THE Beneficiary

BRUCE ROBBINS

THE BENEFICIARY

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This book is dedicated to
the memory of my son,
Andreas Morris Robbins
(1989–2014).

There were no borders to his tenderness.

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CONTENTS

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This is a short book, but it has taken a long time to write, and I have been the beneficiary of more friends and colleagues than I can possibly name here. For memorable moments of insight, interrogation, and incredulity, I am especially grateful to Amanda Anderson, Jonathan Arac, Paul Bove, Stefan Collini, Richard Dienst, Simon During, Ken Hirschkop, Ronald Judy, Dominick LaCapra, Tina Lupton, Edward Mendelson, David Palumbo-Liu, Martin Puchner, Nikil Saval, Helen Small, Gayatri Spivak, Nirvana Tanoukhi, Katie Trumpener, Jeffrey Williams, and Robert Young. No matter how hard the times, Laura Kipnis, John McClure, and Jim Livingston have just kept on offering me emotional and intellectual sustenance. The project has benefitted more than it deserves from the signature creativity and intellectual generosity of Bonnie Honig; her friends will know what I mean. Given the impediments and distractions, I'm not sure this book would exist at all without the unearthly kindness and psychologically astute

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INTRODUCTION

In a secret State Department memo of 1948, George F. Kennan wrote, "We have about 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its population. . . . In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity."[1] It is remarkable that Kennan's statement had to be kept secret and, when it was ultimately leaked, was considered a scandal. How did it come to look like something that could not be publicly admitted? One might have expected that Americans would *want* America to enjoy as high a proportion of the world's wealth as possible.

The anticipated awkwardness might be merely practical, as it seems to be for Kennan. If the rising tide that lifts all boats turns out to be a misleading figure for the global future, as it has been for the past, envy and resentment are to be expected. In that case, passengers on a well-provisioned tourist

ship (to adapt the metaphor) might well worry about going ashore among the stranded and undernourished natives. But the awkwardness may also be moral. It may be that a sizeable demographic has come to assume that no country, including their own, deserves to be disproportionately richer than other countries. The idea of such a moral norm is more than a little mysterious—where would it possibly have come from?—and seriously counterintuitive, given how much howling xenophobia currently buffets the nations of Europe as well as (especially since the election of Donald Trump in November 2016) the American public sphere. And yet its existence seems the most plausible explanation of why people would be embarrassed, whether by the "position of disparity" itself or by Kennan's frank recommendation that the United States do all in its power to maintain it.

I take this embarrassment as suggesting that there is more cosmopolitanism out there than one might have suspected, and cosmopolitanism in a stronger than usual sense. Being nice to people who come from elsewhere is, well, nice, but it would mean more if we could look critically at our own nation from a viewpoint that includes other viewpoints, judging it by a standard that acknowledges that the well-being of the rest of humanity is a norm for us, including its economic well-being. The fact that so many people were embarrassed seems to imply that this more demanding sense of cosmopolitanism is not just an abstract ideal but an actual, substantial, perhaps even measurable influence on collective feeling.

If so, one would like to know what history could account for such a norm and, morally speaking, what sense we should make of it. These are the two questions I pose in what follows. I will not pursue all the promising answers, which include various forms of egalitarianism—revolutionary and reformist—and religious as well as secular modes of thought. I will start with statistics like Kennan's, though statistics don't answer these questions either. The suggestion that the United States or the "developed" world enjoys a disproportionate share of the world's resources has been made innumerable times in innumerable numerical permutations. "The average rates at which people consume resources like oil and metals, and produce wastes like plastic and greenhouse gases," Jared Diamond writes, "are about 32 times higher in North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australia than they are in the developing world. . . . With 10 times the population of Kenya, the United States consumes 320 times more resources than Kenya does."[2] The

official statistics on world hunger are comparable. When you are informed that, unpleasant as they are, these numbers have been systematically low-balled, it hardly matters.[3] You get the point. But your eyes are likely to glaze over. The statistics don't shape themselves spontaneously into a narratable history or a practicable moral. Like a picture that needs a caption, they cry out for some sort of story or argument. It is an excellent thing that they circulate, and circulate widely, but it was not by such numerical means that people arrived at the cosmopolitan wisdom they possess, such as it is, and it is not by producing more such statistics that we will arrive at the greater wisdom we need so as to negotiate a more suitable place for ourselves in a global order that, morally speaking, does not seem very orderly.

This book does not set itself up as a source of reliable moral guidance—in fact it offers precious little moral guidance except perhaps for the idea that charity is no solution and that, if you do want to make yourself feel better by means of philanthropic giving, you would do well to supplement it with some reasoned form of political engagement. What the book tries to do is to tell a story that the numbers themselves cannot provide. If you are wondering how people in the prosperous West began to feel uncomfortable about their "position of disparity" vis-à-vis the less prosperous Rest, one obvious place to look is the history of humanitarianism. *The Beneficiary* proposes a revisionist view of that history. Rather than focusing on the disparity itself, with its appeal to empathy and abstract fairness but also, perhaps, to national or civilizational pride, the book focuses on a somewhat more rarefied feeling: that your fate is *causally linked*, however obscurely, with the fates of distant and sometimes suffering others.[4] The idea that I am causally responsible for someone's suffering appeals to something in me that is stronger than fairness or empathy. Causal responsibility is of course more than Kennan himself acknowledges, and it is also more than humanitarianism can afford to coax out of its donor base. It dictates the telling of a different story, though traces of that story can be detected in some of humanitarianism's best-known texts.

Consider what may be the most discussed passage in what would soon coalesce into a humanitarian canon: the Chinese earthquake in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. After hearing news of the death of hundreds of thousands in a terrible earthquake in China, a European gentleman of refined feeling would no doubt feel sympathy and reflect profoundly but,

Smith notoriously predicted, would also sleep as soundly that night as if he had heard no news at all. The same person would not sleep a wink, however, if told he would lose his own little finger the next day.

Smith's example seems irrefutable. Which of us is not fundamentally self-interested or selfish—Smith's preferred term is not "selfishness" but "self-love"—in the sense Smith so memorably isolates? There is much and ever-increasing insomnia in the world, but the sufferings of distant others are probably not among its primary causes.

Against self-love, Smith and the emergent humanitarianism of the period appealed to a disinterested sense of common humanity. But a disinterested sense of common humanity was not the only force pushing in the other direction. Even during Smith's lifetime, when the news of an earthquake in China would have taken months to get to Europe and it was thus impossible to imagine anyone but fellow Chinese helping Chinese earthquake victims in distress, the Europeans Smith was addressing were not in fact disinterested spectators of suffering in China. They were causally connected to China. Smith was a tea drinker. His habit of drinking tea in Scotland did not initially depend on the coerced importation of opium by Britain into China, where the tea was grown, but during his lifetime the imports and the coercion were steadily growing. The social consequences of the opium dumping were comparable to an earthquake (Smith elsewhere used the analogy to describe British colonial policy in Asia). In this sense, Smith's supposedly impartial spectator could be considered an interested party. He was a beneficiary of the suffering he thought he was merely observing from afar.

This is a kind of perception that has become familiar, often in postcolonial settings. Take for example a brief passage in Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Lucy* in which Lucy is taken to see "an old mansion in ruins, formerly the home of a man who had made a great deal of money in the part of the world that I was from, in the sugar industry. I did not know this man, but if he hadn't been already dead I would have wished him so" (129). The sentence says that the house came from the profits of the sugar industry, that the profits of the sugar industry came from slavery, and that we must learn to see slavery, sometimes, when we look at houses, impolite as that may seem. One might think such moments were impossible until very recently. As I will show, they have a long and interesting history. The material connec-

tions lurking behind humanitarian reflections were not invisible to Adam Smith's eighteenth century. This was the era when abolitionism arose and began its slow march toward victory. Abolitionists made use of campaigns for the boycott of sugar from plantations that exploited slave labor. The iconic argument was that when you sweetened your tea, you were doing so with the blood of the slaves who cultivated the sugar cane. Thus every cup of tea became a carrier of potential political awareness. (The genre is of course still flourishing, and not just in campaigns against sweatshop labor: "The average American is responsible, through his/her greenhouse gas emissions, for the suffering and/or deaths of one or two future people.")[5] The century in which humanitarianism emerged also bristled with consciousness of how commodities newly enjoyed at home depended on coercion, violence, or mere unpleasantness elsewhere.[6] Interesting as the detached, impartial spectator may be, equally interesting, surely, is the fact that it was born along with its opposite number, the beneficiary. Both have a history, but only one of those histories is well known.

The word "beneficiary" smacks of the courtroom. It's not a word I would go out of my way to choose as a self-description. I offer it here anyway despite or perhaps because of its gracelessness, which helps us see ourselves, as we deserve, in an estranged and uncomfortable way. According to the dictionary, a beneficiary is one who derives advantage, as when one receives an inheritance from a will or compensation from an insurance policy. Older meanings involved holding land by feudal right, holding an ecclesiastical living, or simply receiving gifts from someone. Intriguingly, none of these meanings suggests that what you receive as a beneficiary is in fair exchange for services rendered or indeed recompenses you in any way for anything. The older senses thus catch a nuance of amorality that's just right: you are rewarded by an impersonal structure, legal or bureaucratic, that doesn't need or want to know anything about you except that you happen to be in the right place at the right time. What you might deserve as a person has nothing to do with it.

When I use the word, I am almost always referring to the subcategory of the *well-intentioned* beneficiary: the relatively privileged person in the metropolitan center who contemplates her or his unequal relations with persons at the less-prosperous periphery and feels or fears that in some way their fates are linked. The beneficiary is the main character of this book.

Still, I do not promise a colorful or psychologically realistic portrait. The term is really only a placeholder, a way of personalizing a viewpoint on the world that is neither quite humanitarian nor quite political and that needs a new and better name. I am not really interested in exploring the subjectivity of such a person—for example, feelings of "liberal guilt," though in such an argument the subject of guilt can hardly be avoided. To make the beneficiary a kind of character is really only a way of recognizing that in becoming connected the world has also become divided—divided between haves and have-nots—and that its much-acclaimed interconnectedness has brought with it causal and therefore moral relationships whose meanings and even existence remain puzzling and obscure.

Who is a beneficiary? You are, probably. If you had not benefitted from some ambitious higher education, it seems unlikely that you would be dipping into a book with so earnest and unpromising a title as this one. The education that has prepared you to read this paragraph may not guarantee much in terms of job opportunities, income, or security, but on the global scale (the scale of global economic statistics with which I began) it makes you one of the privileged. I will not ask any intrusive questions about where the money for your education came from; there are rules of politeness surrounding questions about income, which will be touched on below. But I will assume that from the perspective of the planet as a whole, such an education remains a scarce commodity and a rare privilege. You are both well intentioned and, I would guess, relatively well informed. You have heard, for example, about the suicides at Foxconn and perhaps also about the anti-suicide nets that were subsequently installed.[7] You were glad to find out that after the rash of suicides and suicide attempts, wages were raised, at least somewhat. But you have an uneasy sense that the silicon chips inside all your suddenly indispensable devices are still manufactured in circumstances so harsh and toxic that for the workers who make them, suicide does not seem an unreasonable option. As a person of goodwill, you are not pleased to find yourself stuck in this self-conscious dependency on bad working conditions. When you say ruefully, to yourself or to others, that our beautiful iPhones and iPads wouldn't exist without low-paid and overworked Chinese workers, you are speaking the discourse of the beneficiary.

In its pure form, the discourse of the beneficiary refers to something between a recognition of global economic injustice and a denunciation of it. It

does so in a range of tonalities, not all of them political, some perhaps more rueful than indignant, that share two characteristics: (1) they are addressed to beneficiaries of that injustice, not to its victims, and (2) they are spoken by a fellow beneficiary. (Rule #1 can sometimes be broken; to my knowledge rule #2 cannot.) Each of these defining elements escapes from direct political speech as we usually recognize it and indeed seems to frustrate political engagement. Imagine trying to organize a political movement or demonstration by pointing out an injustice and then appealing not to its victims but to those who *benefit* from that injustice. (Well, yes, the environmental movement does something like that, but *injustice*—the fact that some suffer more from climate change and others suffer less—has never been its central theme.) The discourse of the beneficiary excludes an immense number of possible statements that here and now might seem politically more urgent and more valuable. And yet it would be hard to say that the statements it enables are politically valueless. It would not be wasted breath if, say, a northern European were to repeat in northern Europe what Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras said shortly before his election in 2015: "The deficits of the South are at the same time the surpluses of the North."[8] This is an example of the discourse of the beneficiary. If enough people were to say such things, the result could be a lifting of austerity policies that have damaged and destroyed a statistically significant number of lives. It's not an uncommon way of speaking, but to my knowledge it has never been named or analyzed.

As I was finishing this book, I discovered that the word "beneficiary" had been picked up and reflected on very usefully by Robert Meister in his 2011 volume *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights*.[9] In situations of transitional justice such as truth and reconciliation commissions, Meister argues, there has been too much focus on victims and perpetrators and not enough on so-called bystanders. Many of these bystanders would be more accurately described, he says, as "structural beneficiaries," that is, "those who received material and social advantage from the old regime and whose continuing well-being in the new order could not have withstood the victory of unreconciled victims" (26). That victory would have meant a redistribution of material rewards. Redistribution is the real issue; discussions of impunity and disclosure are largely distractions from it. His is of course not just an argument about tyrannies that have recently fallen, or for that matter about

the past. It also raises the standard by which we judge the regimes we now live under: "No evil can be truly past as long as its beneficiaries continue to profit from it" (30).

Meister is brilliant on the beneficiary's psychology, with its peculiar modes of unconsciousness and self-reproach, and equally brilliant in pushing his argument toward innovative and practical outcomes—notably, a legal rephrasing of claims for "reparations" not in terms of what victims are owed but in terms of what beneficiaries ought to be obliged to pay. My argument has no comparably precise target or payoff. In order to take that extra step, it would have to jump forward to matters on which I lack the necessary expertise, such as transnational political movements and nongovernmental organizations. In general I am a supporter, but here I will have nothing of significance to add. To my mind, it remains a minor miracle that the great powers ever ceded any sovereignty at all to the United Nations. The fact that the UN system has thus far not acted more effectively can be interpreted, with some generosity, as a local historical phenomenon, compounded of the pressures of the Cold War and the neoliberal hegemony that took over when the Cold War ended. To me, it is not an eternal or essential truth about the system. A democratic reform of the Security Council, for example, would make that form of collective transnational agency suddenly look much more plausible. But to say this is only the very beginning of a long conversation about how a more just redistribution of global resources might one day be achieved. Don't expect to find much of that conversation here.

If it's true, as Meister suggests, that "no evil can be truly past as long as its beneficiaries continue to profit from it," then some people will want to have nothing to do with the subject. They will feel, and with some justification, that if people alive today are to be held responsible for terrible deeds putatively committed by their very distant ancestors, the chain of causality is being stretched too thin and the result will be purity crusades that have no natural endpoint and that will be less likely to remedy injustices than to commit further ones. If the discourse of the beneficiary were understood to recommend fresh inquiry into whether the Jews killed Christ or to demand reparations for the descendants of those sacrificed by the Incas, I too would avoid it.[10] Important as they are to the logic of the beneficiary, questions of ethics in relation to the passage of time will not be central to this book.[11]

My subject here is common sense about economic equality at the global

scale. I am still a bit surprised that this common sense has developed far enough to allow Meister and me, among others, to take it for granted. But I think there are many of us who do, most of us not individual perpetrators of atrocity. If in a sense all of us are sinners, I'm not sure that "perpetrator" is the most useful category in which to put us. One does not have to be a saint to recognize the claims of global justice, or even to do something in response to those claims, when people make them, as they do, by means of strikes, suicides, protests, and appeals. The fact that a certain selfishness or self-love is unlikely to disappear any time soon does not mean that economic equality is just a pipe dream or that "abolishing a part of yourself" (George Orwell's phrase) cannot possibly be in the cards. Rather than associating the beneficiary with what Meister calls "evil," I see a certain potential in the beneficiary's pained perception of a causal relationship between her or his advantages and someone else's suffering. The category also helps me see things we have been missing in writers like Orwell, Jamaica Kincaid, Wallace Shawn, Jean-Paul Sartre, Virginia Woolf, John Berger, and Naomi Klein.

Orwell is my best example of the beneficiary and the figure to whom I return most frequently. From my perspective, Orwell is less a figure of the Cold War, as he has so often been presented, than a creatively cosmopolitan voice grappling with dilemmas of global economic justice that the Cold War obscured and that did not come into their own until the antisweatshop movement that followed it—until Orwell had found his worthiest inheritor, I would argue, in Naomi Klein. "Under the capitalist system," Orwell wrote pungently in 1937, "in order that England may live in comparative comfort, a hundred million Indians must live on the verge of starvation—an evil state of affairs, but you acquiesce in it every time you step into a taxi or eat a plate of strawberries and cream."[12] Orwell makes the relation between prosperity here and hunger there not just a shameful incongruity—the sort of thing that might figure in a humanitarian appeal—but an illustration of implacable economic causality. And he brings it home by talking about what we eat.

This is not to say that writing of this sort counts unambiguously as political speech. Political speech is usually seen as addressing the victims of an injustice, who might be expected to rise up against it, and exhorting them to take action. As I've said, the discourse of the beneficiary addresses itself primarily, perhaps even exclusively, to those who benefit from the injustice,

who therefore might naturally be expected *not* to rise up against it. Yet it assumes that those who benefit from it are nonetheless capable of rising up against it—for example, by campaigns for ethical consumption that try to enlist prosperous First World consumers on behalf of much less prosperous Third World producers. Humanitarianism's seemingly apolitical disinterestedness therefore comes back as a factor that a transnational politics must somehow integrate into itself.

Perhaps I give people like Orwell and Klein, who point the way to that integration, too much credit. I certainly don't rush to complain, as I might, that nonbeneficiaries are being excluded or spoken over when they take up a subsidiary place in Orwell's or Klein's acts of imagination, imagination that comes "from above" as well as from afar. "From below" remains the going mantra. But the process of global democratization, I would maintain, cannot afford to do without the input of those who are empowered (that is, who *are* beneficiaries) and yet who also dissent from and even denounce the system that empowers them. This is what I called, in *Perpetual War: Cosmopolitanism from the Viewpoint of Violence* (2012), the volume to which this is a sequel, the paradox of empowered dissent. By focusing here on the beneficiary, I am picking up this paradox again, but this time trying to make sense of it as a peculiarly transnational phenomenon, characteristic of a discourse whose ambition is to cross the boundaries of the nation-state and find or invent a politics in a zone where many observers judge politics properly speaking to be nonexistent or even inconceivable.

Taking its cue from Larissa MacFarquhar's extraordinary book *Strangers Drowning* (2015), chapter 1, "The Starving Child," enters into an argument with the utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer, whose "effective altruism" inspired a number of MacFarquhar's do-gooders. Singer offers a child drowning in a shallow pond as a model of the moral obligation incumbent on the distant, well-fed observer of the hungry. His inspiration came from the 1971 famine in Bangladesh. Paying attention to the historical circumstances of that famine, I argue, points toward a better though also a more strenuous model of moral obligation than Singer's and thus also to an alternative to the humanitarian paradigm generally.

Chapter 2, "You Acquiesce In It: George Orwell on the System," reflects on Orwell's idea of what that system is and on the ethical consequences of inhabiting it. If he had not been so sure that we do inhabit a "system,"

Orwell might not have been able to moralize about the consequences that follow from our ways of life for distant others. Systems dilute individual responsibility, but they also create it. Are we sure we live in one, or on one? There is of course controversy over whether the structures, networks, or operations of power (the list of possible nouns might be extended) can be properly summed up in the synthetic or totalizing concept of system. Chapter 2 brings theorists of global inequality such as Immanuel Wallerstein and Branko Milanović into a debate which is also a history. If the beneficiary did not spring into sudden existence with the post–World War II phase of globalization or the austerity program imposed by European financial institutions on Greece, it's because system too, I argue, goes back further in time. George Eliot's investment in Indian railways helps illustrate the growing ethical force of knowingly inhabiting a global system. We are accustomed to thinking that gross simplifications between "us" and "them" must be denounced, as Edward Said denounced "Orientalism." But what if it is just such a gross simplification that the system imposes? In that case, would fine-grained detail and nuance really be the necessary correctives? The tormented use of the pronoun "you" that Orwell shares with Jamaica Kincaid is one piece of evidence, I suggest, that we remain trapped in an economic Orientalism. But it is also evidence of the perceptions this entrapment has the power to generate.

Chapter 3, "A Short History of Commodity Recognition," links Orwell's version of common sense to an unlikely source: global capitalism itself, as described in its radiant multinational sublimity by enthusiasts from Adam Smith to Thomas Friedman. How did capitalism's miraculous interconnectedness get associated with moral scandal? My answer begins with mercantilist misogyny, which blames women for luxurious consumption and, in a classic dialectical twist, thereby empowers them to link their everyday lives with political realities far away. The chapter takes the commodity recognition scene forward to Virginia Woolf and then back to Adam Smith, whose Chinese earthquake, under close inspection, comes to look like something other than the primal scene of humanitarianism it has been taken to be.

Chapter 4, "The Nation-State as Agent of Cosmopolitanism," adds a crucial stage to the historical argument of the previous chapter. In *Upward Mobility and the Common Good* (2007) I talked about the presuppositions that had to arise in order for the welfare state to come into being.[13] That

argument turns out to be crucial here as well. You cannot see anything as wrong unless and until you can see or at least sense that it can be otherwise. The greatest obstacle to moral critique is the idea that, as Margaret Thatcher insisted, "there is no alternative." The welfare state proved that an alternative does exist. Jacques Rancière, in a critique of Sartre and French solidarity with Algerian national liberation, suggests that there is no genuine politics outside the territory of the nation-state. I answer with a double argument: on the one hand, yes, there can be politics outside national borders, but on the other hand, Rancière is right to play up the crucial role of the state. Only the rise of the modern nation-state and in particular the welfare state made it possible for a moral critique of global economic inequality to achieve anything like its present form. My example, developed at some length, comes from the period when Orwell worked for the British Ministry of Information during World War II.

Chapter 5, "Naomi Klein's Love Story," takes off from Larissa MacFarquhar's profile of Klein in the *New Yorker*, a piece in which she seems to defend Klein in advance against being dismissed as one of the do-gooders who would later appear in *Strangers Drowning*. Following Klein's career from *No Logo* (2000) to *This Changes Everything* (2015) and teasing out from it themes of disembodiment and desire, the chapter reflects on Klein's investment in infrastructure (which is not a consumer commodity) as well as the coincidence that leads her, like Orwell, to the historical moment of rationing during World War II. It argues that Klein's take on climate change points her readers toward what might be called, a bit provocatively, global justice for selfish people. And it concludes by showing how issues of economic redistribution on the global scale, literally unspeakable in terms of anyone's domestic political agenda, hide out under "other business" like remittances and refugees.

Chapter 6, "Life Will Win," takes up the idea, also borrowed from MacFarquhar, that what the application of ethics to global economic inequality is up against is finally nothing less than "life" itself. Imagining a dialogue between Naomi Klein and antiutilitarian philosophers such as Bernard Williams, especially those who appeal (as Williams does) to Nietzsche, I suggest that life is not on only one side of the issue. It gives me a certain satisfaction to draw toward the conclusion on such a flagrantly overambitious topic by discussing the meaning of life.

The conclusion, "You Can't Handle the Truth," reads moments from Aaron Sorkin's script for the film *A Few Good Men* and Ari Shavit's account of a 1948 massacre of Palestinians in *My Promised Land*, both of them about recognizing civilian debts to military violence, in order to distinguish the discourse of the beneficiary (as it is interpreted throughout the book) from the more familiar and intuitive scenario in which people feel themselves the beneficiaries of acts committed in a more or less distant past, as in discussions of "white privilege." The book ends by suggesting how various and intriguing the instances of beneficiary thinking are that I did not have space or energy to draw into this argument, and what my collection of unexpected global insights might mean for a more strenuous, more demanding, and more popular cosmopolitanism.

Readers will perhaps consider this whole enterprise a bit quixotic, given the surge of "America first" nationalism that helped propel Donald Trump into the White House. The bigger news of the election campaign, it seems to me, including Bernie Sanders's role in it, is the recognition on the part of large numbers of voters that globalization has not been good to them. In a sense, as the mainstream economists did not fail to point out, it *has* been good to them. If you compare their lives with those of workers on the shop floor of Bangladeshi shoe factories or Chinese chip makers, most Americans would have to count as beneficiaries of globalization. (No one is asking how all this looks to the Chinese and Bangladeshi workers.) But that is not how it feels. Globalization has come to feel obscurely unfair. And this feeling, now widespread in the metropolitan core, seems destined to devour the nationalism that is its current manifestation and to move on to the systemic relations of core and periphery that can make better sense of it.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 On the origin and history of the Kennan line, see d'Aymery, "Context and Accuracy."
2 Diamond, "What's Your Consumption Factor?"
3 See Caparrós, "Counting the Hungry."
4 For an example of an appeal to pride, consider a passage found early in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*: "If we examine, I say, all these things, and consider what a variety of labour is employed about each of them, we shall be sensible that without the assistance and cooperation of many thousands, the very meanest person in a civilized country could not be provided, even according to, what we very falsely imagine, the easy and simple manner in which he is commonly accommodated. Compared, indeed, with the more extravagant luxury of the great, his accommodation [Smith means "level of comfort"] must no doubt appear extremely simple and easy; and yet it may be true, perhaps, that the accommodation of an European prince does not always so much exceed that of an industrious and

frugal peasant, as the accommodation of the latter exceeds that of many an African king, the absolute master of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages" (13). The explicit meaning of this last sentence is that a European peasant is more prosperous than an African king, and that there is a greater difference between the prosperity of European peasant and African king than between a European prince and a European peasant. Smith's intention seems to be to preempt the grievances of the European poor as they resentfully contemplate "the extravagant luxury of the great" by offering them the flattering picture of their putative economic superiority to African kings. This is a subgenre of what I will be calling the discourse of the beneficiary.

5 Dale Jamieson quotes John Nolt, 6.

6 Valuable commentary on the eighteenth century's new awareness of causal chains extending across vast distances comes from Laqueur, "Bodies, Details."

7 See, for example, Charles Isherwood, "Moral Issues behind iPhone and Its Makers," *New York Times*, October 17, 2011.

8 Žižek and Horvat, *What Does Europe Want?*, 170.

9 "From the standpoint of creating an *effective* transitional regime, bystanders are beneficiaries who are yet to be blamed and beneficiaries are bystanders who are yet to be absolved" (Meister, *After Evil*, 28).

10 I like to imagine a discussion of the loss of American jobs that have been shipped overseas in which someone asked how Americans got those jobs in the first place and in particular whether someone else possessed them at the time, someone (for example, steelworkers somewhere in Europe) who might have complained with equal justice that their jobs had been "stolen."

11 I have written elsewhere about the larger issue that Meister raises under the heading of "reparations": namely, how feeling oneself a beneficiary of past violence can lead one's judgments of the present astray. The book I am currently writing, on the literary history of atrocity, addresses questions of ethics and temporality that are raised below, especially in the conclusion, but that I leave undeveloped.

12 Orwell, *Road to Wigan Pier*, 140.

13 Samuel Fleischacker, in his *A Short History of Distributive Justice*, notes how slow the world was to arrive at the moral conviction that poverty is harmful and "that people do not deserve their socioeconomic place" (116) and how many presuppositions had to change in order for this to happen even on the domestic scale.

CHAPTER 1. THE STARVING CHILD

1 Vernon, *Hunger*, 275.

2 It would be useless for me to deny that this project is motivated by the same kinds of concerns as Singer's. I am grateful to Singer and his philosophical companions even if I try to dispute the ethical bases of effective altruism. My double premise here is (1) that it's not good for the cause of global economic justice for utilitarians to have a monopoly on it, and (2) that Singer needs to be argued with by people,