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**Alice Bullard**, *Exile to Paradise: Savagery and Civilization in Paris and the South Pacific, 1790-1900*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2000. viii + 380 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography and index. \$55 US (cl). ISBN 0-8047-3878-5.

Review by Robert Aldrich, University of Sydney.

The French Pacific territory of New Caledonia came to international attention in the mid-1980s, when a fierce political struggle—land occupations, barricades, hostage-taking, assassinations, police violence, and the deaths of several dozen people—pitted pro- and anti-independence groups against each other. At the time of the *événements*, as they were euphemistically called, relatively little historical literature was available on New Caledonia in either English or French. The developments in the island inspired a number of eyewitness accounts, works by those *engagés* in the struggle, as well as scholarly studies, and recent years have seen a steady, if small, production of volumes on New Caledonia and, more generally, on France's empire in the South Pacific.

Alice Bullard's book is the most recent English-language contribution to the study of New Caledonia, including material from a doctoral thesis at the University of California in Berkeley. It shows admirably wide-ranging research—the notes and bibliography cover almost seventy pages—using published sources, many little-known memoirs and fictional works from the late nineteenth century, and primary materials in the French national archives in Paris, the overseas archives in Aix-en-Provence, and collections in New Caledonia and Australia, as well as other archives and libraries. Bullard has also read extensively in political theory and cultural studies, and cites a pantheon of historians, philosophers, ethnologists and other 'theorists.' She invokes Eugen Weber, Norbert Elias, Michel Foucault and Theodor Adorno in the introduction. Fanon, Freud, Marx and Lévy-Bruhl are among those who appear in later pages, and she borrows, somewhat eclectically, from their ideas.

Bullard sets up a dichotomy between 'savagery and civilization in Paris and the South Pacific' in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, there was France, the 'gold standard,' as she neatly puts it, of civilisation—progress, modernity and liberal democracy. On the other, there was the savagery of Melanesians, or Kanaks in New Caledonia, considered a relic of the stone age, primitive and immoral, practitioners of cannibalism and other vices. But there was a second sort of savagery, that of the rebels of the Commune who ruled Paris for a couple of months in 1871, trying to establish a social republic with attacks on clerics and capitalists. After the 'bloody week' in which the Commune was suppressed, some 4500 Communards were exiled to New Caledonia, there to languish until allowed to return to France in 1879.

The aim of Bullard's book is to investigate French views of savagery, both Kanak and Communard, as the antithesis of the civilisation promoted by the victorious conservatives in France and their imperial administrators in New Caledonia. However, Bullard has to force her material into the mould. By effectively declaring '*Kanak, Communard, même combat,*' she neglects the obvious difference between 'savagery' as applied diversely to Melanesians and Paris revolutionaries. 'Savage,' even 'cannibal,' were indeed labels pinned to both groups, but in the one case, this was an ethnographical judgement about the primitiveness of a population living without the benefits of commerce and Christianity or the Enlightenment and the Republic. As applied to the Parisian rebels, however, savagery meant an intentional rejection by the Communards of the norms of political behaviour and social thought as understood by their opponents. The two are not the same--just as 'cannibal' for one group was used literally (even if inaccurately), and for the other, metaphorically. Matters become even more complicated because Communards sometimes referred to the savagery of Thiers' troops, who put down the Paris rebellion, for instance, in a lecture (to which Bullard refers) by the Communard Henri Rochefort on 'The Civilization of Savagery and the Savagery of Civilization'--proof indeed of the malleability of the term. Another problem is that Bullard concentrates almost exclusively on the Communards in New Caledonia, most of whom were isolated in their confinement from the indigenous population. She pays little attention to the convicts sent to the prison colony or to the free settlers and other agents of imperialism on the island. This keeps her from looking in a comprehensive manner at relations between locals and foreigners in what by the end of the nineteenth century (when transportation ended) was a complex demographic and social situation. Regeneration (or rehabilitation), a goal of the Paris policy-makers, was not quite the same for Communards, convicts, and Kanaks. Furthermore, most of the social and racial tensions in New Caledonia came from clashes between Kanaks and non-Communards--settlers who took their land, missionaries who tried converting them, emancipated convicts who sold them alcohol or ranged about in their midst, soldiers and administrators who imposed summary imperial justice. Where all these groups fit into Bullard's scheme is not clear.

Not surprisingly, Bullard has difficulty explaining why most of the Communards in New Caledonia--Louise Michel was a notable exception--took the side of the French, some even shouldering arms during a Melanesian rebellion in 1878. Bullard resorts to a hypothesis about 'fatal nostalgia,' which the erstwhile Parisian revolutionaries finally abjured in the hope of defeating the rebellious Kanaks and returning home to France. This explanation is part of Bullard's delving into psycho-cultural (for lack of a better word) matters. Bullard argues that the French considered Kanaks devoid of what she terms 'affect' - basic human sentiments, such as individualism - or that their 'affect' was stunted and inhumane (indeed not human): 'The strong tradition in missionary and secular representations of deriding Kanak affect and accusing it of perversion and inhumanity worked as a fundamental component in a dehumanizing rhetoric' (p. 181). This contrasted with civilised European 'affect' and the concomitant 'moralizing process' (p. 99) that was part of the imperial mission. The clash of cultures, thus, was not just political, military and cultural, but also psychological.

Bullard is very interested in the issue of gender but never quite succeeds in bringing her material together cogently. Imperialism, and the hope of moral reform of deported prisoners and political exiles was, she says (no doubt rightly), 'a deeply gendered project' (p. 3). She never really shows how Kanak and Communard women's reactions differed from those of men nor does she investigate the subject of colonial gender in a detailed fashion. She mentions that European men generally found Melanesian women physically unattractive, but that *métissage* paradoxically occurred with regularity. Predictable

assertions about the patriarchal control of women are not documented in way that would illustrate the interesting particularities of French settlement in a 'primitive' colony.

The book, unfortunately, is confusingly organised. Not until page 124 does Bullard give relevant population figures for New Caledonia in the 1870s, and then repeats the figures on page 165. The 1878 rebellion pops up in various chapters, but the various elements are not consolidated. There are allusions to international exhibitions, particularly the Paris World's Fair of 1878, but not until more than two hundred pages into the text is there thorough consideration. Discussion of cannibalism in Chapter 6 largely repeats what has been said earlier. Broad generalisations are brandished with little proof: 'Overcoming the fatal threat of nostalgia produced a quintessentially modern French psyche, one with a profound sense of absence at its center, yet with a predilection, too, to overcome this absence, through politics, productivity, or warfare' (p. 209).

This volume bears many traces of an insufficiently revised thesis, including overly lengthy footnotes and compulsive references to theorists. There is much detailed but sometimes irrelevant information, such as most of the chapter on Charles Renouvier, who argued, curiously, that "'savage tribes" in the world of his day were the descendants of criminals, expelled from virtuous groups and forced to live on their own' (p. 118). A worthy tone predominates ('I earnestly hope that this recapitulation inscribes in the reader's mind knowledge about the relations in French political culture between emotion, morality, and natural law.' (p. 165)). Rather righteously, Bullard charges that 'if we examine the language of the humanitarian defenders of the Kanak, the overwhelming racism of their outlooks is evident' (p. 221); a similar point could be made about campaigners against slavery, but surely that does not exhaust the analysis. Such chapter titles as 'Improper Subjectivity: Recuperating the Category of Affect in French Colonial Policy' and 'Hybridity or Humanitarianism?' (or a subhead on 'Ethno/dialogic Encounters') read almost as a caricature of post-modern jargon. Some of her writing is terribly opaque, to wit, a sentence that 'the "affective self" underlies discussion of the possessive individual in a manner that demands recognition' (p. 181), or a comment that nostalgia 'surpassed direct valorization of nationalist sentiment' (p. 190). There are omissions in the nevertheless long bibliography--Bullard, for instance, does not seem to know Jean-François Baré's work on *'le malentendu pacifique'* though she talks about misunderstandings between early European arrivals and Kanaks. Nor does she cite Colin Forster's book on the debate on whether and how the French should repeat the British experiment of penal colonies in the Antipodes, which has interesting insights into French penal theory in the nineteenth century.

There are good parts to this book--in particular, Bullard's chapter on the torture of Communards by French guards, a reminder that in the nineteenth century and later, violent treatment of rebels, whether French or 'native,' was a constant of the colonial system. She brings to light a number of little known but interesting writings. She makes good points on such issues as the 'fear the French sometimes expressed of the New Caledonian landscape' (p. 137). However, the book remains a disappointing and convoluted account, intent on deploying a particular methodology but failing to make a convincing case for its hypothesis.

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