

fiscal structures in many colonized regions. Because much of the book uses the comparative study of regional case studies to explain elite interests as well as types of coercion, the book tends to overlook the agency of the taxpayer. Several chapters hint at protest and resistance though do not offer detailed accounts of collective action against tax regimes. Protests grew in size and spread during the nineteenth century, and more so in the twentieth century. Yet, there is little in this book about taxpayer resistance nor the effect of the threat of resistance on changes and continuities in fiscal governance.

Second, the book could have said more about the nature of pre-colonial fiscal institutions. This line of enquiry could probe the question of *why* colonial administrators relied on local elites to enforce tax arrangements. Indeed, some chapters in the book suggest that the interests of elites and colonial administrators were not always aligned, which suggests a puzzle in terms of why fiscal institutions were influenced by these elites. One answer could be that it was cheaper for colonial administrators to maintain pre-colonial institutional structures that delegated tax monitoring and enforcement responsibilities to elites rather than to enact substantial changes. Cost as a motivator for negotiations between the colonial government and local elites is indirectly discussed in the chapters that explore financial self-sufficiency and could be investigated more explicitly.

Third, the book overlooks large parts of the colonized world and interactions among the colonies. Regional omissions, in turn, weaken the framing of fiscal institutional building as an imperial-state rather than a nation-state project. The book enriches our understanding of connections between colonized region and metropole, though does little to show connections among regions ruled by the same imperial regime. The authors might consider a sequel that explores regions not included in the book and also makes connections between fiscal institutions in these regions and those in the colonies analysed in the book.

Criticisms aside, *Imperial Inequalities* offers a rich history of fiscal arrangements in European empires. Economic and social historians should consult the book for a comparative reading of tax and economic governance in the colonized world.

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FRASER, NANCY. *Cannibal Capitalism. How Our System is Devouring Democracy, Care, and the Planet and What We Can Do About It.* Verso, London [etc.] 2022. xvii, 190 pp. Paper: £9.99. (E-book: £7.50.)

In the early spring of 2020, it was easy to believe that society would be permanently changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The rupture of disease seemed to have

divided the world into a before and an after. Surely it would be impossible to reconstitute what had once been normal life. In this context of crisis, the writings of the social theorist Nancy Fraser on care and capitalism appeared newly relevant. Although Fraser's essays on the "crisis of care" predated the pandemic, the collapse of the boundaries between care and work came to seem among the defining aspects of the pandemic era. *Cannibal Capitalism* collects many of Fraser's recent writings on care, environment, racism, and democracy into a single volume, but this is not a straightforward anthology – she expands on her earlier arguments, while also developing the connections between them. In this slim book, Fraser outlines a new way of understanding capitalism, setting out a theoretical approach that is very different from that of classical Marxism, while also offering meditations on racism, gender and care labor, democratic politics, and environmental degradation, exploring the relationship of each of these realms to capitalist economic life.

At the heart of the book is the metaphor of capitalism as a cannibalistic social order that constantly destroys the resources – external to it – which are necessary to power it and to give it life. Fraser opens with an analysis of the traditional Marxian vision of capitalism, as an economic order in which class power is sustained through the exploitation of the proletariat at the workplace. The workplace, accordingly, is the key site of resistance, and the struggle at the heart of the entire social order is over material wealth.

What Fraser suggests as an alternative vision of capitalism moves away from the central focus on the workplace. She offers a very different image of capitalism, one in which the economy is deeply reliant on aspects of social life that do not operate according to its logic. Economic life requires workers, who are not produced as commodities. Production demands natural resources, which are not generated by capitalist dynamics. Even the ideology that capitalists use to justify their social order relies on fictions of biological hierarchy (racism) that seem to exist outside of the economy itself. In other words, in Fraser's vision, capitalism is defined by its hybrid nature. It is not a unitary whole but rather depends on relationships that it has no power to create.

In this, Fraser is drawing on the Marxian idea of "primitive accumulation" – the notion that capitalist economies require foundational violent acts, such as the enclosure of the commons or the seizure of colonies from indigenous occupants or the kidnapping and enslaving of human beings. For Marx (in the old reading), these were not part of the normal, ordinary workings of capitalism. Rather, they are the initial acts of seizures that enable the initial concentration of wealth that can then be invested in productive self-sustained enterprise. In Fraser's account, though, the dynamic of "primitive accumulation" remains intrinsic to capitalism even after the economic order is established. Capitalism continues to rely on seizing and accumulating resources that it does not generate. For the social order to function, it must continue capturing and subduing these external and resistant elements. "Primitive accumulation" is not an original sin but an ongoing, constitutive aspect of capitalist society.

One of the fascinating claims of *Cannibal Capitalism* is that capitalism cannot generate the emotional relationships upon which it relies. To produce new workers, to sustain consumption and requisite levels of prosperity, the economic order must always rely on bonds of love and friendship that are external to the norms and demands of the workplace. Even consumption is powered by psychic demands and

relationships that are not created or sustained by the atomized world of the market or of personal utility maximization – take, for example, the central role of Christmas shopping, or shopping for gifts for others rather than for commodities for oneself, in sustaining economic demand. What this means is that capitalism is an incomplete social order, one that is dependent on swallowing up social relationships that are not part of it and can be opposed to it in critical ways. The natural world is another such realm. Economies are constantly sucking up the natural resources they require, but in so doing have created a carbon-based economic order that threatens to destroy the underlying social and economic infrastructure.

The resulting vision is bleak. Marx suggested that capitalism was exploitative but ferociously dynamic. Capitalism destroyed old worlds of prejudice and superstition, but it opened the way for something new – material wealth, economic production, a global cultural community. Fraser, by contrast, is far less sanguine, suggesting that capitalism as a partial social order is inherently unstable and that it must constantly destroy those very dynamics on which it relies. Rather than Marx's compulsive, frenetic creativity, revolutionizing the modes of production and reducing comforting illusions to dust, Fraser sees a social order that is at its core destructive. All that is solid melts into air, but people are left then with nothing, rather than the realism that is at the heart of Marx's account.

This is not to say that Fraser is entirely pessimistic. At the heart of Fraser's political project is an effort to expand what we see as challenges to capitalism. The left sometimes interprets feminism, social movements for racial equality, even environmental justice movements as simply part of neoliberalism – expanding the norms of individualism and its rights to ever-broader circles. But Fraser contends that once we recognize the dependence of capitalism on these realms of life outside of the economic order, we can see the activism in these arenas as potentially radical in new ways. Feminism, for example, insists on the autonomy of women's labor and of the labor of the household from the norms of the marketplace. Highlighting the enormous work that transpires within the realm of the family and making it visible helps to provide a sense of an counter-sphere to that of wage labor and exploitation – a reservoir of alternatives.

A certain tension in Fraser's book comes from its historical argument. Is this description of "cannibal capitalism" an analysis that transcends any specific historical moment – is this how capitalism has always worked? Or are there aspects of our contemporary moment that make this framework especially resonant – with the decline of industry and manufacturing, at least in the United States and Europe, and the rise of a financial capitalism? Is capitalism more self-destructive now than in the past? Fraser provides little in the way of archival evidence, oral history, or historical examples to illuminate her arguments. She constructs a scaffolding but does not fill it in. In so doing, she gives a gift to any social historians who may one day choose to take up the intellectual project that Fraser sketches out.

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