

Clive Gabay, *Imagining Africa: Whiteness and the Western Gaze*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hb £63 – 978 1 108 47360 6). 2018, xi + 270 pp.

Gabay's *Imagining Africa* presents a history of Eurocentric whiteness and its idealizations of Africa from the post-Second World War period to the 2007–08 financial crisis. It questions conventional notions about racial supremacy and the imagined relationship between whiteness and Africanness, which Gabay contextualizes within the legacy of colonialism and the global imperial project of white universalism. The main impetus behind Gabay's work is to challenge the perception that Africans and Africa exist in relation to the Western world in a fixed, unmoving negative capacity or as a threat to the modern and violent order that the Western world has tried to create and subsequently make an objective truth.

Gabay reads the 'Anglospheric' works of white settlers, missionaries and the British imperial governments of Kenya and British South Africa. These sources include travel literature, popular media, film, economic debates and the intellectual history of the social sciences, covered in Chapters 2, 4 and 6. In these chapters, Gabay maps the discursive shifts in Western 'racial anxieties' at different historical moments, including the interwar period; the post-Second World War era, when modernization theory was dominant; and the twenty-first-century economic crises that have shaped the past two decades. In Chapters 3, 5 and 7, Gabay analyses how these shifts shaped 'crises' within the white civilizational project. He traces these crises over the last century, from the issuing of the 1923 Devonshire White Paper and the rise of Harry Thuku and the East Africa Association, through the founding of the white-dominated Capricorn African Society and New Kenya Party in 1950s and 1960s Zimbabwe and Kenya, and to the advent of modern narratives about Africa's unquestionable economic rise following the aftermath of the 2007–08 financial crash. Gabay argues that Anglospheric writers engaging with these events began to imagine a significant distance between phenotypic whiteness and the fulfilment of the white civilizational project. As a consequence, the West now visualizes Africans and Africa as the protagonists in the story of the eternal promise of Western modernity.

According to Gabay, the Western world has crumbled in the face of imperial and economic crises that made it impossible to ignore its decay. As such, the West imagines Africa as untouched by the excesses of capitalist accumulation and industrialization – as a place where there is still potential for Western technologies to remake the world, this time without failure. Africa is a fertile laboratory for Western modernity, a phenomenon that was fully actualized once it became clear that there was no experimental capacity left in the West itself.

Gabay's work is a comprehensive and welcome contribution. Two major elements that were not explored in his work need to be addressed, however. The first is Gabay's assumption of the omnipresent and sweeping force of Eurocentric whiteness. He privileges the white/Black binary as being the defining racial divide and does not engage with the ways in which precolonial racial orders and postcolonial resistance movements informed the creation of categories of difference within the white civilizational project. The writings, cultural productions and political works of African-descended peoples could have

provided critical insight on the contradictions of white universalism. They could have illuminated how the fetishization of Africa and Africans is also endemic to capital accumulation and the insatiable desire to conquer the frontier of global whiteness – often represented in the form of Blackness, its assumed negation. Second, Gabay could have examined how other vectors of power colour the relationship between Africans and Africa and the white world around them. Gender, which was largely overlooked in the analysis, is critical to understanding this relationship. In Chapter 6, Gabay explores the Western world's consumption of the 'Afropolitan': the African who has so exceeded the limitations of twenty-first-century modernity that they are 'of the world'. They pass through the metropole and the former colony with ease and represent the connectedness of the world in a way that the social, cultural and political cache of whiteness can no longer conjure. He argues that events such as the 2016 #OscarsSoWhite campaign illustrate how the forces of representation, culture and public discourse are shifting in response to the furthering distance between phenotypically white people and the sustainability of Western universalism.

If Gabay had engaged more intently with the particular nature of this disembodiment through the lens of gender, for instance, the supposed distance between phenotype and representation would have to be questioned. We can argue that, over the course of the past few decades, beauty standards have radically shifted, and non-white and especially Black features have become commodified on a larger-than-life scale and incorporated into universal, white standards of beauty. Perhaps due to the way in which beauty uniquely operates on a structural level, this incorporation has divorced Black features from Black people. Black features are more valuable on white people. They give whiteness a modern beauty that revitalizes it. Black women are representations of a particular gendered type of violence that the white universalist project's extractive relationship with Africa and Africans both reinforces and relies upon. This begs the question: how do the histories of objectification and dispossession of women of colour from their bodies expand Gabay's argument? What then becomes of Gabay's conclusion that whiteness reproduces itself by associating Africa and Africans with the markers of civilizational progress? Can we refer to the twenty-first-century Eurocentric fantasy of Africa as 'Africa' at all if African subjectivity is also becoming distanced from people who are phenotypically and ethnically African? Who exactly is the 'African' subject we are talking about?

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In her book *Garbage Citizenship: vital infrastructures of labor in Dakar, Senegal*, Rosalind Fredericks presents a detailed description and lucid analysis of how garbage and waste infrastructures are crucial in understanding the politics of urban change in