly in the labour movement, pursue liberalisation with such alacrity? Was it because of the external pressures of donors and the IMF and World Bank? The comparison with Russia suggests something else, namely that privatisation and liberalisation were a class project from within the party–state. The emergent 'merchant bourgeoisie' were able to use anti-socialist rhetoric to project the market as the only conceivable solution to the economic impasse of

38 This section on the market transition in post-Soviet Russia is based on ethnographic research that I conducted in factories in Moscow and Syktyvkar. See M. Burawoy and K. Hendley, 'Between Perestroika and Privatization: Divided Strategies and Political Crisis in a Soviet Enterprise', *Soviet Studies*, 44,3 (1992), pp. 371–402; M. Burawoy and P. Krotov, 'The Soviet Transition from Socialism to Capitalism: Worker Control and Economic Bargaining in the Wood Industry', *American Sociological Review*, 57,1 (1992) pp.16–38; 'The Economic Basis of Russia's Political Crisis', *New Left Review*, 198 (1993), pp. 49–70; 'Russian Miners Bow to the Angel of History', *Antipode*, 27, 2 (1995), pp. 115–36.

39 P. Mususa, 'Contesting Illegality: Women in the Informal Copper Business', in Fraser and Larmer (eds), *Zambia, Mining and Neoliberalism*, pp. 185–208.

40 M. Burawoy, P. Krotov and T. Lytkyna, 'Involution and Destitution in Capitalist Russia', *Ethnography*, 1, 1 (2000), pp. 43–65.

41 J. Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999).

state socialism, all of which was painted in nationalist terms, Russia against the Soviet Union.⁴²

Can the same be said of the MMD? How was it possible to turn against the very political base from which it drew its strength? Larmer argues that it was through the MMD that the Zambian mineworkers claimed to represent the Zambian people as a whole, but the characteristic of MMD's ascent to power was its detachment from all classes.⁴³ Zambian mineworkers, however, were a labour aristocracy bent on defending their status and unable politically to represent the interests of all, and therefore they lost control of the party they had helped put into power. To be sure, we had to wait until 1997 for the privatisation of the mines, and then the government dragged its feet, but in the meantime ZCCM was able to funnel money into political projects that bolstered the Zambian bourgeoisie.⁴⁴

Revisit as Theoretical Reconstruction – From Marx to Polanyi

It might appear that the Marxian framework, suitably stretched from Fanon to a world-systems approach, would suffice for the reconstruction of *The Colour of Class*. However, an analysis focused on the process of production has, in my view, severe limitations. As Larmer puts it in his criticism of *The Colour of Class*: 'My research, while not denying the importance of struggles over workplace control, has found that the major conflicts in Zambia's copper mines since Independence took place over wages and conditions, in particular the "social wage"'.⁴⁵ Larmer concludes his book:

The uncertain future of the mining industry has undermined the assumptions that underlie much labour and social historiography, i.e. that urbanisation and social and economic progress are inevitable processes that will continue to unfold. Rather, there is the distinct possibility that this history of the significant role played by Zambia's mineworkers and their union in post-colonial political change will prove to be an epitaph for a way of work and life that may soon disappear.⁴⁶

My research into the transition to post-socialism in Hungary and Russia leads me to a similar conclusion. My studies of Hungarian industrial workers, conducted during the 1980s, viewed the process of production as the defining experience of state socialism, explaining working-class socialist consciousness as a product of the critique of state socialism. When, however, I came to participate in the dismantling of the Soviet order, the inadequacy of my approach struck me forcibly. Production-as-it-was disappeared from sight as industries closed down, and those that remained depended on ever more precarious conditions. The labour aristocracies of old disintegrated in the face of the capitalist market. Indeed, the market

42 I witnessed this conflict in dramatic form in the civil war that broke out in 1991 in a single factory between the Old Guard and the Young Turks: the defence of socialist planning and the integrity of the Soviet Union vs the shift to the market and Russian break-away from the Soviet Union. See Burawoy and Hendley, 'Between Perestroika and Privatization'.

43 Larmer, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, chapter 6.

44 In their comparative analysis of the adoption of 'neoliberal' policies by Chile, the UK, France and Mexico, Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas and Sarah Babb point to the constellation of interests that congeal around international finance and state bureaucracies under pressure of a balance-of-payments crisis. They distinguish between the radical ideological adoption of neoliberalism in Chile and the UK in contrast to the more pragmatic adoption in Mexico and France. One might say that Russia is a representative of the first while Zambia is a representative of the second. See M. Fourcade-Gourinchas and S. Babb, 'The Rebirth of the Liberal Creed: Paths to Neoliberalism in Four Countries', *American Journal of Sociology*, 108, 3 (2002), pp. 533–79.

45 Larmer, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p. 202.

46 *Ibid.*, p.203.

became the all-important determinant of human existence, calling for a major shift in my theoretical framework: from Marx to Polanyi.⁴⁷

Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* was written in 1944 as a warning against the dangers of market fundamentalism.⁴⁸ In that book he argued that unregulated markets tend to destroy society, leading to counter-movements that congeal into repressive regimes (fascism and Stalinism) as well as democratic regimes (welfare states, the US New Deal). He traces the ascendancy of the market from the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, linking lived experience on the ground to war-making and finance capital at the global level. With its origins in nineteenth-century England, market fundamentalism had an impact so devastating that he thought humanity would never again undertake such a dangerous experiment. He was wrong, but his analysis remains pertinent to today's world.

Polanyi devotes a major part of his book to the English industrial revolution, arguing against the Marxist focus on production as shaping working-class movements. Instead he insists on the primacy of the commodification rather than the exploitation of labour. He studies the Chartists, the factory movement, the co-operative movement, the trade union movement, Owenism, and even the formation of the Labour Party as manifestations of society's reaction to the over-extension of the market in labour. In the same way, Larmer focuses on the reaction of mineworkers to the devastation of social life brought about by structural adjustment – the struggles to defend the political autonomy of the township to secure the social and economic benefits it served, the militant protest against the removal of subsidies for cheap food, and, of course, the struggle for wages that might keep up with the increasing cost of living. These are Polanyi-type struggles rather than Marx-type struggles. Polanyi also argued that sectional struggles will be successful only to the extent that they represented the broad societal interests of all. Here, too, we see how the mineworkers and their union, and more broadly the ZCTU, sought to represent Zambian society through the political party, the MMD, and, when it failed, through the Patriotic Front since the early 2000s.

But labour was not Polanyi's only 'fictitious commodity' – a factor of production that, when subject to unregulated exchange, loses its use-value. The commodification of land threatened subsistence existence, and the commodification of money threatened the very viability of a market economy. Rohit Negi's account of the creation of the Lumwana mine in the far Northwestern Province focuses on the terms under which land would be commodified and the returns to the local Kaonde society, in particular its control of labour supplies.⁴⁹ The very commodification of the mines, selling them off for next to nothing with little or no compensation for labour or revenue for the state, can be seen as the commodification of land, with all its deleterious consequences. As regards money, the creation of an auction for the kwacha had devastating consequences for the livelihoods of so many. Similar analyses can be made for Russia – but there the mines were generally sold not to foreigners but to a new class of entrepreneurs, made rich on their political capital and a treacherous form of voucher privatisation. The commodification of the rouble – that is to say, financial speculation – ended up destroying it as a medium of exchange, so that economic actors turned either to barter or to newly invented local currencies.⁵⁰ Millions of people lost their life savings

47 M. Burawoy, 'Transition without Transformation: Russia's Involuntary Road to Capitalism', *East European Politics and Societies*, 15, 2 (2001), pp. 269–90; 'From Polanyi to Pollyanna: The False Optimism of Global Labor Studies', *Global Labour Journal*, 1, 2 (2010), pp. 301–13.

48 K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (New York, Farrar & Rinehart, 1944).

49 R. Negi, 'The Mining Boom, Capital, and Chiefs in the "New Copperbelt"', in Fraser and Larmer (eds), *Zambia, Mining and Neoliberalism*, pp. 209–38.

50 D. Woodruff, *Money Unmade: Barter and the Fate of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1999).

overnight, and the vast majority were plunged into instant poverty, from which they never recovered.

This suggests that we should think of the present period of marketisation, which began in the middle 1970s when the price of copper began to fall, as the articulation of the commodification of land, labour and money. But this is, on the global level, the third of three waves of marketisation. Polanyi thought that an initial wave of marketisation was followed by one general counter-movement, but the existence of another wave in the 1970s (which he could not have anticipated) leads to the reconstruction of the past as harbouring not one but two waves and their counter-movements, the first spanning the nineteenth century, and the second spanning Hobsbawm's short twentieth century (1914–1991).⁵¹ We should look on these waves of commodification as becoming deeper and broader in their penetration into society, but also as a changing articulation of the commodification of different factors of production.

This is not to dispense with but to reorient Marxism, because Polanyi's optimism regarding the future stemmed from his limited attention to the dynamics of capital accumulation. He dismissed Marx's laws of history without substituting an alternative, but we still need to recognise the way that capitalism generates crises the solution to which is, as has been the case since the financial crisis of 2007–8, a new surge of market fundamentalism rather than a counter-movement. In Zambia, the Patriotic Front, for all its socialist ideology, has shown few signs of reversing the market reforms that have been so devastating in their consequences since the 1980s, and particularly since the full-scale neoliberalism of the 1990s.

Conclusion

I've re-presented *The Colour of Class* through the lens of the four moments of the extended case method: a participant-observation study of the copper industry, extended over space and time, linking micro-processes of Zambianisation to macro-forces of class structure, with the aid of two sets of theory: Gouldner's notion of succession and Fanon's class analysis of the colony and the postcolony. The four moments have their corresponding revisits. The first revisit is a critique of my standpoint as researcher: dwelling too deeply in my site, reifying the forces at work, and in particular not recognising even in my own subsequent interaction the heterogeneity of the state. The second revisit underlines the limitations of thinking of history as history of the present, not recognising how the changing character of the global economy could set limits on what was nationally feasible. Following in the footsteps of Fanon, I had played down the constraints of international forces in favour of the autonomy of national class forces. The third revisit thus seeks to understand the room for manoeuvre within constraints defined by dependence on copper, whether that dependence could have been reduced, and how much of that dependence can be attributed to the class character of the state. To disentangle more effectively the relation between global and national as expressed in the 'neoliberal turn', I drew on my research in socialist Hungary and post-socialist Russia, each passing through similar transitions. Finally, we come to the fourth revisit that focuses on the reconstruction of theory, shifting the focus away from production to the market, from exploitation to commodification, from Marx to Polanyi.

In this interpretive revisit I have criticised my original study – historicising the original observations not just in the light of the subsequent unfolding of reality, but also in terms of my own research trajectory. In the 40 years since publishing *The Colour of Class*, I have taken a detour through the manufacturing plants of south Chicago, the socialist steel industry of

51 E. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes* (London, Michael Joseph, 1994).

Hungary, and the fall-out of communism in Russia. Wherever I went, disaster followed me, a disaster that was, of course, not of my making: it was the tsunami of third-wave marketisation. The tsunami rolls on, destroying community after community, creating chaos wherever it strikes. In this era of third-wave marketisation, we cannot confine our ethnographic 'extensions' to the national; rather, we need to proceed to the global. This does not mean ignoring the national, since states play an important part in mediating – either fostering or retarding – global transformations, just as some communities are active in exploiting new opportunities, even as others are closed down.

With the world just emerging from second-wave marketisation, anthropologist Godfrey Wilson, writing as a precursor to the Manchester School, understood far better than they the importance of the global for urban–industrial life on and around the Copperbelt.⁵² He captured the reverberations of the second-wave marketisation of the 1920s and 1930s, which, in turn, prompted the counter-movement of state-regulated economies, including colonialism and formal decolonisation. Now, as then, it is important not to make the mistake of thinking that marketisation is natural and eternal or, equally, that a Polanyian counter-movement is inevitable. We must not repeat the mistake, when extending to the global, of homogenising or reifying third-wave marketisation, as is so often the case in the conceptualisation of 'neoliberalism'.

We have to seek out theories of the global that recognise its internal contradictions, its external limits and its different national manifestations. That is surely one of the virtues of world-systems analysis, particularly in the hands of its most creative exponents. Among these, Giovanni Arrighi is the most interesting and most nuanced. One does not have to agree with him that US world hegemony is in decline, to be replaced by China as the next hegemonic power, to appreciate his ability to elucidate the complicated dynamics of world capitalism: specifically his anticipation of the turn to financialisation as a defining feature of third-wave marketisation; his use of hegemony to underline its always contested nature, especially from the Global South; and his recognition of the heterogeneity of national experiences, in particular the peculiarities of Chinese expansionism.⁵³ Consonant with such a framework, Ching Kwan Lee's detailed ethnography of the Zambian Copperbelt – with its focus on the political as well as the economic moment of Chinese investment, its comparison with Chinese investment in the construction industry as well as the contrast with speculative international capital, its grasp of the internal complexities of the Zambian state as well as its strategic resource nationalism, all backed up by her continuing, innovative analysis of Chinese state capitalism – points to an exemplary revisit using the extended case method, while avoiding the errors that I made.⁵⁴

MICHAEL BURAWOY

Department of Sociology, University of California, 410 Barrows Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720–1980, USA. E-mail: burawoy@berkeley.edu.

52 G. Wilson, *An Essay on the Economics of Detribalisation in Northern Rhodesia*, The Rhodes–Livingstone Papers, Nos 5 and 6 (Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia, The Rhodes–Livingstone Institute, 1941 and 1942).

53 G. Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (London, Verso, 1994); *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century* (London, Verso, 2007).

54 Lee, 'The Specter of Global China'. This is still a work in progress, but it builds on her own theorisation of Chinese state capitalism in *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2007).