



EDITED BY

GRAHAM
HUGGAN

≡ The Oxford Handbook of
**POSTCOLONIAL
STUDIES**

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GRAHAM HUGGAN

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GRAHAM HUGGAN

POSTCOLONIALISM AND REVOLUTION

Postcolonial criticism usually ends up running behind the history it sometimes attempts to anticipate. In 2011, as this volume was finally beginning to pick up pace, it was overtaken by the cascading series of events now popularly known as the ‘Arab Spring’ as these rushed in to claim global media attention. Although some journalists wasted no time in categorizing the successive uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere as ‘spontaneous [outbreaks], contagious and unforeseen ... apparently impossible beforehand [but] inevitable afterwards’ (Black 2012: vii), less excitable accounts emphasized that there had been numerous antecedents and that the uprisings might best be seen within a larger historical pattern of national and transnational social movements registering the unfinished struggle against ‘liberalized autocracy’ in the Arab world (for a journalistic selection, see Manhire 2012; for historical context, also Brumberg 2002; El-Mahdi 2009; McAdam et al. 2001). Unsurprisingly, the events of the ‘Arab Spring’ were soon picked up by postcolonial critics, most of whom continued—problematically perhaps—to see their field as being closely attuned to worldwide liberation movements (see for example Al-Rahim 2011; Bamyeh 2011; Rooney 2011; for an earlier critique of the relationship between postcolonial and liberation theory, see also Parry 2004). As one of the most prominent among them, the UK-based literary/cultural critic Caroline Rooney remarked of unfolding events in Egypt, a ‘postcolonial approach [generally] attempts to engage with questions of national self-determination through attending to the cultural forms in which a nation expresses itself, reflects on itself and critiques itself’ (2011: 373)—questions raised by the coming to consciousness, not so much of the people as of Arab and western leaders, who were ‘abruptly awakened themselves by those who [had been] awake all along, maintaining a vigilance for the right moment to seize’ (373). National consciousness aside, Rooney’s approach is best characterized as Saidean rather than Fanonian. Hence her view that the events of the ‘Arab Spring’ have powerfully combined to challenge the ‘civilizationist’ narrative of Islamic threat and the lazy association of a still-Orientalized Middle East with fundamentalism and the religiously grounded rejection of modernity; and hence her insistence that what is really at stake is ‘the ongoing progressive struggle [to make] Egyptian modernity possible’ and for Egyptians to be able to negotiate that modernity in their own terms (372; see also the essays by Hazbun and Mignolo in Parts II and I of this volume).

At the same time, the events of the ‘Arab Spring’ invited a re-reckoning of the view, still common among Marxist exponents in the field, that postcolonial criticism had long since turned its back on its liberationist origins, a state of affairs generally attributed to the poststructuralist ‘turn’ in the 1980s with which postcolonial studies was—depending on perspective—either summarily or presumptuously identified (for critical accounts of the ‘turn’ and its effect on postcolonial studies, see Brennan 2007; Lazarus 2011; Parry 2004; see also Part II of this volume). This view, however intemperately expressed, needs to be taken seriously. In a recent, characteristically passionate iteration in his book *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (2011), Neil Lazarus decries the ‘anti-anti-liberationist’ tendencies of postcolonial criticism, which may have succeeded in positioning itself against ingrained US anti-liberationism, but is still given to disavow liberationist discourse itself as historically anachronistic (10; see also Scott 2004 below). As Lazarus suggests, the empowering *revolutionary* vocabulary that once animated a generation of anti-colonial activists—Cabral, Césaire, Fanon—has fallen into disuse, and a diluted *revisionist* vocabulary has taken its place that responds to prevailing political sentiments. These sentiments, which Lazarus jointly links to the disappointments of the Bandung era, the collapse of Soviet communism, and the ascendancy of global neoliberalism, have had the effect of putting revolutionary anti-imperialism in the shade despite its obvious and enduring relevance to ‘the intensification of imperialist social relations in the times and spaces of the [contemporary] postcolonial world’ (17; see also Lazarus in this volume).

Although Lazarus does not mention him, the anthropologist David Scott provides a particularly good example of this revisionist impulse. Scott’s coruscating account of the Haitian Revolution of 1797–1804, *Conscripts of Modernity* (2004), concerns itself with ‘our [uncertain] present after the [irreparable] collapse of the social and political hopes that went into the anticolonial imagining and postcolonial making of national sovereignties’ (1). The postcolonial present, says Scott, is a present ‘after Bandung’: it reflects the irreversible demise of the national-liberationist ideologies that flourished during the decolonization decades. Scott’s book draws primarily on C. L. R. James’s magisterial 1958 account of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*, which he legitimately sees as ‘one of the great inaugural texts of the discourse of anticolonialism’, just as the Revolution itself, encompassing ‘the [great] revolutionary story of the self-emancipation of New World slaves’, was one of the defining socio-political events in the making of the modern world (9; for further reflections on James, see also Featherstone in this volume). However, Scott then startlingly proceeds to turn the tables on conventional readings of James’s text as a ‘vindicationist narrative of revolutionary overcoming’; instead, seen from the vantage point of the present, *The Black Jacobins*, and in particular the story of its Romantic revolutionary hero Toussaint L’Ouverture, is dramatically reconfigured as a critical-revisionist account of our ‘tragic’ postcolonial times (14). For Scott, *revolution*, which once defined the ‘very horizon of radical oppositional politics and haunted the imagination of modern intellectuals’, has lost its force and has become ‘enfeebled [as a] salient category in our oppositional political vocabulary’ (65). What is left is *revisionism*, a more-or-less radical interpretative strategy that allows Scott to reread James’s work in light of the ‘tragedy of colonial enlightenment’ in whose wake we westerners currently

live, and in whose shadow we plaintively acknowledge that ‘the critical languages in which we [previously] wagered our moral vision and political hope (including the languages of black emancipation and postcolonial critique) are no longer commensurate with the world they were meant to understand, engage, and overcome’ (210).

The relationship between revolution and revisionism in Scott’s text is made clear in an epilogue in which, in the last and perhaps most surprising of his moves, he compares James’s largely celebratory view of the Haitian Revolution with the more sceptical position taken towards revolutions in general by the political philosopher Hannah Arendt. Scott’s juxtaposition of James and Arendt is surprising in other ways: Arendt’s classic 1963 study *On Revolution* is, after all, hardly notable for the attention it gives to Haiti, focusing almost exclusively as it does on the French and American revolutions as paradigmatic if markedly different examples of revolution in the modern age (1990 [1963]: 18). Both revolutions, Arendt argues, were linked sets of social and political events in which the idea of *freedom* was brought together with the idea of *novelty*. Modern revolution, in this sense, is not just about the pursuit of human freedom—the basis of all revolutions—but about the replacement of an old order by a new one: it describes the inexorably unfolding historical process by which ‘members of the vast majority of mankind, the low and the poor, all those who had always lived in darkness and subjection to whatever powers there were, should rise and become the supreme sovereigns of the land’ (40). Arendt points out, however, that most modern revolutions have conspicuously failed to provide a lasting basis for the political exercise of freedom: in sacrificing the political to the social, they have fought shy of producing the political foundations that might turn epic revolutionary struggle into the sustainable production of civil rights and liberties. Most modern revolutions—to put this another way—have been inspired by freedom but have missed the opportunity to found it; and it is this operative distinction, potentially tragic in its consequences, that Arendt sees as marking the political spirit of our times.

Scott’s approach to revolution seems uncannily similar to Arendt’s, even if he understandably stops short of endorsing her Eurocentrism. More to the point, he sees James’s work as being similarly informed both by a ‘tragic vision of freedom’ and by the compensatory recognition that the great revolutionary traditions can still be remembered and retold (2004: 214). This compensatory recognition seems unlikely to impress those—Lazarus among them—who hold to James’s revolutionary Marxism; nor, I should probably add, would it have been much likely to have impressed James himself. However, I do not think it should be mistaken for defeatism. Rather, it invites revisionism: a self-conscious revisiting of the past—including the colonial past—with a primary view to seeking inspiration from its revolutionary struggles, tempered by the secondary and sober realization that these struggles have most often failed to sustain the new social and political conditions they produced. Scott implicitly allies himself here with the political theorist Bernard Yack, whose revisionist views on revolution are part-inspired, as are his own, by the late twentieth-century collapse of Soviet communism. Yack associates a longer history of modern revolutionary thought with the teleological view that posits ‘total revolution’ as a powerful antidote to the ‘dehumanizing ethos that shapes modern society’, but ultimately finds the idea of ‘total revolution’ both illusory and nostalgic,

born out of an agonized reflection on the failure of the French Revolution to achieve its social and political goals (1992: xii, 20). What Scott objects to, as does Yack, is not the idea of revolution itself but the uncritical narrative of overcoming that accompanies it: hence their joint emphasis on revisionism as a way of returning to the inspirational beginnings of revolution without necessarily endorsing its determinate ends.

Let me be clear here: I am not trying to claim the ‘victory’ of postcolonial revisionism, tragic or otherwise, over revolutionary Marxism; nor do I agree with Scott’s dismal view that we currently live in a ‘time of postcolonial crisis in which old horizons have collapsed or evaporated and new ones have not yet taken shape’ (168). However, I also happen to disagree with the view taken by Lazarus and others that contemporary postcolonial criticism has cleared a space for itself by parting the ways with the revolutionary spirit that once drove it; and I disagree even more strongly with the view, expressed most forcefully by Benita Parry, that postcolonial criticism today is largely defined by the ‘post-turn’ tendency to ‘disown liberation discourses and practices, and indeed anti-colonialist rhetoric and organization [of all kinds]’ (2004: 75). Instead, it seems to me that the postcolonial field is torn, and has been for some time now, between competing revolutionary and revisionist impulses, and that much of the intellectual momentum it continues to generate is borne—explicitly or implicitly—out of the dialectical interaction between these. Indeed, I would go so far as to argue that the very vocabulary that Lazarus, Parry, and others want to reinstate—‘liberation,’ ‘revolution,’ ‘decolonization,’ etc.—never disappeared from the postcolonial lexicon in the first place; on the contrary, its meanings are continually renegotiated in a complex revisionist process that allows the relationship between past and present, or what Scott elegantly calls ‘the paradoxical inscription of pasts within the present,’ to be productively reassessed (2004: 169).

‘Memory’ has probably become the key term through which this process is instantiated (see Rothberg in Part III of this volume). But memory discourses, important though these are, are only part of postcolonialism’s vast, internally diversified revisionist enterprise. For if postcolonial criticism returns restlessly to the colonial past, gauging it in and for itself as well as for its multiple secretions in the present, it also critiques the teleologies that continue to inform past–present relations (Enlightenment narratives of ‘progress,’ ‘end-of-ideology’ arguments about globalization, etc.: for a thoroughgoing critique of these teleologies, see the chapters by Abeysekara and Hindess in Part IV of this volume; see also some of the essays in Part V). Similarly, postcolonial criticism reinvigorates the spirit of anti-colonial resistance—the revolutionary spirit, if you will—while simultaneously recognizing the need to modify the vocabularies that surround it. This does not mean that postcolonial criticism simply moves on, adapting itself to the trends and needs of the moment. There is a crucial difference between claiming that postcolonial studies has the capacity to generate ‘new discourses of resistance’ (Williams 2010: 88)—which seems fair enough—and blithely suggesting that the postcolonial field is now in the process of being ‘rerouted,’ breaking new conceptual ground and adjusting its sights towards ‘neocolonial imbalances’ in the contemporary globalized world (Wilson et al. 2010: 1). Opportunistic presentism, to my mind, is as much a danger to the field as unreflective historicism; and it is for this reason among several others that

postcolonial studies should be dutifully suspicious towards market-driven demands that it reinvent itself—not least because the incessant proclamation of the ‘new’, a sure sign of the intellectual branding prevalent under late capitalism, is part of a commodifying process it explicitly contests (Huggan 2001; also Brouillette 2007 and section 3 of this chapter). Rather, postcolonial criticism might do better to re-engage in the lively battle over its own intellectual and institutional origins without becoming a prisoner to self-reflexivity—a familiar if overdiagnosed problem—and without reacting, with an anger that is predictable as it is complicit, to the latest expedient announcement of its demise (Dirlik 2003; Loomba et al. 2005; Yaeger 2007). It should probably be clear by now that I think the best way for postcolonial critics to do this is to stay true to their own revisionist instincts: the crucial question remains, though, revisionism of what kind?

POSTCOLONIALISM AS CRITICAL REVISIONISM

I have been suggesting so far that while postcolonialism’s revolutionary impetus holds open a theoretical debate about beginnings—a debate Arendt sees as being synonymous with revolution—its revisionist dimensions invite the practical reconsideration of endings (e.g. the question of liberation ‘after independence’, the question of affiliation and alignment ‘after Bandung’). I want to examine this dialectical relationship further; but before I do so, a few preliminary observations on revisionism seem in order. While revisionism in its dictionary definition refers primarily to the theory or practice of revising one’s view of a previously accepted political doctrine, the term is probably most relevant to postcolonial studies in its broader historical sense.¹ Historical

¹ Historical revisionism is, it seems to me, more intrinsic to the postcolonial field than its literary counterpart, critical rereading, which—partly as an effect of the alliance between postcolonialism and postmodernism—flourished during the 1980s and 1990s, the most obvious example being Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s *The Empire Writes Back* (1989). For a while, it seemed as if postcolonial revisionism effectively meant *literary* revisionism: see Lee’s confident assertion that ‘most postcolonial projects have a common denominator: the critical rereading of texts in the Western canon that have been thought of as embodying universal and transhistorical values’ (1997: 89). There are several by now familiar problems with this view: the assumption of a more or less transparent correlation between colonialism as a ‘politico-economic reality’ and colonialism as a ‘system of cultural representation’ (Lee 1997: 89); the use of literature as historical evidence; the tendency to reinscribe binary systems (e.g. through the now virtually defunct ‘writing back’ model); and the consolidation of postcolonialism as a predominantly ‘reactive idiom’ (Suleri 1992: 21; see also Lee 1997: 109). There are reactive tendencies as well, of course, in historical revisionism: the easy view, for example, that there are ‘hegemonic’ and ‘counter-hegemonic’ forms of historical writing or—an argument sometimes used by so-called ‘anti-revisionist’ historians—that solid bodies of historical evidence can be called upon that resist or surpass ideology-driven attempts to recast them from a particular perspective. Postcolonial revisionism has not always avoided these traps, but it generally proceeds from the not unreasonable view that history is open to contending interpretations, and that such interpretations are ‘inextricably associated with political agendas and social identities’ from the start (Howe 2000: 232).

revisionism has had a bad press, and it is not hard to see the reasons. Revisionist history—it has been said often enough—is less likely to be progressive than reactionary; it is frequently accused of being biased or reductive; while, at another level, it is sometimes dismissed as tautological, i.e. all historicizing is revisionist in one way or another in so far as it takes ‘a second look at what has already been otherwise’, just as history attempts the impossible recuperation of that which is already lost (Radhakrishnan 2008: 69; see also Howe 2000).² At the same time, revisionist history is by definition quarrelsome, confrontational—qualities always likely to endear it to postcolonial scholars, whose interventionist stance on colonial history-making naturally inclines them to rub history against the grain (see Stoler and some of the other essays in Part I of this volume). Not that postcolonial revisionism is concerned with setting the record straight: it does not seek a corrective to the past so much as to trouble accepted versions of it; and it is adamant that the past, impinging as it does on the present, needs to be returned to again and again. But as the theorist R. Radhakrishnan (on whose work I am drawing here) suggests, there is a ‘double-tongued truth [in] any revisionist vision’ (2008: 75), one necessarily tied to the plurality of perspectives:

The semantics of revisionism is necessarily double, and not just in the context of the antagonistic contact zone between subjugated and dominant knowledges, but in a broader theoretical sense as well. For example, how are the specific politics of feminist revisionism or postcolonial revisionism related to the general nature of revisionism as such? What are the differences between patriarchal dominant historiography as the object of a reading or brushing against the grain and the historiography of colonialism or that of normative heterosexuality or that of racism subjected to a similar antagonistic reading? What are the specific assumptions about nature, human nature, gender, race and ethnicity, and sexuality that drive the semantics of each revisionist project under the broad syntactic umbrella called revisionism as such? (76)

These are not rhetorical questions, but they point to the potential dilemma of an infinite regress of revisionism in which the plurality of possible perspectives stretches out ad infinitum to leave what Radhakrishnan calls, loosely following Foucault, a ‘revisionist

² As Stephen Howe apologetically remarks near the beginning of an essay that paradoxically seeks to *recuperate* revisionism in the context of ultra-nationalist accounts of Irish and Israeli-Palestinian history: “Revisionism” is an awful label, politically as well as historiographically. In different contexts ... it has meant everything from people who think the English Civil War had short-term political causes rather than long-term social ones, to people who deny that Nazis murdered any Jews. It has meant maximalist or physical-force Zionists (Benjamin Netanyahu’s ideological forebears) and Dublin journalists who disliked Charles Haughey. Meanwhile all historians are in some narrower sense revisionists, challenging previous accounts and interpretations with newer ones. Whether in academic contexts or political ones, the term might well be thought meaningless’ (2000: 230). As Howe later makes clear, however, revisionism is not meaningless at all and can usefully counteract the very bias of which it is often accused; there are thus ‘good’ and ‘bad’ revisionisms, the latter of which require further revisionism—a point frequently made by postcolonial critics, two recent contexts being ‘civilizationist’ cultural analysis (Huntington) and ‘revisionist’ imperial history (Ferguson). I will come back to this point later in my discussion of the paradigmatically revisionist work of Edward Said.

politics of ongoing questions' with no discernible end in sight (76; see also Foucault 1970). Such 'open revisionism' is not necessarily a bad thing, but there is always the risk that it turn into the equivalent of a postmodern hall of mirrors in which historical truths, while rarely secure or guarantee-able, are held in permanent abeyance. As Radhakrishnan, otherwise sympathetic to this kind of poststructuralist approach, puts it in pithier language, 'is the look back towards the past necessary for the look forward into the future? [And if it is], which look towards the past is legitimate and historical, and which apocryphal and self-deluded?' (76).

Radhakrishnan turns, appropriately enough, to Fanon for support: Fanon the *revolutionary*, wedded to the cause of decolonization as a revolutionary practice—'a program of disorder ... which sets out to change the order of the world', he dramatically calls it (Fanon 1965 [1963]: 36)—but also Fanon the *revisionist*, 'both solicitous and suspicious of history', committed to mobilizing historical categories yet aware at the same time of the simultaneous elusiveness and ideological malleability of the historical past (Radhakrishnan 2008: 76). Perhaps the best way of understanding Fanon's revisionist programme, Radhakrishnan suggests, is to see it as an attempt to 'rediscover the native as the postcolonial African national' (77). Yet the 'native', as Fanon himself seems to admit, is neither the most solid nor the most reliable of categories; and the history he seeks to remake occupies equally insecure and violently contested ground (for a discussion of Fanon's 'native', see Farrier and Tuitt in this volume). Fanon's revisionism is revolutionary, we might say, in so far as it programmes an attempt to reverse the historically sanctioned structures of power on which colonialism founds itself: decolonization is not just liberation but revolution, pitting two implacable opponents against each other in a bloody struggle at the end of which—Fanon puts it in the strongest possible terms—'the last shall be first' (1965 [1963]: 37). But Fanon's revolution (which he makes clear is as much internal as external, as much psychically grounded as physically fought) is conducted at the same time in the watchful spirit of a revisionism that recognizes that there are not just contending perspectives on history but contending histories, each of which lays claim to the present; thus, while 'the native intellectual [can] repudiate the authority of colonial history, [he cannot abolish] its "given-ness"', and the project of postcolonial revisionism becomes a confrontational 'encounter with that history which is not one's own' (Radhakrishnan 2008: 78).

It is instructive here to compare Radhakrishnan's brief discussion with the more detailed analysis of Fanon to be found in Lazarus's previously mentioned book *The Postcolonial Unconscious*. This latter analysis takes up its place alongside what Lazarus calls a series of 'revisionary' readings of theorists central to postcolonial studies, with an unsurprising but understandable emphasis on Said and Fanon, the two most frequently cited 'founding figures' of the field (for different views on this, see the essays by Abeysekara and Brennan in this volume). 'Re-revisionary' is more appropriate in so far as Lazarus is eager to rebut poststructuralist readings of both figures in the name of a postmodernism-inspired 'postcolonialism' he relentlessly opposes. The ferocity of Lazarus's attack is understandable; for at stake in his view is nothing less than a 'dispute or battle over postcolonial meaning' in which 'Said' and 'Fanon' feature as catalytic agents for the transformative understanding of the postcolonial field (2011: 184).

As should already be apparent, Lazarus is less interested than Radhakrishnan in uncovering the revisionist tendencies embedded within Fanon's revolutionary thinking, and more concerned with mapping what looks suspiciously like a corrective, Marxist-liberationist reading onto previous critical accounts of Fanon's work. This path is opened up via a patient reading of David Macey's 2000 biography, *Fanon: A Life*, itself a revisionist text that, in Lazarus's words, 'breaks open the field into which it intervenes, enforcing in the process a reconfiguration not only of its boundaries but also of its internal arrangements and relations' (2011: 162). As Lazarus explains, the biography is divided into 'two conflicting and incompatible schemas' (163). The first of these is a liberationist Third-Worldism linked to 'the upsurge of revolutionary anticolonial nationalism in the post-1945 period'; the second ensues from what Lazarus calls 'the containment and rolling back of insurgent anticolonial nationalism by the imperialist powers [especially the United States] since 1975 or so ... and the [corresponding] obsolescence of the earlier liberationist Third-Worldist ideologeme' (163; see also Lazarus in this volume). The first schema recuperates a 'revolutionary' Fanon, (although, as Macey shows, this celebratory vision needs to be complicated), while the second presents its revisionist, 'postcolonial' reverse image. In Macey's words,

[If] 'Third Worldist' readings [have] largely ignored the Fanon of *Peau noire, masques blancs* [*Black Skin, White Masks*], post-colonial readings [have concentrated] almost exclusively on that text and studiously avoided the question of violence. The Third Worldist Fanon was an apocalyptic creature; the post-colonial Fanon worries about identity politics, and often about his own sexual identity, but he is no longer angry. (2000: 28, also quoted in Lazarus 2011: 165)

As the sardonic tone of this passage makes clear, Macey has little truck with the 'post-colonial' Fanon, a confusing, self-contradictory image he sees as being almost wilfully decontextualized—caricatured even—in the blind service of poststructuralist critique (2000: 27). Lazarus latches gleefully onto Macey's peremptory dismissal of postcolonialism's revisionist assessment of Fanon as a 'deconstructive critic of (western) humanism' (Lazarus 2011: 162), reserving particular scorn for his own *bête noire*, Homi Bhabha, whose polymorphous Fanon, like Henry Louis Gates's before it, seems impossible to square 'either with Fanon's actual writings or with the trajectory of Fanon's own career' (Lazarus 2011: 166; see also Bhabha 2005; Gates 1991).

Like Macey, Lazarus sides unequivocally with the 'revolutionary' Fanon, summarizing some of the main themes of his work as follows: 'revolutionary nationalist anticolonialism, violence and counter-violence, popular political mobilisation, the relation between party and people and between proletarian and peasant classes, the role of culture and ideology in the furtherance of the struggle, and the Algerian conflict and its relevance for and relation to "African" and "Third World" liberation struggles' (Lazarus 2011: 174). Unlike Macey, however, Lazarus energetically defends the contemporary relevance of these struggles. To some extent echoing Scott, Macey suggests that Fanon, for all the inspirational quality of his rage, 'does not speak for the tragic Algeria of today' (2000: 503). 'The themes of Third World solidarity and unity,' he continues, 'of a vision

of pan-Africanism and of the liberating power of violence have not worn well. For a generation, Fanon was a prophet. He has become a witness to the process of decolonization but, whilst his discussion of racism remains valid, he has little to say about the outcome of that process' (503). Lazarus disagrees with this. As he points out, Fanon's influence—particularly his writings on nationalism and decolonization—continues to be apparent in a number of contemporary liberation struggles; and, to revisit my remarks about the 'Arab Spring' at the beginning, if postcolonial intellectuals across the Arab world and in support of recent events there have certainly read their Said, it also seems highly likely that they have read, and have reflected deeply on, their Fanon. More to the point, the general struggle against imperialism continues. As Lazarus concludes, the supposed 'new world order' of today has turned out not to be so different from the 'old' one it is often prematurely seen as supplanting (see Parts II and V of this volume); and contra Macey, he considers Fanon's committed struggle against this order to be as urgent for our times as it was for his (2011: 180–1).

It should be clear, I hope, that I am sympathetic to this; yet there are problems. For one, as Lazarus admits, the 'revolutionary' Fanon is no more transparent than the 'post-colonial' one; and for another, postcolonial criticism—despite Macey's and Lazarus's damaging portrayals of it—has been attuned to, if not necessarily persuaded by, the 'revolutionary' Fanon from the start. To return to Radhakrishnan, there is a sense in which Fanon remains theoretically suspicious of the very binary categories (colonizer/colonized, master/slave, etc.) that are most practically useful to him; this is not necessarily to turn Fanon into a deconstructive critic, but rather to acknowledge that there is a crucial link between the *practical* (revolutionary) project of smashing 'the unequal historical conditions brought into existence by binarity' and the *theoretical* (revisionist) enterprise of 'dismantling the very structure of binarity itself' (Radhakrishnan 2008: 77; see also Part III of this volume). The main problem with Macey's approach to Fanon is that it reinstalls binarity even as it seeks to question it—a problem shared by Lazarus across the seemingly unbridgeable divide in their political viewpoints. The battle over Fanon, in both cases, turns out to be one over the legitimacy of revisionism. Revisionism, in this last sense, should not be confused with either renewal or return, though it should be understood as shuttling unceasingly between these. Rather, it is about the enunciative possibility of *reclamation* as a political speech act.³ Lazarus's

³ Probably the best example of this form of critical revisionism is the dispersed (in both a geographical and methodological sense) 'rescue work' of the India-based Subaltern Studies Collective, one of whose primary aims has been to revalidate histories of peasant struggle that are often conspicuously missing from official historical accounts. One of the problems of the SSC—although, to be fair, it is a problem that is explicitly recognized by many of its members—has been the tendency to work within European historical categories. For a useful recent critique of this tendency, see Gajarawala, who sees the SSC's 'project of recovery [as helping] to build a revolutionary historical consciousness' (2011: 586), but also points out the inappropriateness of such explicitly or implicitly linear historical categories for subaltern social groups, e.g. Dalits, whose collective sense of self and of historical emplacement seems to require a different understanding of historical knowledge than that provided in the SSC's revolutionary-cum-revisionist historical accounts.

revisionary reading reclaims Fanon with a practical view towards reusing him; Macey's memorializes Fanon in Arendt's tragic sense of imaginatively reclaiming the revolutionary spirit that he once embodied and is now at significant risk of being lost.

These alternative speech acts are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, it is the dialectical interaction between them that guarantees postcolonialism's dynamic status as a self-perpetuating form of *critical revisionism*. Postcolonialism, we might then say, is a performative mode of critical revisionism, consistently directed at the colonial past and assessing its legacies for the present, but also intermittently focusing on those forms of colonialism that have surfaced more recently in the context of an increasingly globalized but incompletely decolonized world. This might add a certain methodological clarity to earlier, equally wholesale definitions of postcolonialism as 'a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the level of ex-colonial societies as well as at the level of more general global developments thought to be the after-effects of empire' (Quayson 2000: 25). But it continues to leave us with a series of crucially unanswered questions: which kinds of revisionism are to be performed within the field, and how is their legitimacy to be measured? And if postcolonialism is best seen, as Radhakrishnan and others imply, in terms of a *combination* of revisionisms, which combination works best or will this necessarily depend on what particular object or process is being studied, what particular contingencies attach to it, and what broader institutional benefits derive from a particular intellectual task? There seems little point, in this last context, in arguing that postcolonial studies lacks institutional support when there has been plenty of evidence for some time now to suggest precisely the opposite; a better question to ask is whether it retains its critical edge under institutional conditions where it has so obviously been transformed into an intellectual orthodoxy or, as Homi Bhabha has said more generally of critical theory, in circumstances marked by the constitutive tension between 'institutional containment' and 'revisionary force' (1994: 32; for more critical views of this, see Dirlik 1994 and Huggan 2001). To ask this question another way: at what point does postcolonial revisionism merely recite as it reclaims; when do its histories from below and counter-canonical readings become all too easily predictable? And can it move beyond what Lazarus calls its 'fetishization' of representation: its theoretically inflected obsession with western systems of knowledge and belief and the translation of those systems into self-consuming artefacts; its dogged insistence on tracing the lines of control and power that underlie the production of colonial and postcolonial cultural texts? (Lazarus 2011: 114)

One perfectly serviceable answer to this is that it does not need to. What registers as obsession to some will doubtless look more like engagement, even commitment, to others, and it seems legitimate to argue that the postcolonial field, while long since relinquishing its earlier, text-based claims to be 'transgressive', has retained its oppositional capacity to harness a theoretically and historically informed analysis of the shifting politics of textual representation to the situational demands of contemporary cultural critique. 'Critical consciousness', Edward Said's capacious term, still seems the best one to encapsulate this, and Said's—to my mind—remains the most convincing attempt to

account for postcolonialism as a committed mode of revisionist knowledge, both rigorously self-aware and resolutely adversarial, that dedicates itself to the service of human freedom in the context of a world historically conditioned by colonial relations of power. Whether it is possible to square this kind of commitment with revolutionary solidarity is another matter. Indeed, as Said would repeatedly insist throughout his work, especially in his reflections on the oppositional role of the intellectual, critical consciousness should not be confused with solidarity. Thus, despite his lifelong commitment to the Palestinian cause, he always argued that, as an independent intellectual, it was his duty to forswear the kind of blind loyalty to liberationist causes that might short-circuit critical thinking. Intellectual support for liberation struggles was, he repeatedly affirmed, vitally necessary. But the following passage (from *Representations of the Intellectual*) is typical for the caveat it adds to this:

Loyalty to [an oppressed] group's fight for survival cannot draw in the intellectual so far as to narcotize the critical sense, or reduce its imperatives, which are always to go beyond survival to questions of political liberation, to critiques of the leadership, to presenting alternatives that are too often marginalized or pushed aside as irrelevant to the main battle at hand. (1994: 41)

Clearer still is this passage, from an essay originally published in *The London Review of Books* and later included in the 1999 collection *Letters in Transit*:

For myself, I have been unable to live an uncommitted or suspended life: I have not hesitated to declare my affiliation with an extremely unpopular cause. On the other hand, I have always reserved the right to be critical, even when criticism conflicted with solidarity or with what others expected in the name of national loyalty. There is a definite, almost palpable discomfort to such a position, especially given the irreconcilability of the two constituencies, and the two lives they have required. (1999b: 108–9).

'Solidarity' is a troublesome term in Said's indissolubly mixed critical vocabulary. Thus, while at times he seems almost to turn his back on it—'never solidarity before criticism' is a well-known Said credo (1994: 32)—at others it becomes one of the foundational principles in the broad, uncompromisingly confrontational but also unfailingly generous humanist vision he offers to a violently divided world (for different perspectives on this, see Lazarus 2011 and Robbins 2004). So much is clear from the praise he showers on Fanon and James, the former for the visionary power with which he was able to trace an 'immense cultural shift from the terrain of nationalist independence to the theoretical domain of liberation' (1993: 324), and the latter for his inspirational capacity in reaffirming the 'value of the epic struggle for human emancipation and enlightenment' (1989: 126). In either case, Said stops short of endorsing revolutionary *violence* without necessarily letting go of the idea of revolutionary *consciousness*, a term that also comes into play in the 1995 re-edition of *Orientalism*, where he speaks, in proudly acknowledging the original's widespread influence, of a recent 'revolution of consciousness of

women, minorities and marginals so powerful as to affect mainstream thinking world-wide' (1995a: 350).

This 'revolution of consciousness' is a long way, of course, from the violent independence wars that inspired James and Fanon, and just as far from the class-based analyses that have underpinned Marxist revolutionary struggle. Rather, it corresponds to a humanistic enlargement of vision that Said relates, here as elsewhere in his work, to postcolonialism, the 'historical and political imperatives' of which are connected to 'emancipation [and] revisionist attitudes towards history and culture', indicating that the postcolonial field as a whole, for all its postmodernist prevarications, is marked by 'a general approach to universal concerns' (1995a: 351–2). This recuperative reading of postcolonialism is out of step with Said's earlier, stinging critiques of it (see for example Said 1986b, 1995b; also Williams 2001). What interests me here, though, is not the much commented-on inconsistency of Said's views but his direct association of postcolonialism with *revisionism*—a revisionism he clearly links to general liberationist principles if not to any particular revolutionary cause.

Revisionism, for Said, is not just a question of politically motivated rereading; it is a committed if non-partisan act in which cultural critique is brought into line with political engagement. This is not to be confused, though, with political *activism*. Said, in this sense, would most likely have disagreed with Robert Young's succinct working definition of postcolonialism as 'nam[ing] a politics and philosophy of activism that contests [contemporary conditions of cultural and economic] disparity, and so continues in a new way the anti-colonial struggles of the past' (Young 2003: 7). Said's stance comes closer, though, to Young's immediate qualification of this definition. For postcolonialism's activist potential, Young goes on to explain, does not usually consist—although it certainly can consist—of an incitement to direct material struggle; rather it registers an attempt to 'intervene, to force its alternative knowledges into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west' (2003: 7). Dubious binaries notwithstanding, Young's valid point is that the grounds for continuing anti-colonial struggle are as much epistemological as they are physical and material; relational too in so far as postcolonial theory is 'about relations between ideas and practices: relations of harmony, relations of conflict, generative relations between different peoples and their cultures [that underlie] a world that has been changed by struggle and which [the field's] practitioners intend to change further' if they can (Young 2003: 7; see also Part III of this volume).

The key word to my mind here is 'intervention'. As its intermediary status implies, intervention operates in the interstices between cultural critique and political advocacy: its primary goal is to raise general consciousness of injustice rather than to provide a specific rationale for struggle, armed or otherwise; and its baseline recognition is that while theory is no direct substitute for politics, theory and politics are inextricably entwined (see Boehmer in Part III of this volume). For Said, as for Young, postcolonialism is best understood as a sustained form of intellectual interventionism, at once individually committed to the parallel pursuits of freedom and justice and collectively driven by the will to change a flagrantly unequal, unevenly developed world. This oppositional tradition is linked, for both, to the inheritance of anti-colonial thought: to 'the radical

legacy of its political determinations, its refusal to accept the status quo, its transformation of epistemologies, [and] its establishment of new forms of discursive and political power' (Young 2001: 428). Where the two most obviously part company is in their understanding of the foundational role of revolutionary violence in achieving social change, with Said tending to distance himself from the Fanonian views that Young explicitly embraces: that anti-colonial struggle is essentially a form of revolutionary war; that violence is intrinsic to it; and that the ongoing battle against colonialism is one against violence 'in its natural state' (Fanon 1965 [1963]: 48; see also Young 2001: 294–5).

As Young makes clear, however, this is by no means the *only* way of theorizing anti-colonial struggle—non-violent options are also possible.⁴ 'Violence versus non-violence,' he epigrammatically says, 'that [is] the anti-colonial question'; but as he then readily concedes, the reality of most twentieth- and twenty-first-century anti-colonial resistance movements, whether incorporated or not into national liberation struggles, is that violent and non-violent tactics have been strategically combined (2001: 296). This revised view again approaches that of Said, who, for all that his temperament is significantly more inclined to combative debate than bloody conflict, to the open-ended spirit of intellectual dissidence than goal-oriented programmes of revolutionary militancy, never goes quite so far as to dismiss the moral legitimacy of force (Said 1988, 1993; see also Brennan 2007; Parry 2001). That said, Said also repeatedly insists throughout his work that liberation struggles of both the present and the past, however heroically framed, are by no means immune from criticism, and that the ideologies of intractable difference that drive them consciously or unconsciously suppress the cross-cutting alliances and overlapping activities that are the marks of even the most irreconcilably polarized of human conflicts. 'Ideologies of difference,' he typically complains in a blistering 1986 review essay on the Jewish American cultural critic Michael Walzer, 'are a great deal less satisfactory than impure genres, people, activities; separation and discrimination are often not as estimable as connecting and crossing over; moral and military victories are not always such wonderful things' (1986b: 106).

⁴ Gandhi—who remains something of a forgotten figure in postcolonial criticism—is central to Young's argument here. Young counterpoints Gandhi and Fanon as complementary if profoundly different anti-colonial hero figures by showing that, while the latter moved 'from analysis of the disabling violence of colonialism to advocating military violence against the colonial regime', the former 'combined strategies of non-violent non-cooperation with a more widespread psychological resistance, arguing that they were both more ethical and more effective than any kind of violence' (2001: 323). While Young is careful not to dismiss either option, he implicitly suggests that non-violence needs to be de-idealized, and that it effectively worked in a 'negative dialectic with the perpetual possibility and reality of violence' in the India of Gandhi's time (324; see also McGonegal 2009). For a recent essay that reidealizes non-violence, associating it with Gandhi as a 'revolutionary' anti-colonial figure, see Trivedi (2011). While Trivedi not unreasonably argues that there continues to be a 'monumental mismatch' (547) between Gandhian legacies of non-violence and orthodox (Fanonian) postcolonial accounts of the role of violence in anti-colonial struggle, he somewhat spoils the point by assimilating the latter uncritically to 'Marxist discourse', thereby missing the revisionism that is integral to both.

Here, as so often in his work, Said's chosen emphasis is on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which he interprets in terms of morally competing, but also historically intersecting, national narratives. To offer wholehearted support for one, as Said unabashedly does, does not necessarily involve wholesale rejection of the other; indeed, as he goes on to suggest in a later essay, 'Israelis and Palestinians are now so intertwined through history, geography and political actuality that it seems to me absolute folly to try and plan the future of one without that of the other' (1999b: 19; see also Robbins 2004). Measured statements such as this have been eagerly latched upon as evidence of Said's broad humanistic support for intercultural reconciliation (see for example Bové 1993). Yet 'reconciliation' is not a term that features widely in Said's expansive cultural-political vocabulary; and most common when it does are pained assertions of its opposite ('The Zionist-Israeli narrative and the Palestinian one are irreconcilable ... and this irreconcilability was already quite obvious to several generations of early Zionist leaders and thinkers, as of course it was to all the Palestinians', 1999c: n.p.), or steely refusals to entertain the very possibility of reconciliation in circumstances where it smacks of moral compromise or political accommodationism ('I [have] learned from Adorno that reconciliation under duress is both cowardly and inauthentic: better a lost cause than a triumphant one, more satisfying a sense of the provisional and contingent than the proprietary solidity of permanent ownership ... I have [long since] accepted the irreconcilability of the various conflicting, or at least incompletely harmonized, aspects of what, cumulatively, I appear to have stood for', 1999a: 112–13).

One might argue here that 'reconciliation' (like 'solidarity') can mean very different things at different times in Said's work, and that its meanings can alter within the space of a few sentences. One might also reasonably expect from a critic one of whose most important books (*Culture and Imperialism*) ends with a chapter entitled 'Freedom from Domination in the Future', that the prospect of framing creative alternatives to intractable histories of separatist identity and conflict is an attractive one (Said 1993; see also Bové 1993; McGonegal 2009). 'Reconciliation', in this last sense, may yet be seen to emerge in Said's work as the utopian horizon of a sustained imaginative effort—a self-consciously revisionist attempt to narrativize shared histories and experiences which, moving beyond naturalized histories of conflict and antagonism, position themselves strategically against the automatic and repeating gestures of a 'politics of blame' (Said 1993: 19). As Paul Bové, whose ideas I have been parsing here, explains more fully,

Said's understanding of shared experience calls forth narratives of common history that are ... the best hope for overcoming the stories of conflict, separation, and radical purity or identity that horrify the world and form the morbid and deadly cultures of radical nationalism. At the same time, this is no groundless hope. Said has understood two all-important things. [T]he first [of these] is historical: ... reconciliation is needed and possible [at a time when] division is doing its worst [*sic*] ... [while the] second is cultural: narratives have formed nations but now other narratives form relations across nations, against divisive commitments to identity and purity. Always Said's thinking moves in two directions because the realities he is trying to understand develop complexly, but not necessarily as contradictions.

Nationalisms form communities against imperial occupation; yet nationalisms threaten division and separation. So there is [in Said's words] 'a noticeable pull away from separatist nationalism toward a more integrative view of human community and human liberation.' (Bové 1993: 267–8)

If Bové's preliminary account of the reconciliatory aspects of Said's 'contrapuntal' thought is convincing, his subsequent, almost hysterical dismissal of its postcolonial dimensions is not. From Bové's scandalized liberal-humanist perspective, Said needs rescuing from the legion of leftist 'ideologues' and postcolonial 'opportunists' who see the promise of reconciliation as no more than a 'collaborationist sell-out', and whose collectively attributed aim is to 'weaken the vision of [his] work, to undermine the truths of complex historical experience and identities, [to] promote conflict (which, outside academia, is often truly murderous), and [to] impoverish human culture and so threaten the human species itself' (1993: 269). It seems worth pointing out that Said's friends, diverse though these are, have not generally tended to double as postcolonialism's enemies; and that the continuing battle over Said and other postcolonial critics has often been engaged most vigorously by those who seem to have had the least acquaintance with their work (for different if largely compatible versions of this argument, see Brennan 2007 and Huggan 2005). My larger point though has to do with reconciliation itself, which has recently become a lively debating point in postcolonial studies. What are we to make of this 'reconciliatory' strand in contemporary postcolonial theory and criticism, which seems initially at least to be so profoundly at odds with the field's revolutionary credentials? Are 'revolutionary' and 'reconciliatory' postcolonialisms mutually exclusive or does their negotiated relationship with critical revisionism offer a new, triangulated way of looking at and creatively accounting for the constitutive contradictions in the postcolonial field?

POSTCOLONIALISM AND RECONCILIATION

I have argued thus far that postcolonial theory and criticism might best be seen in terms of a linked set of not necessarily compatible revisionisms, which are as much creative engagements with the present as they are critical interrogations of the past. These revisionisms enter into a complex relationship with the history of revolutionary and liberationist thought, the dialectical aspects of which have neither been accepted nor appreciated; this relationship significantly complicates the manufactured binaries (poststructuralism versus Marxism, culturalism versus materialism, etc.) which—ironically to a greater degree than one might have thought would be the field's formative binary, the colonizer versus the colonized—have tended to dominate 'in-house' discussions of the nature and function of postcolonial studies to date. The introduction of a third term, 'reconciliation', risks muddying the waters further still, not least because it appears so out of step with postcolonialism's putatively radical credentials (for a lively

exchange on the would-be radicalism of postcolonial thought, see the essays in Part III of this volume). Predictably, it is the field's Marxists who have been particularly scathing, seeing reconciliation as little more than an ideological smokescreen for dominant cultural and economic interests, an irresponsible escape from continuing historical obligations, and a politically expedient initiative to champion the supposedly reparative effects of negotiation, collaboration, and reciprocity in what remains a fundamentally divided and consequently *unreconciled* world. For materialist critics like Benita Parry, for instance, the consensus politics of reconciliation represents more of an obstacle to than a catalyst for social transformation: the symbolic possibilities of reconciliation should not be dismissed, but nor should they be prematurely celebrated, and 'our best hope for universal emancipation lies in remaining [discontented with the present] and unreconciled to the past' (2005: 25).

Non-Marxists too have shown considerable scepticism towards the usefulness of reconciliation as a sustainable idiom for postcolonial studies. The Australian-based cultural critic Simon During, for example, has provocatively opposed 'reconciliatory' to 'critical' postcolonialisms, seeing the postmodernist vocabulary (ambivalence, hybridity, mimicry, etc.) of the former as having long since passed its sell-by date, and suggesting that the necessary critique of 'reconciliatory' postcolonialism has led, not to a reconstituted postcolonial studies, but to a discernible and irreversible shift from postcolonial to global studies as more appropriate to the cross-disciplinary study of contemporary society and culture in today's intricately interconnected world (1998: 31–2). Needless to say, I disagree with During, if not necessarily with Parry, but the most interesting question in both cases is what 'reconciliation' actually stands for: what sense, if any, can be made out of such an apparently misleading and politically malleable term? A second question comes to the fore here: *why* has the term become so prominent and why is it now so often written about; why has there been what Jill Scott calls a veritable 'explosion of [academic publishing] in the areas of reconciliation, transitional justice, and conflict resolution' in areas such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science, literature, and law? (2010: n.p.). And a third: *how* can reconciliation be recuperated for postcolonial studies, and in what kind of relationship to revolutionary anti-colonial thought and postcolonial critical revisionism, which I am arguing here—against the grain perhaps—are the two dialectically interrelated paradigms that structure the postcolonial field?

Let me take these questions in turn, though for obvious reasons I will focus on the third one. As decent a working definition of reconciliation as any is that provided by the political theorists Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly (2009), who see it as 'developing a mutual conciliatory accommodation between antagonistic or formerly antagonistic persons or groups', at the heart of which is 'the preparedness of people to anticipate a shared future' (287). This definition, while perhaps too general to be truly useful, has the advantage of separating reconciliation from forgiveness, which is usually understood as having a religious source; of seeing it as a pragmatic—and often difficult—process rather than as an ideal product; and of envisaging that process in dialogical, continually renegotiated and renegotiable terms. As Hamber and Kelly propose, reconciliation is—or at least should be—an engine of social, political, and economic change;

both material and symbolic, at once individual and collective, it aims to acknowledge without simultaneously drawing a line under the past (2009: 299; see also McGonegal 2009; Quinn 2009; J. Scott 2010).

It is not difficult to see why reconciliation processes, framed in these generous terms, should be attractive at a time when the language of apology, compensation, and redress has entered mainstream political vocabularies all over the world, and when the social and economic realities of globalization have arguably brought with them a heightened awareness of structural inequalities, systemic interdependencies, and the collective need for both theoretical and practical considerations of what it means to share space, but not necessarily values, in a technologically connected but politically and economically separated world (for a discussion of the links between 'globalism' and 'global consciousness', see Part V of this volume). Nor is it difficult to see why these processes—many of which have colonial roots—should be of keen interest to postcolonial scholarship, operating as it currently is in the wake of an 'ethical turn' evidenced in the revived (rather than strictly new) attention to trauma theory, memory studies, critical cosmopolitanism, and the discourse of human rights. Reconciliation also forms part of a revived interest in utopian thinking in postcolonial theory and criticism that takes in work as diverse as Derrida's treatises on the 'promises' of democracy and friendship; growing realizations of the conceptual limits of critique (see Abeysekara in this volume); a rethinking of commitment and community in future-oriented contexts; a shift from individual guilt to collective responsibility; and a reassessment of the productive role of the creative imagination in thinking what Julie McGonegal optimistically calls 'the possibility of a radically different future, a world beyond the politics of pain and despair enacted by colonialism and its various aftermaths' (2009: 14). Finally, however, it is not difficult to see why these processes should elicit considerable suspicion and why reconciliation's practical problems might be seen as outweighing its idealistic promises: the legal problems of who adjudicates and who 'forgives'; the political problems of agency and authority; the historical problems of closure and teleology; and the overriding structural problem of how to bring about 'a radical revision to existing relations of inequality' (McGonegal 2009: 33) without previously securing the transformed material conditions that would seem necessary to bring such revised relations about (see Parry above).

An illustrative case study might be useful here. Like Parry, the Australian-based geographer Jane Jacobs sees reconciliation as an impediment to change rather than a facilitator of it, concentrating her attack on the pre-Apology reconciliation debates in Australia (for a post-Apology update, though written in much the same vein, see Johnson 2011; see also Hindess in Part IV and, in a related if non-identical New Zealand context, Smith and Turner in Part IV of this volume). For Jacobs, the collective pursuit of reconciliation in postcolonial Australia is part of a state-sanctioned national narrative: it corresponds, that is, to an official revisionist strategy of 'correcting the national sense of self' (2007: 208). Jacobs sees this strategy in terms of (1) a 're-indigenization' of national belonging and (2) an assimilative management of anti-colonial resistance, with both of these being similarly rephrased in postcolonial revisionist terms. Reconciliation, she suggests, 'may not stop certain uncomfortable "truths" [e.g. about Australia's colonial

past] being told', but is designed to prevent these from getting too close and affecting 'the existing order of things' (217). Reconciliation, in other words, offers a *revisionist* but strictly *non-revolutionary* story of indigenous resistance, then reclaims that story—and by corollary its players—in the national interest: 'Reconciled (non-Aboriginal) Australia wants the grand moments of colonial triumph to be chastened by historically contained memories of Aboriginal opposition', but it also prefers its resistance in the past, as 'something that happened *then* but is remembered *now*' (216; her italics).⁵

Writing more than a decade later in the wake of Kevin Rudd's much-applauded official apology to indigenous Australians, Miranda Johnson recodes, but also reconfirms, this postcolonial revisionist narrative. What is being valued in post-Apology Australian reconciliation debates, Johnson suggests, is indigenous peoples' 'primordial attachment to place and community' in the face of historical injustice; what is *not* being valued is the political autonomy of indigenous peoples themselves (2011: 188). Reconciliation, seen this way, reinforces the political authority of the postcolonial settler state even as it claims to apologize to its victims; it performs what Lazarus might call the 'anti-anti-liberationist' gesture of appealing to an oppositional (anti-colonial) narrative of indigenous presence which is then repackaged in inclusive national (postcolonial) terms (2011: 199; see also Smith and Turner in Part II of this volume for a New Zealand variation on this assimilative method).

This smacks of 'bad' revisionism, as Howe might call it (see note 2), but that is not all it is. For, as Jacobs suggests, reconciliation processes in Australia and elsewhere have notably failed to corral indigenous resistance into the closely guarded national spaces of 'calm co-habitation' (208) their respective governments claim officially to be fashioning; instead, these failures have opened up alternative spaces of resistance, organized around plural identities and incommensurable differences, which can also be considered in ('good') revisionist terms. As Jacobs expresses it, 'Rather than reconciliation restructuring the parameters of national knowing into a new space of calm co-habitation, its actually producing a most contested politics of knowing and rights. Reconciliation may have as its goal a transcending of a more familiar oppositional politics, but it is at the same time generating new political articulations characterised by a range of significant reversals and inversions' (208). This fundamentally conflicted understanding of reconciliation is,

⁵ This is largely in keeping with Fanon's view that reconciliation is, by definition, incompatible with revolution: 'no conciliation is possible', he insists, in postcolonial societies where liberation and the revolutionary consciousness it succours can only be brought about after a violent struggle between two implacably opposed sides (1965 [1963]: 39). However, it might also help explain why most postcolonial approaches to reconciliation to date (the notable exception is South Africa) have focused on the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in settler states (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand) that have not recently experienced revolutionary violence or rupture. Reconciliation, in this sense, may be seen as part of state-sponsored national projects to hold revolution at bay or even to block the social processes that might make it possible. Such projects posit reconciliation as a revisionist process whereby the state accepts wrongdoing in the past while acknowledging the need to take reparative measures in the present. However, it is the state itself that organizes the conditions under which such measures are to be taken; state authority is implicitly reinforced by privileging the pursuit of *justice* over and against the pursuit of *freedom* that is intrinsic to revolutionary change.

it seems to me, much closer to the oppositional spirit of Said's work than Bové's accommodating liberal-humanist rendition of it; it also gives the lie to McGonegal's similarly consensus-based account of reconciliation as 'an entire project ... of transforming the brutal conditions' that are the unbroken historical legacy of colonial relations of power (2009: 33).

McGonegal, at least, recognizes that this project is by definition 'ongoing and perpetually unfinished' (33), and that reconciliation, rather than presenting a morally superior alternative to violence, operates in constant tension with other, more directly confrontational resistance practices; in fact, there is a sense in which reconciliation can itself be seen (as Jacobs and Johnson appear to see it) as a form of violence in so far as it is 'forced or imposed by those occupying positions of [authority and] power' (33). Perhaps McGonegal's account of postcolonial reconciliation might itself be seen as performing a 'reconciliatory' move that mediates between apparently incompatible approaches to the subject: an idealist view in which reconciliation 'advocates situating truth relative to testimony, narrative, and memory in the interests of promoting justice' (181); a postmodernist view in which the value of truth itself is questioned; and a materialist view which acknowledges that the granting of 'forgiveness' and the possibility of rapprochement depend on the restoration of specific, historically and geographically situated forms of political autonomy without abandoning the general idea/ideal that reconciliation can provide a 'means of agency for the oppressed' (52, 55).

This composite revisionist view, I would argue, combines several of the contradictory narratives embedded within postcolonialism itself: the universal narrative of enlightenment and emancipation; the deconstructionist critique of it; and the 'new humanist' insistence that a shared planetary future can only be created by addressing and overturning the systemic inequalities that work together to impede human freedom in the modern world.⁶ That modernity itself has helped create these inequalities is one of postcolonialism's givens; so too modernity's multilayered connections to the histories of capitalism and colonialism, which postcolonial critics, despite often significant ideological and methodological differences, all see as being symbiotically entwined (see Hindess and Mignolo in this volume). But if one of the few generally agreed-upon tasks of postcolonial

⁶ The role of humanism in postcolonial thought has been persistently contested. For poststructuralists, by and large, humanism is no longer a serviceable category, whilst for Marxists it needs to be critiqued for its arrogant assimilation to western imperial interests but reinstated in universal liberationist terms. For many of the latter, it also needs rescuing from the blandishments of 'posthumanism', which can alternately be seen as a sustainability-oriented recognition of the need to see the world in terms other than those that reinforce human domination and as a radical questioning, as much philosophical as biological, of the category of the 'human' itself (for different perspectives on this, see Brennan and Mount and O'Brien in Parts I and IV of this volume). Both the deconstructive and recuperative dimensions of postcolonialism have affiliations, though in markedly different ways, with the philosophical legacies of humanism, as do most of the field's significant figures: the ongoing battle over Fanon and Said mentioned above, for instance, is at least in part a battle over contending critical-theoretical interpretations of humanism's potential to provide the philosophical basis for a decolonized world.

studies has been to show that alternative understandings of modernity—alternative modernities—are possible, it seems there are many, not necessarily compatible ways of achieving this, just as there are many, not necessarily compatible postcolonialisms, each seeking energetically to intervene in the unfinished history of the modern world. Postcolonialisms, like the colonialisms they seek to contest, are volatile and fractured, dynamically but also uncontrollably plural (see Seed in Part I of this volume). At once belated and anticipatory, they offer often radically different ways of understanding the past as well as a myriad of alternative possible avenues to a necessarily uncertain future. Reconciliation-oriented postcolonialism stresses a negotiated path; its revolutionary counterpart insists on an embattled one. However, as I hope to have shown here, these are not mutually exclusive options, while both are refracted through the prism of critical revisionism. If revisionism, as I am riskily suggesting, is the default mode of postcolonial theory and criticism, then attempts to forge a ‘new’ postcolonial studies will by definition be stymied. But so too will attempts to move ‘beyond’ postcolonial studies, for even if particular *kinds* of revisionism will fall in and out of fashion, the general *practice* of revisionism, in restlessly shuttling between necessary return and desired renewal, offers a welcome critical bulwark against postcolonialism’s negative trajectory from premature celebration (Shohat 1992) to premature demise (Yaeger 2007).

A revisionist approach to postcolonial studies will always run the risk of being seen as quaintly nostalgic, reprehensibly regressive even. (Before being accused of this myself, I should reiterate that I am using revisionism here to recuperate revolutionary ideas without necessarily rejecting their reconciliatory alternatives, and to show that *both* reconciliation *and* revolution are central to current understandings of the postcolonial field.) Notwithstanding, revisionism has the advantage of complicating the opposite (i.e. self-confidently progressivist) view, most likely to be endorsed by materialist critics, that the postcolonial field has made the transition from an earlier, text-based approach that dominated the first wave of postcolonial literary/cultural criticism in the 1980s and 1990s to the cross-disciplinary, interventionist model of the present day (see Mukherjee 2006; also Young 2003). Admittedly, this threefold model—multisited, multilingual, multidisciplinary—has a lot to be said for it (for further reflections on this model, see Huggan 2008). Indeed, some of the more discomfiting questions it raises are explicitly addressed in this volume: what power, explanatory or otherwise, does postcolonialism’s ‘culturalist’ vocabulary, indebted as it still is to one version or other of secular idealism, have in today’s increasingly postsecular climate? Is the current, cross-disciplinary approach to postcolonial studies necessarily an improvement on the earlier, text-based model, or does it risk exacerbating postcolonialism’s overgeneralizing tendencies, producing new conceptual and methodological confusions of its own? What kinds of regional comparisons are needed at a time when the earlier, largely nation-based approach of comparative postcolonial criticism no longer seems appropriate; whither postcolonialism in an increasingly fragmented, and transnationally configured, globalized world? Is there a danger, in focusing on contemporary experiences of colonialism and imperialism, of losing touch with their historical antecedents, or an equal-and-opposite temptation to merge the ‘colonial present’ (Gregory 2004)

indiscriminately with the imperial past? Can the 'new' postcolonial studies liberate itself from 'older' tendencies to view empire as an all-encompassing concept-metaphor, or will it end up reproducing the figural understandings of, e.g., the 'exile' and the 'migrant' that were not particularly helpful in explaining historical processes of colonial dislocation and resettlement, and are no more useful in assessing the condition of their globalist, 'new imperialist' counterparts now? (Hardt and Negri 2000; Harvey 2003; see also Part II of this volume.) Can the 'new' postcolonial studies, in propagating a form of 'transnational literacy' (Spivak 1999), work towards opening up the linguistic range of its highly disparate subject matter, or will its latest encounters with globalization merely reinforce the hegemony of the one particular world language, English, in which the vast majority of its work continues to be conducted, even though it is precisely such linguistic/cultural hegemonies that the field makes it its business to contest?

These questions are no doubt useful, and several of the essays in this volume choose, directly or indirectly, to engage with them. However, two overriding questions still need to be asked: just how 'new' is the 'new' postcolonial studies? And is 'newness' such a vital category? To put my own view one last time: if postcolonial studies is to remain relevant to today's world—and I certainly believe it will—it will need to pay greater attention than ever to the various conflicted histories that inform it; while if its radical credentials are to be taken seriously—and I firmly believe they should—they will need to be more strongly connected than ever to the anti-colonial struggles of the past. Postcolonial studies, in this last sense, may be seen as defiantly *unfashionable*, even if, for perhaps understandable professional reasons, many of the field's current practitioners have strategically adjusted their sights to the realities of the contemporary globalized world. It also remains obstinately dedicated to what Timothy Brennan somewhat backhandedly calls a 'welcome intellectual generalism' (2008: 49; see also Brennan in Part I of this volume). The postcolonial, as Peter Hallward exasperatedly remarked more than a decade ago, may well 'present itself as a sort of general theory on the non-generalisable as such' (2001: ix), but surely this is the *point* of postcolonial studies, and while it is certainly true that postcolonial theory/criticism makes large, at times tendentious generalizations, this is the occupational hazard of any ambitiously comparative field. Nor is the postcolonial field, as Hallward implies, necessarily committed to seeking refuge in the specific or to reaching out, in spite of itself, to an extreme form of singularity through which specific cultural differences are somehow collapsed into an originary Difference that effectively transcends them all (Bhabha 1994; Hallward 2001). Rather, as Hallward grudgingly acknowledges, the postcolonial field wavers—unconvincingly at times—between the singular and the specific: between the wary but necessary acceptance of universal values and the close attention to those cultural particularities, and their abiding capacity for political manipulation, that universals (the 'human condition', the 'struggle for justice', etc.) are sometimes given to disguise. Postcolonialism, understood this way, registers a continuing obligation to complexity: it fervently supports the idea of a just world, but it is also aware of the ways in which this idea can be made and remade to serve particular sets of political and historical interests, not all of them egalitarian or beneficial; and in which the imperialisms of the present, to twist Aijaz Ahmad, may be

ironically founded on the *anti*-colonialisms of the past (Ahmad 1992; see also Parts II and III of this volume).

This much is clear: 'postcolonial' is a troubled term in an embattled set of social and historical circumstances. There can be no doubting its slipperiness, its conceptual inadequacy in face of the immensity of its subject; but there can be no doubting either the compelling nature of its material and the social immediacy of its contemporary intellectual interests and continuing historical effects. To some extent, postcolonial studies amounts to the sum of its own internal differences. This is not a field one is likely to look to for methodological coherence or consensual politics, nor is it a field (despite the noticeable development of critical and theoretical orthodoxies, many of them situated at the cusp of Marxism and poststructuralism) that is likely to exhaust its own capacity for provocative debate. Postcolonialism, as a loose set of revisionist techniques, is both irrepressibly and incorrigibly combative, quarrelling with the world it wishes to transform but also, and no less obviously, bickering with itself. This is no less, of course, than one might expect of a field whose existence has been persistently fraught since its first institutional appearance in the 1980s, and the increasingly frequent allegation of whose replacement by emergent disciplines such as transnational cultural studies or globalization studies is so far from being the truth that it seems almost pointless to reject. What is closer to the truth, perhaps, is that terms such as 'postcolonial', 'transnational', and 'global' work better together than apart, and help collectively to explain the times we live in. This volume also suggests they help collectively to make predictions for the future and to assess the continuing significance of the past. Such predictions and assessments, like much else in the field, will likely remain speculative or hypothetical. One thing is for sure though: that postcolonial studies will continue to be relevant as long as colonialism—multiple colonialisms—exist in the current world order, even if the field's remit is, paradoxically, to play its utopian part in making colonialism and the imperialist ideologies that drive it a thing of the past.

Recent evidence suggests that there are grounds for hope—or hope at least that the struggle for emancipation will continue. At the time of writing, as the 'Arab Spring' continues to unfold, it seems tempting to reflect on the continuing viability of revolution. 'Tahrir Square', in the unabashedly romantic view of Egyptian novelist Alaa Al Aswany, 'became [for a time in 2011] like the Paris Commune. The authority of the regime collapsed as the authority of the people took its place' (2011: ix). But it is equally tempting to reflect on revolution's shortcomings or, perhaps better, on the perils of assuming revolutionary change before it has actually happened; and as the political commentator Olivier Roy has more cautiously suggested, ongoing events in Egypt are perhaps best understood in Arendtian terms as the 'politics of protest' rather than as 'the dawn of a new [political] regime' (2011: n.p.; also Arendt 1990 [1963] and the opening section of this essay above). Meanwhile, one could be forgiven for thinking that much of the world is at war: a highly selective list here might include civil wars in Afghanistan and Somalia; insurgencies in Sudan and Iraq; drug wars in Mexico and Colombia; and armed conflict—some but by no means all of it revolutionary—in Syria, Yemen, Chechnya, Nigeria, Kashmir, and West Papua. We might recall that Arendt's opening argument in

On Revolution (1963) was that the rest of the twentieth century would eventually see the eclipse of war by revolution, though she was canny enough to recognize that the one could easily blend into the other, and that violence was the most likely common denominator for both (1990 [1963]: 18). She was right, up to a point: a variety of revolutionary freedom struggles, most of them violent in the extreme, would go on to characterize much of the latter half of the twentieth century, and revolution has already made a defining mark on the new millennium. So too has war. The question of war, and the sometimes illusory freedoms it claims to protect, should trouble postcolonial studies far more than it has done, certainly far more than its own sometimes tedious internecine conflicts; but that should not stop the age-old pursuit of human freedom from being its primary and urgently necessary goal.

Graham Huggan, April 2012

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PART I

THE IMPERIAL
PAST

INTRODUCTION

GRAHAM HUGGAN

Bearing in mind Stephen Howe's exasperated claim that 'ideas about empire have [recently] seemed to spread and multiply beyond all control: imperialism, as a word, has gone imperial' (2002: 10), the opening section of the Handbook looks at different ways of envisaging empires and imperialisms, with an emphasis on broadly postcolonial approaches to the imperial past. While the section will offer different interpretations of empire, most of these are in accordance with Howe's broad-based definition of empire as a 'large, composite multi-ethnic political unit, usually created by conquest', and of imperialism as a sum of the 'attitudes and actions which create or uphold such political units'—attitudes and actions that imply indirect, as well as more direct, forms of authority and control (2002: 30).

Postcolonial approaches to empire are often less historical than they claim to be, which is why this section includes the work of prominent imperial historians as well as a variety of postcolonial literary/cultural critics whose work engages explicitly or implicitly with the imperial past. The phrase 'the imperial past' begs a series of other questions: whose past is it that is being referred to; what is meant by the adjective 'imperial'; and when does that past begin (and when does it end or can it reasonably be expected to end)? These questions are given extra resonance by the fact that empires past and present have been so culturally different, even if many of them have operated with similar politico-economic mechanisms and apparatuses of power. The section aims accordingly to look comparatively at empire, focusing on the largest European colonial empires: Britain's, to be sure, but also those of Spain and Portugal, France and the Netherlands. It will be asked to what extent these empires are historically circumscribed, what legacies they have left for the nations that founded them, and what continuities exist between the 'colonial present' (the heading of the Handbook's next section) and the imperial past.

It will also be asked to what extent empire is a world-historical phenomenon, as evident in Asia as it has been in Europe, though it will challenge the sweeping view that empire has operated as 'a default mode of political organization throughout much of history' (Van Steenkiste 2008; see also Darwin 2007)—a view which, in confusing the durability of the idea of empire with the inevitability of empires, subscribes to an ideological fatalism that postcolonial critics and theorists vigorously contest. Empires are neither 'inevitable' nor 'normal', and the violence they produce far outweighs any economic and political advantages to be derived from them. Nor are they consistent; as David Harvey among others points out, different empires have historically produced different imperialisms, some of them radically incompatible with one another, while different

conceptions of empire—‘hard’ and ‘soft,’ formal and informal, coercive and consensual—can easily become ‘internalized [within] the same [political] space’ (Harvey 2003: 5; see also Howe 2002; Said 1993).

Empires are *plural*: they may function simultaneously as economic engines, political units, and ideological vehicles, but they obviously exist in all shapes and sizes, are subject to a variety of often contradictory motives, and produce an equally wide array of different methods for controlling (and justifying the control of) others and for understanding themselves. They are also *global*. Not all empires aspire to world domination, nor do they all constitute what the British imperial historian John Darwin (2009) calls a functionally interdependent ‘world system’; but empires of the past are best understood in global terms as competing visions for the conquest and control of other people’s territories and resources, just as empires of the present—whether seen or not in terms of an overriding ‘capitalist imperialism’ (Lazarus 2011)—consist in rival attempts to wrest control over the global economy that encompasses them all.

It seems only sensible to insist on political and, above all, economic understandings of empire and imperialism as instruments for predatory commercial interests, and the repeated failure to do so has been a charge laid, with depressing regularity, at postcolonialism’s door. Marxist critics such as Neil Lazarus, for example, have demonstrated increasing impatience with those postcolonial theorists (basically all those other than Marxists) who persist in seeing empire and imperialism in terms of processes of ‘cultural and epistemological subjugation, whose material preconditions have been referred to only glancingly, if at all’ (Lazarus 2011: 17; see also the General Introduction to this volume). Lazarus has a point, but surely empire and the imperialist ideologies that drive it need to be seen in *both* economic *and* cultural terms as well as in the relationship between them; strategic perceptions of cultural difference, after all, provided one of the primary ‘moral’ justifications for European economic expansion, and it is difficult to disagree with Edward Said that the battle over ‘culture’ has been central to the modern imperial experience—surfacing most recently in US-led ‘civilizationism’ (see Mignolo’s and Sayyid’s chapters in this section)—just as the various European colonial empires’ economic ‘pattern[s] of dominions [and] possessions laid the groundwork for what is now in effect a fully global world’ (Said 1993: 4; see also Part V of this volume).

A second charge made by Lazarus in the same book (*The Postcolonial Unconscious*) is also worth examining here. Postcolonial studies, he suggests, has not only not been particularly effective in revealing either the long history of empire or the ‘intensification of imperialist social relations’ (2011: 16) that now obtains under current conditions of globalization; it has tended to *mystify* these relations, either by ignoring imperialism altogether or by falsely assuming its ‘obsolescence’ (16) by the time of the 1980s and 1990s, generally acknowledged to be the key decades in the discipline’s own institutional growth. Again it seems necessary to qualify, without necessarily dismissing, this statement. There is little doubt that postcolonial studies can be seen as part of what is generally referred to as the ‘cultural turn’ at European and, particularly, North American universities during the period in question—a turn often accompanied by rapt attention to the work of Continental poststructuralist thinkers: Derrida, Lacan, Foucault. Yet

this—as Lazarus himself admits—is only part of the complex institutional history of postcolonial studies as a discipline, and even the most ‘culturalist’ of postcolonial critics have rarely subscribed either then or now to the demise, still less the obsolescence, of imperialism; on the contrary, it is the *continuity* of empire as both idea and practice that works, paradoxically no doubt, to guarantee the anti-colonial credentials of those working in the field.

For Lazarus, as for other postcolonial Marxists, imperialism is—as Lenin famously saw it—a particular stage in the development of global capitalism; failing to acknowledge this, however, is hardly tantamount to suggesting that imperialism is obsolete. It is true, nonetheless, that postcolonial critics have sometimes been reluctant to address the symbiotic relationship between imperialism, modernity, and global capitalism (though equally true that they have tended to focus on European rather than non-European imperialisms, and have not always been ready either to acknowledge that the long history of empire significantly pre-dates the emergence of capitalist imperialism in the west: see Sayyid below). Elaborate distinctions between ‘imperialism’ and ‘colonialism’, with one seen as pre-dating the other, will not help to solve the problem (see, for example, Boehmer 1995; Loomba 1999). What is needed, it seems, is a more methodical understanding of the imperial past as the product of a set of shifting historical conjunctures and relations—an understanding to which both imperial historians and postcolonial literary/cultural critics are well capable of contributing, precisely because of the significant differences in approach and method that their perhaps unduly compartmentalized disciplines entail (see Part IV of this volume).

It seems appropriate, then, that the chapters that follow in this section (and in other sections) represent a wide range of disciplines—history, literary/cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, philosophy—and that primacy is not given to any one of these; rather, close attention is paid to the relationship between them all. Postcolonial studies, after all, is a relational field investigating an equally relational subject—and a further axiom of empires is that they are always relational if not always systematic, despite their systematizing intent. Stephen Howe’s critical definition of empire as a relational term that promiscuously refers to ‘any and every type of relation between a more powerful state or society and a less powerful one’ (2002: 13) comes to mind here; or Michael Doyle’s, which sees empire as a ‘relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society [whether] by force, or by political collaboration, or by economic, social, or cultural dependence’ (Doyle 1986: 45; also quoted in Said 1993: 8).

Neither of these definitions is complete, nor should we expect it to be. Both definitions, for example, overlook the possibility of empires that are not necessarily extensions of state power. Hardt and Negri’s all-embracing postmodern empire, while speculative and abstract, is one of these: a ‘decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule’, coextensive with if not reducible to globalization, it ‘progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers’ (2000: xii). There is perhaps nothing particularly ‘new’ about the ‘new imperialism’ being argued for here, nor anything especially ‘postmodern’ about it either; rather, contemporary

empire-building is driven, as it ever was, by the rival ideological demands of consent and conquest, and by the competing political and economic imperatives of territorial expansion and centralized power (Harvey 2003; see also Part II of this volume). That said, alternative philosophical conceptions of—and definitional disagreements around—empire are likely to continue as long as empire itself continues; ironically perhaps, one of the few things that historians and theorists of empire appear to agree on is that the imperial past is not past. That basic contradiction shadows this section, as it does other sections in this volume. But however empire is seen, and however imperialism is seen as operating, historical understandings of both empire and imperialism are as necessary today as they have ever been, partly as a way of assessing, appreciating, and, whenever and wherever necessary, contesting the multiple legacies of empire for the contemporary world.

The section begins with a chapter by the distinguished American anthropologist and historian Ann Laura Stoler, which raises the vexed issue of Enlightenment's relationship to empire. Stoler is critical of the persistence with which the Enlightenment has been posited as central to understandings of the European colonial empires, suggesting that these understandings—both of Enlightenment and empire as well as the relationship between them—have been far more plural and internally conflicted than is often taken to be the case. Plurality and conflict also apply to some of the governing assumptions surrounding Enlightenment and empire: the identification of empire with order and rationality; the preconception that these were based on shared and agreed-upon knowledge; and the designation of Enlightenment itself as the 'Age of Reason'—a designation belied by the central role of sentiment and the passions in Enlightenment thinking and in the 'colonial dispositions and ... practices [it] served'.

Stoler's particular focus is on the nineteenth-century Netherlands Indies. Here, Stoler's exemplary archival research—which has informed her work over several decades—reveals neither uniformity in colonial response nor unanimity in colonial method; instead, it shows 'how much is missed and amiss in how [Dutch colonial] mappings of the Enlightenment onto empire [were and still are] formed'. Uncertainty is at the heart of things; and Stoler's emphasis, accordingly, is on what she elegantly calls 'the unquiet minds of colonialisms' European practitioners to invoke ... history "in a minor key"—a history that 'initiates a rereading of the anxious and anticipatory states that imperial governance engendered to better understand the regimes of security it produced and the expectant, affective economies on which imperial formations continue to depend'. Stoler does not contest that reason still held sway in the nineteenth-century Netherlands Indies, as elsewhere in Europe's far-flung and sharply differentiated colonies; but she insists that 'rational, scientific ways of knowing the world were insufficient for [imperial] governance', and that these proved incapable either of describing the 'temperament of rule' or of capturing how it worked.

It is the *messiness* of empire that emerges from Stoler's multi-layered account: the anxieties and insecurities it instilled; the hesitations and slippages it engendered; the moments of 'discernment when ... common sense and convention failed [colonial administrators], and what [they] thought they knew, and how they might know it, they

found they did not'. Empire—in so far as it can be seen as singular at all—is less systematic than it desires, and more fashioned by desire than its claim to detached rationality supposes; indeed, it is marked by a wide range of 'emotional registers of experience' that demonstrate, not just the affective force of imperial governance, but also the speed with which the social passions and sensibilities attached to it 'could traverse the colony and the globe'. These registers emphasize the interconnectedness, in European colonial regimes, of private and public spheres of influence; they also highlight what Stoler calls the 'lived epistemic spaces' in which colonial agents operated—fragile, often fearful sites in which their apprehension of things they could *not* see, and things they did *not* know, were imaginatively shaped.

Stoler ends by asserting the continuity of *dérailson*, Foucault's expansive term for the instabilities that underlie even Reason's most self-assertive gestures, in contemporary imperial/colonial practices; 'unreason', she says, 'organized the political grammar of empire at its beginning' and now re-emerges in, e.g., the 'colonizing passions of relentless Israeli incursions on Palestinian [territory]', or in the 'standard operating procedures' of the US presence in Iraq (see also Morton in Part II of this volume). This is a salutary reminder—one repeated throughout this volume—that fear and insecurity, not just of the world as it is but of how it might be imagined to be, lies at the spectral heart of any empire, just as what Ahmad (1992) calls the 'imperialisms of the present' are continually shadowed by the 'colonialisms of the past'.

In the next chapter, the American historian Tyler Stovall brings to the surface what was already embedded in Stoler's work: namely that there has been an intellectual rift between postcolonial theory and imperial history, though theorists and historians alike, without necessarily settling their differences, have 'learned greatly from one another' in their respective analyses of the imperial past (see also Kennedy in Part IV of this volume). A further problem, Stovall suggests, is the immensity of the terrain that both postcolonial theorists and imperial historians cover, even within broadly national imperial enterprises: Stovall's own focus is on the colonial empires of Britain and France. Comparison between these two empires, he suggests, has tended to focus on the differences between them, including 'contrasting processes of decolonization, economic versus political motivations for empire, [and] direct and indirect rule'. More recent work, however, has brought out similarities, e.g. in the relationship between empire and modernity or in the role played by liberal political thought in shaping the colonial encounter, and it is on this last set of connections that the subsequent argument of Stovall's chapter rests. His particular focus is on the rise of mass liberal democracy in both countries. This reveals the paradox that the age of mass democracy in Europe was also an age of imperialism—a contradiction that Stovall sees as being central to the modern world at large.

Stovall's emphasis, unlike Seed's in the chapter that immediately follows his, is on the European history of empires seen from the metropolitan rather than the colonial perspective, though his wider aim is to 'broaden [imperial] history beyond the traditional focus on policymaking elites to consider how empire shaped the political culture of modern Britain and France themselves'. His argument turns on the transition from 'old' (monarchical) to 'new' (liberal democratic) models of empire during the nineteenth century,

with the latter model combining the humanitarian elements of the era of democratic revolution (e.g., anti-slavery) with an 'aggressive expansionism' based, not just on economic imperatives but on a consolidated view of social and cultural differences shaped by nineteenth-century European racial theory (see Gopal in Part II of this volume).

While Stovall shows that the emergent alliance of liberal democracy and the new imperialism was remarkable in both of the countries (Britain and France) that form the basis of his analysis, he takes care to point out the differences between them, e.g. in later decolonization patterns and the changing political demands of the working class. However, his analysis, by and large, focuses—riskily perhaps—on similarities between the two countries. These are brought together one last time in his conclusion, where he suggests some of the different ways—highlighted later by Michael Rothberg (see Part III of this volume)—in which the imperial past in both Britain and France is far from over, not least because the manufactured polarity between metropole and colony, often phrased in the exclusivist rhetoric of nation, persists. This, for Stovall, is at the heart of the postcolonial dilemma—one in which the global spread of democracy suggests more inclusive alternatives to nationalist imperialism while ushering in new, reintensified forms of cultural differentialism that suggest that, at best, 'the democratic project remains incomplete'.

While Patricia Seed's chapter, like Stovall's, focuses on similarities and differences between two former European colonial empires, in her case Spain's and Portugal's, it departs from it significantly by adopting a subaltern/indigenist rather than a metropolitan approach. 'Indigenism', for Seed, is a falsely homogenizing category created out of histories of invasion and conquest; like the colonialism to which it is yoked, it is 'not and never has been a singular noun'. Seed's focus, accordingly, is on separating out the important internal differences within these categories, and in exposing the equally variegated 'colonial fictions' by which the indigenous peoples of the Americas could be treated, depending on European political and economic priorities, as either fundamentally different or essentially the same. For Seed, it is the 'neocolonial formulation of principles governing the status of native peoples that defies American postcolonialism and marks its distinctiveness'—a particularly bald instance of the generally fine line that separates the 'colonial present' (see Part II of this volume) from the imperial past. Paradoxically, Seed sees the native-born elites of Spanish and Portuguese America, who have been understandably eager to distinguish themselves from their Iberian predecessors, as attempting to rationalize their privilege by glorifying a 'safely distant indigenous past'.

This particular instance of the colonial present is used to suggest that liberty rarely followed the transition to independence and the return of political power to indigenous communities in the Americas; nor, generally speaking, have the subsequent histories of postcolonial nations in other parts of the world offered an 'uplifting narrative about the removal of European power'. Postcolonial literature, Seed suggests, has supplied a critical alternative, although it is as well to be reminded that the vast majority of its subaltern perspectives have been fashioned by elites (see McLeod in Part IV and Dhawan and Randeria in Part V of this volume). Subaltern authors do exist, however, and Seed provides some compelling examples from the Spanish and Portuguese Americas. Some

of these works are self-consciously informed by a cosmopolitan perspective that appeals to a broad international community but does not necessarily carry direct political consequences, and Seed duly provides a series of cautionary tales to show how, in the face of neocolonial political and economic authority, cosmopolitanism's 'forward momentum', defined as it is largely in cultural terms, 'comes to a screeching halt'.

Seed concludes by issuing a salutary reminder that the actual status of indigenous communities in the Americas and elsewhere is often markedly different from the heroic role assigned to them in the postcolonial cultural imaginary; in the Americas, she suggests, 'no reversal of the fundamental colonial project [has been possible], and ... the cultural fictions of Indian identities remain entrenched'. Seed reminds us too that categories like 'subaltern' and 'indigenous', which continue to be mobilized by postcolonial critics for a variety of oppositional and emancipatory purposes, may also falsify the actual conditions and/or historical circumstances in which subaltern/indigenous peoples live.

Walter Mignolo's chapter, like Seed's, focuses on Latin America, but brings it into dialogue with the Latin countries of the European Union and the Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East. Also like Seed, Mignolo is interested in alternatives to more-or-less mainstream, European-centred versions of imperial history, seeing—as in much of his recent work—the need for a 'decolonial shift' centring on transverse relations between Islam, Latinity, and modernity in a globalized world.

One aspect of this shift is 'dewesternization': a deliberate challenge to those 'imperial/colonial metamorphoses of the west' that are inscribed within the history of capitalism, Christianity, and secularism. Mignolo takes neoliberalism to be the latest iteration of this continuing history, which, folded into the composite 'Eurocentrism', he understands as a 'general epistemic model that organizes subjectivity and knowledge, gender and sexuality, economy and the state'. Over and against this western model he posits the notion of a 'transmodern' world that both exposes the complicities between modernity and imperial/colonial power and works towards overcoming them. The 'decolonial shift', in this last sense, offers nothing less than a 'radical undoing of modernity/coloniality' that, setting its face against the binaries of post-'9/11' 'civilizationism', simultaneously opposes 'a five-hundred-year history of empire, capitalism, and modernity ... in which coloniality [modernity's destructive underside] is conspicuously missing from accounts'.

A further aspect of the 'decolonial shift' reassesses the role played in the imperial past, and on into the colonial present, by the world's subaltern peoples, whose collective agency—demonstrated so clearly in the recent events of the 'Arab Spring'—can no longer be contained by a civil society that seeks to instrumentalize their revolutionary anger and political dissent (see also the General Introduction to this volume). This also shows the possibilities offered by transmodernity, in which modernity is openly 'confronted with other languages, religions, and histories that take it beyond the Greco-Roman and Christian legacies of the west'.

A third aspect of the 'decolonial shift' requires a renewed acknowledgement of the place of Islam *within* rather than *against* Europe and a corresponding recognition of the

currents of justice, equality, and pluralism within Islamic thought. (Mignolo concedes here that the history of Islam is as likely to yield examples of authoritarian thinking and action.) ‘Decolonial transmodernity’ is not, however, an automatic championing of Islam anymore than it is an unquestioning celebration of the imperial achievements of western Christianity; rather, in analysing the complex tracery of historical connections *between* them, it seeks to articulate parallel world views to those of the west, to reveal the alternative epistemologies contained within western world views, and to highlight pluralistic, often localized understandings of human relations and interactions that contest, explicitly or implicitly, universal imperial ambitions of dominating the world. ‘The single story of western civilization,’ Mignolo insists, is slowly but inexorably ending; and other narratives—those informed by the ‘alternative trajectories’ of decoloniality and dewesternization—are rapidly emerging to take its place.

Like Mignolo’s chapter, Bobby Sayyid’s complicates standard postcolonial accounts of the triangulation of capitalism, modernity, and empire by working to effect a ‘decolonial shift’ that disrupts the persistent European emphasis of each of these three elements while counteracting the historical telescoping of empire that tends to happen when the elements are combined. Also like Mignolo, Sayyid looks to the articulation of Islam and empire as a way of positing alternatives to Eurocentric understandings of empire and imperialism. But whereas Mignolo’s primary concern is to use the decolonial shift to pave the way for a globally inflected, appropriately dewesternized ‘transmodernity’ (see above), Sayyid’s is to demonstrate the historically and politically specific nature of Islamicate imperialism at a time when Muslims, and the master-signifier of Islam, are being ideologically co-opted into re-establishing the ‘violent hierarchy’ between the west and the non-west.

The main thrust of Sayyid’s argument is that Islamicate empires (i.e. empires closely associated with, but not necessarily reducible to, Islam) have historically relied on the construction of a distinct Muslim identity—one, however, that is less racially exclusive than its European Christian (or secular) counterpart, which both philosophically underpins and politically reiterates the original European colonial order as ‘a racist order [in which the] European colonial empires [functioned] as racial states’. The Islamicate empires, Sayyid insists, were not structured around the logic of racialization, but one of the main ideological features of post-‘9/11’ civilizationism has been the *re*-racialization of Muslims as latter-day predatory imperialists intent on the conquest of the west. Ironically, civilizationism has reinstated western (US-style) imperialism, organizing it around the coordinates of the ‘war on terror’, with consequences—as much epistemological as cultural and political—that suggest the powerful capacity of empires to persist even given what Sayyid calls the post-colonial ‘temper of the times’ (see Part II of this volume). At the same time, Islam’s continued haunting of the west suggests ‘the contingency at the heart of the western [imperial] enterprise’; and this contingency, which also exists at the heart of contemporary postcolonial studies, might help explain why present-day articulations of Islam and empire play as much to the tensions of the ‘postcolonial imperial present’ as they do to the Islamicate imperial past.

In the section's concluding chapter, Timothy Brennan maintains the theoretical emphasis of Sayyid's piece, but makes clear that its main contribution is to *philosophy*, which he distinguishes from 'jackdaw' theory by linking it to specific, readily identifiable intellectual traditions anchored in core philosophical texts. The tradition he focuses on is Hegelian, and its core text is Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (sometimes seen as a tacit defence of colonialism). For these and other reasons, Hegel might seem a curious choice, but as Brennan points out, Hegel's critique of the Enlightenment (see also Stoler's opening chapter in this section), his openness to non-European traditions, and his indebtedness to French revolutionary thought, all indicate his relevance to twentieth-century anti-colonial thinking, while the political oppositionalism embedded in *Philosophy of Right*, in particular, suggests that—contrary to the popular view of Hegel as a conservative apologist—there are radical political implications to his work.

Brennan's careful reading of *Philosophy of Right* reveals further complicities between imperialism and capitalism, between political and ethical considerations of empire, and—with another nod to Stoler's earlier chapter—between 'the political institutions of colonialism [and] the structure of colonialist thought'. Brennan does not deny the 'cultural disparagement' to be found in Hegel, e.g. his robust belief in the differences between 'advanced' and 'backward' cultures. Notwithstanding, he insists that Hegel, seen from the vantage point of what he unequivocally calls the 'imperial present', provides 'philosophical resources [for] the [continuing] anti-colonial project', not least via Hegel's spirited defence of human beings as the sole power capable of resisting global inequality—a defence as necessary as it ever was in face of what Brennan sees as the fake universalism and 'cybernetic triumphalism' of our allegedly 'posthuman' times (for a different view, see Rangan and Chow in Part III of this volume; also Mount and O'Brien in Part IV).

As suggested above, Brennan's chapter returns us to several of Stoler's arguments at the beginning of this section: that the imperial past secretes itself into the present; that empires need to be philosophically as well as materially resisted; and that resources can be found for this resistance even in the most apparently unpromising places: the self-justifying colonial archive; the racist philosophical text. This is not to compartmentalize the imperial past or to collapse it for instrumental purposes into the present; rather, it is to insist on what Edward Said calls, in another context, reading against the grain of empire in whichever forms—physical or mental, material or symbolic—it continues to be found.

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CHAPTER 1

REASON ASIDE

Reflections on Enlightenment and Empire

ANN LAURA STOLER

INTRODUCTION

One need not be well versed in the field of colonial studies to attest that the glare of the Enlightenment pervades historiographies of nineteenth-century European imperial formations and their analytic space. Some notion of ‘an Enlightenment project’ (as Alasdair MacIntyre first called it) features as a core conceptual frame for understanding how and why what is commonly referred to as ‘universal reason’ and ‘totalizing systems of knowledge’ underwrote European colonial expansions and made possible the regimes that claimed sovereignties over the non-European world (MacIntyre 1984: esp. 51–78; see also Young 1990). It is in these terms that many students of empire have come to understand the subjects that imperial macropolities created and coerced, the agents they recruited, the dispositions they cultivated, and the domains they privileged for intervention. Implicit or explicit, ‘the Enlightenment’ is cast as an organizing principle for understanding the epistemological scaffolding of imperial governance—what political lessons we need to learn from its prescriptive mandates and its durable effects, and which of those commanding logics surreptitiously work on and through us so differentially now.

To whomever and whatever we may attribute inspiration (Kant or Hegel), or grant pride of place to account for the ubiquity of this ‘turn’, of which there are too many to name (Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Jean-François Lyotard, or the scripted narratives of scientific progress that some colonial architects rehearsed amongst themselves), ‘the Enlightenment’ with a capital E appears almost seamlessly to map onto the capital E of empire. For that master

of Enlightenment scholarship, Jonathan Israel, it is a postmodern camp that has been guilty of portraying 'The Enlightenment' as 'biased, facile, self-deluded, over-optimistic, Eurocentric, imperialistic and ultimately destructive' (2006a: v).¹ Israel's assault aside, the Enlightenment has been far more pluralized by students of empire than his derisive statement would suggest. If anything it is the sprawling scope of the Enlightenment's impact and the features underscored to define its most prominent concerns that need qualification (Berman 1998).²

The choice of verb to describe the effect of the Enlightenment's precepts on imperial principles may be vague or precise. So too its attributed effects: the Enlightenment has been argued to provide the vehicle of imperial domination, buttress empire, inaugurate the exploratory verve that opened to its voracious agrarian enterprises and ambitious scientific projects, shape the dispositions of empire's practitioners, preen imperial arrogance, prime anti-colonial nationalist movements, and not least animate and justify the toxic mix of coercive and curative interventions and reforms that have served the installation of European sovereignties across the globe. The notion of 'Enlightenment-as-imperialism' and the 'epistemic violences' that fusion enabled (as Gayatri Spivak has charged) have dominated scholarship over the last few decades just as its imaginary is said to have once instrumentally colonized so much of the world (Williams and Chrisman 1994: 15).

In this chapter, I invite us to look more carefully at what this fit between imperial formations and Enlightenment precepts looks like, between the workings of one imperial body politic, that of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Netherlands Indies, and the loose cut of its Enlightenment clothes. At issue is *not* the discrepancy between prescription and practice alone, but rather what constituted the lived epistemic space in which different forms of knowledge were combined, contested, and implicitly compared. There are three underlying, if tacit, assumptions that deserve examination and that frame my concerns in what follows. One is the unquestioned identification of empire with a 'rule of reason'. That equation seems to take little account of what was often a more cobbled and messy colonial order of things that careened between standardization and arbitrary protocols, bureaucratic precisions and unrealistic visions, large-scale planning and gross failures of foresight. Not least, the conditions and practices of governance often contravened what a commitment to reason might otherwise have required and a commitment to rational knowledge would have disallowed. The second assumption is also tacit. It is one that leaves unquestioned whether European colonials shared a clarity

¹ Interestingly, Israel significantly tones down his dismissal of postmodern scholarship after *Enlightenment Contested* obviously had already gone to press, noting instead of its practitioners: 'their partially correct (but too narrow) critique', and thinking 'with' them rather than against them. See also Israel (2006b).

² Berman impatiently condemns those who insist on collaboration between Enlightenment and empire. By his account, students of empire have got it all wrong by endorsing 'a blanket refusal of reason—and, by extension of science, progress, and a normative universalism'.

(if not consensus) about the kinds of knowledge that mattered to them. I would argue that they did not. With respect to the making of social kinds, to the production of racial categories, and to the strategies of security and surveillance that empire's architects and agents so assiduously sought to put in place, their confidence was often compromised by a disquieted and uncertain epistemic space (Stoler 2009).

The third assumption, that the Enlightenment is best designated as 'the Age of Reason', is one largely shared among students of empire but not unique to them. At issue are the multiple implications of that convention for how imperial governance has been viewed by scholars: how the latter have understood the domains empire's practitioners saw as their proper province; which particular kinds of knowledge those practitioners deemed 'relevant'; and ultimately what they saw as being their requisite tasks to perform. I am not alone in arguing that an overarching commitment to reason in fact poorly describes the compendium of the Enlightenment's core considerations or the prevailing concerns of many of those taken as Enlightenment exemplars. Here I follow Albert Hirschman's and Susan James's compelling arguments that in matters of governance and statecraft, the sentiments and passions—mental states usually opposed to the rule of reason—were central both to Enlightenment thinking and, as I hope to show, to colonial dispositions and the practices they served (Hirschman 1977). Indeed, it was seventeenth-century French philosophers who understood that the art of governance entailed 'the art of knowing men' (James 1997: 2). It was John Locke, after all, author of what some have considered 'the "Bible" of the Enlightenment', who attended so finely and fiercely to those affective sensibilities that made one eligible to be a proper citizen (Morsberger 1996; see also Mehta 1992, esp. ch. IV). Hume identified the contagious quality of sentiments, and later Adam Smith worried over the problematic careers of the moral sentiments in usefully or abusively shaping a state's agendas and political priorities (Pinch 1996).

Under Dutch colonial rule, attention to sentiments marked out the domains targeted for scrutiny and surveillance, the attachments and proximities seen as problematic, the 'habits of heart' that were demanded for governance but might alternately undermine its fragile order. Efforts to assess other people's non-manifest 'interior states' and the kinds of affective and psychological knowledge on which those assessments relied, were both critical for identifying who and what constituted a present threat to the colonial polity and, as importantly, who might constitute a threat in the future. This was more than a pragmatic problem in the apparatus of governance. A limited capacity to recognize political sentiments and personal attachments *that could not be measured* was understood as one of the most vulnerable nodes in the craft of rule. As I argue here, efforts to discern affective differences permeated the seemingly benign and more brutal strategies of defence, security and segregation. Not least, it underwrote a quest for affective knowledge about intuitions and inclinations that would make more accessible bodily, tactile, and intimate sites for intervention and control (Stoler 2010b).

I address these questions through the archival field that I know best, that of the nineteenth-century Netherlands Indies. It would be easy to see such a specific focus as

peculiar and unique.³ The Indies architecture of authority was singular. But the epistemic predicaments it reveals and repeats were not. My concern is specific, my archive particular to the Indies, my aims both narrow and broad: to offer another inflection on imperial dispositions less tethered by the supremacy of reason, one that opens to alternative genealogies of the present. My focus is on the making of social categories and the conceptual work (both epistemological and political) that went into the ascription of racial kinds.

One might imagine such a domain to provide a contrived invitation to illustrate how the logic of scientific rationality was invoked to authorize such distinctions and to secure the rigid categories that cordoned off and clarified those who were white and inherently superior from those who were not. Indeed, nineteenth-century race sciences sought and claimed to have found universal laws of racial classification derived from biologically blatant patterns of human physical variation.⁴ It is in this quintessential and critical space of race-making—on which colonial regimes were so vitally dependent—that the noisy, ambiguous qualities of human admixture called to question the knowledges on which those distinctions could and should be made. If Enlightenment precepts and concepts mattered, they did so not because they provided the firm percepts of colonial rule, nor because they were wholly convincing and exhaustive; on the contrary, it is precisely because they were understood at the time to offer inadequate sources of epistemic authority for the pedagogy of empire's governing tasks.

THE RULE OF REASON

Even if the Enlightenment has been a very important phase in our history, and in the development of political technology, I think we have to refer to much more remote processes if we want to understand how we have been trapped in our own history. (Foucault 1981: 228)

Progress, reason, scientific rationality, liberalism, and secularism are among those many political concepts (and the institutional formations they animated) claimed to bear genealogies rooted in Enlightenment thinking. Such thinking is claimed to have made it possible

³ According to Jonathan Israel, the Dutch Enlightenment had its strongest influence on the European Enlightenment and was of 'diminishing' importance and increasingly 'marginal' throughout the 18th century. Israel's notion that the establishment of the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* (Society for the Public Good) was a significant example of Dutch Enlightenment projects is problematic. Not only was it an institution based on punitive care and coercive instruments of reform, it became one of the models for the children's agricultural colonies that some have called 'prisons in the fields'. See Israel (1995: 1038–66); on the Dutch Enlightenment in Java see Taylor (1983: 78–95); on the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen*, see Schauwers (2001: 298–328), also Stoler (2010b).

⁴ The histories that have been written with this story of racism are too many to list here. For one example, see Taguieff (1988).

for empire's advocates to conceive of their ventures as ennobling enterprises, to school its agents and architects to value their jobs as moral missions if not relish their bureaucratic tasks. Foundational Enlightenment priorities find in empire what Uday Mehta writes of liberalism, its iconic descendant, as the concrete space of its dreams (Mehta 1999: esp. Intro.; see also Gopal in Part II of this volume). In Partha Chatterjee's incisive account, it is the tyrannical universality of Reason that sets passions to work in its service while keeping 'itself in the background, untouched, unharmed ... [and] unscathed' (1993: 168.) He locates 'the story of the Enlightenment in the colonies' in 'the hands of the policemen and ... in the station house when the cunning of reason turns against "particular ethical values of the nation" (168). Gyan Prakash identifies the subtle ways in which scientific reason became "a multivalent sign" that exerted force in a wider social and political domain. In British India, reason was the syntax of reform for British colonials and Indian intellectuals. Universal Reason, he holds, was not only a means of rule adapted to other guises and other languages; science was "the grammar of modern power with its fullest expression in the state" (1999: 9). On the terrain of Latin America, Walter Mignolo tracks an earlier genealogy of imperial authority that also asserted a hegemonic epistemological imaginary': 'a planetary epistemological standard' that valued scientific authority and its credibility above other ways of knowing the world with Reason supporting a new global design (2000: 59; see also Mignolo in this section of the volume).

Central to these claims is identification not only of an imperial veneration of Reason and rational knowledge, but of empire as a crystalline and unspoken embodiment of the way both worked their way through the infrastructure of authority, the hierarchies of credibility and the prioritized policies in colonial relations. Colonial circumstances are said to have offered a new sense of, and sites for, the uses of rational knowledge to tame nature and control subject populations, fuelled by those with conviction in its power, in its transformative qualities, and in the pragmatics of governance, its efficacy and worth. Peter Gay reminds us in his much-lauded volume *The Enlightenment: The Science of Freedom* (1996), that it was Francis Bacon who, in breaking with the historical fatalism that preceded the Enlightenment, insisted that knowledge was power. It is students of colonialism who have attributed that insight, so differently mobilized, to Foucault. For Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), the master narrative of the European Enlightenment has been, and continues to be, the silent referent that organized the Eurocentric epistemics of imperial knowledge production. As Partha Chatterjee (1993) has shown, India's elite nationalists shared its premises and were entrapped by it. Chakrabarty demonstrates how that narrative has enforced a pernicious teleology, a sequential temporality, and a form of historical progression that captured colonial agents, and more pointedly still governs our writing of history and continues unknowingly to bind us all.

If what falls under the Enlightenment project is sometimes encompassing and broad, it is the elevation of a parochial, local, and culture-bound sense of reason to a universal standard against which critical colonial studies has been rightly aimed—against epistemological commitments that have partitioned the world into unequally deserving and differentially capable social kinds, plotted on a grid that divides those who are either committed to and capable of reason from those who are not. As Dorinda Outram has

put it, 'The Enlightenment itself often seemed to devote as much energy to designating entire social groups, such as women or peasants, as impervious to the voice of reason, as it did to constructing a better world for [some] human beings' (1995: 21–2). The deeper critique targets less implementation than the structural entailments of knowledge production itself.

Rethinkings of this tableau have come from within and outside the quarters of colonial historians. Sarkar Muthu (2003) contends that the foes of empire were among the most prominent Enlightenment intellectuals and that by eliminating those anti-imperial arguments from our purview we have diminished our own ability to track the diverse effects of its force. Gyan Prakash (1999) argues that India's colonized intellectuals mounted their assault by asserting 'another reason', thereby opening colonialism's 'normalizing myth ... to questioning and contention ... [and to] a space for the negotiation of science's status as truth' (72).⁵ Richard Schweder (1984) attributes to his discipline (and my own), anthropology, a long-standing appreciation of cultural difference that refused the normative uniformity of mankind under the 'dictate of reason and evidence' (27–66).

No one who has spent time in French, British, Dutch, or German colonial archives would deny that scientific and technological inquiry and innovations were fundamental to the organizational apparatus of imperial ventures, or that colonial administrations called upon and encouraged European experts and amateurs of all kinds—botanists, economists, geographers, architects, doctors, epidemiologists—to ply their trade, refine their instruments, and indeed to imagine and to attempt to make of colonized places their comparative 'laboratories of modernity' on an unfettered scale (Pyenson 1980; Goss 2011). Still, after nearly three decades of work in the French and Dutch colonial archives, I am struck by how much is missed and amiss in how these mappings of the Enlightenment onto empire are framed. There seems something too readily unquestioned about the epistemic commitments that are supposed to have governed colonial visions, something too capacious in the ready line-up of governing practices with the Enlightenment's abstract claims.⁶ I broach this issue by

⁵ Aamir Mufti (2007) insists that it is a 'false perception to view the colonial reenactment of the modern bourgeois Enlightenment as entirely the imposition of an external (European) form' (24).

⁶ Let me clear. My focus is not primarily on science and empire. I have no intention of contradicting the fine-grained historical work, in so many different colonial contexts, on the synergies of scientific and imperial pursuits across so many domains, as in Richard Grove's exemplary work, *Green Imperialism* (1995). And of course colonial bureaucracies across the globe drew on science to collect statistics, to dam up rice fields for export crops, to convert sugar beet machines into those for Javanese cane sugar, to conceive imperial maps (and reorder space to fit them) in the pursuit of imperial sovereignty, under the sign of giving 'value', and in the name of progress and profit, social welfare, and peace. Nor is my subject Enlightenment thinking among colonial subjects, popular or elite visionaries who appropriated its emancipatory lexicon of freedom for themselves. Others are pursuing those projects with finesse. I think, among others, of David Scott's considered reading of Toussaint L'Ouverture and C. L. R. James's early attention to him, of Michel-Rolph Trouillot and Laurent Dubois' study of the French and Haitian revolutions, of Partha Chatterjee's rendition of a Bengali middle-class elite smitten with Enlightenment precepts, and of Akeel Bilgrami's treatment of Gandhi's prophetic warnings against a 'liberal democracy' that India's elite were so eager to embrace as part of the dissenting 'Radical Enlightenment'. See Scott 2004; James 2001; Trouillot 1995; Dubois 2004; Chatterjee 1995: 93–117; Bilgrami 2006.

examining the effects of what I call the ‘epistemic politics’ of empire—the constellation of conceptually articulated and inchoate understandings of what the arts and crafts of governance entailed in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Netherlands Indies—on the ways of knowing that guided its practitioners and on what made up the unstable coordinates of colonial common sense (Stoler 2008a). I am struck by how much is assumed about what colonial agents did, how they did it, and not least about how successfully they achieved—and how much they were convinced of—their taxonomic goals.

WHAT WE KNOW AND HOW WE KNOW IT

The science of order is the science of a lie. (Rancière 2004: 17)

‘Reason,’ as we know too well, is an elusive, indeed moving target: mobile in meaning, unfettered by scale, historically contingent, radically altered by context.⁷ In its movement between common noun and commanding concept, it may silently traverse the analytic heights of philosophy, detail the precise procedures of scientific enquiry, or ratify that which constitutes the thoughtful grounds for the most mundane acts. With a capital R it represents at once a European philosophical tradition of truth production, both the form and content of the kind of knowledge valorized in it. As a verb, ‘to reason,’ it often loses its philosophical command and epistemic weight. As an adjective to modify an action considered ‘reasoned’ and ‘reasonable,’ it parses shared understandings and prosaic requirements. As a modifier of ‘knowledge,’ the adjective ‘rational’ stands in its place to indicate either subsumption by a set of norms and procedures or conceptual schemes already in place, independent of what any practitioner may find on the ground. If sometimes these different senses of the term are distinguished, they often were, and still are, not.⁸ As students of empire have argued, the conflation of reason as a mental faculty, universal reason as a specific European logic, and reason—as opposed to emotion—as that which is required to make good judgements is no historical or

⁷ As Talal Asad notes, when people make claims about the concept of rationality (and religion) it is not always clear what concept of rationality they are using. See his *Genealogies of Religion* (1993: 235) and footnotes 57 and 58 therein. On the use of a concept of rationality in current debates that is ‘wider than mere scientific truth,’ see Chatterjee (1993), esp. 14–17; with respect to science as a ‘multivalent sign’ that ‘penetrates the fabric of social life’ in the history of Indian modernity, see also Prakash 1999: 7.

⁸ Akeel Bilgrami offers one enabling way to clarify our use of the concept of rationality in this impacted epistemic and historical space, suggesting that we distinguish between a ‘thin’ sense of rationality as that which is ‘uncontroversially possessed by all’ and a ‘thick’ sense of rationality that ‘owes to specific historical developments in outlook around the time of the rise of science and its implications for how to think (“rationally”) about culture and politics and society’. It is the ‘thick’ notion of scientific rationality against which Gandhi’s critiques were aimed, a position, Bilgrami argues, that he shared with many proponents of the Radical Enlightenment. See Bilgrami (2006) and the responses to it.

semantic accident.⁹ Their interchangeability has been understood to form part of the unspoken epistemological matrix of European superiority, the Enlightenment's legacy, a conflation that helped secure the hierarchical racial order of the imperial world.

Still, the archival record for this period of Dutch rule in its colonial heartland of Java and Sumatra sits uneasily with a conception of a rule of reason as its operative frame. If 'reason' was 'the syntax of reform', it was a grammar that yielded neither a clear political semantics nor straightforward rules of application. Dipesh Chakrabarty notes that the task of examining European rationalism in the history of empire is 'a matter of documenting how its "reason," which was not always self-evident to everyone, has been made to look obvious far beyond the ground where it originated' (2000: 43). I would agree. Our points of entry and sites of query are complementary. But they are not the same. Chakrabarty's are posed against what he sees as the warped, constraining optic of European colonial archives and the unspoken logic and forms of history that underwrote their implicit truth claims. My points of entry are the documentary forms and the political content subadjacently lodged within them. My sights turn more toward a history of what Gaston Bachelard once called 'epistemological detail', to those conceptual and political perturbations that disperse and hug close along—and on the ragged edges of—the European colonial archival grain (1940: 12).¹⁰ Or to put it differently: threats to colonial common sense come in many forms: some 'breaches of self-evidence' are pressed by colonial subjects; others erupt from within the protocols of governance itself, those moments 'when the certainties are lost' among those Europeans we have taken to be Reason's disciples and advocates.¹¹

The 'minor' histories, to which Dipesh Chakrabarty and I turn, converge and diverge as well. Both 'cast doubt on the "major"' and reflect on the ways in which the "rationality" of the historian's methods necessarily makes [relationships to the past] "minor" or inferior, as something "nonrational" ... as a result of, its own operation' (2000: 101). Chakrabarty's focus probes other ways of knowing 'subaltern pasts' excluded from what counts as history in a European mode. Mine rest with the unquiet minds of colonialisms' European practitioners to invoke what I think of as 'history in a minor key'. Such a history initiates a rereading of the anxious and anticipatory states that imperial governance engendered to better understand the regimes of security it produced and the expectant, affective economies on which imperial formations continue to depend.

My interest here is in the Dutch civil servants and in the social, industrial, legal, and medical technicians who worked directly for them or on the outskirts of their authority.

⁹ While much of the contrast was between reason and the authority of *religious* sentiments—of faith—it is the more general distinction between the calculus of reason and the capricious, unpredictable power of the sentiments that has had such lasting post-Enlightenment resonance.

¹⁰ The term 'epistemological detail' is actually Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's beautiful translation of Bachelard's methodological entreaty to turn away from '*un seul point de vue fixe*' and instead to imagine a 'method of arranged dispersion', '*une méthode d'analyse très fine*'. See Rheinberger (1997: 23).

¹¹ 'A breach of self-evidence' is Michel Foucault's definition of a historical event. See Foucault (1994); also Foucault (1997: 143).

Both groups palpably struggled with the criteria to use in assigning racial categories and evaluating moral dangers and political threats, and with how to make convincing and credible their assessments. They questioned not the validity of empire so much as the kinds of knowledge that served what they were counted on to know. Epistemic clarity eluded them: what a deep confidence in a 'calculus of reason' and science as 'the measure of men' might be imagined to bestow (Adas 1989).

To say that what constituted 'reason' for them was not self-evident is not to suggest that they were closet anti-imperialists, renegades to European colonial society, or unheralded descendants of the counter-Enlightenment. On the contrary, they were, as Paul Rabinow once aptly called them, colonialism's 'social technicians'—both fledgling and seasoned bureaucratic agents of empire whose reports had to be comprehensible and convincing to their superiors about who was a danger, what threatened security, and what was a risk (1989: 13). To make credible their recommendations, they needed to be versed both in the categories that demonstrated a skilled adherence to the repertoire of narratives deemed appropriate, and in the selective choice of contexts that accorded with those conventions. Such prosaic features of reportage were subject to the 'political rationalities' of rule but never dictated by the mandates of 'reason' alone.

WHO HAS A 'FEAR OF PHANTOMS'?

A ruler who is himself enlightened has no fear of phantoms, yet who likewise has at hand a well-disciplined and numerous army to guarantee public security, may say what no republic would dare to say: Argue as much as you like and about whatever you like, but obey! (Kant, quoted in Asad 1993: 203)

Whether construed as a period, a 'cultural climate', an intellectual phenomenon, a political legacy, or a disposition toward the world in Kant's sense above, the work Enlightenment thinking has been enlisted to perform may account for both less than its evocation promises and than its accusers profess: less in that classificatory zeal is often taken as evidence of its definitive imprint on colonial epistemology; less in that historical emphasis on the regulative 'architectonics' of reason privileges prescriptive categories rather than the fractious epistemic work and uncertainties of those who wrestled with them.¹² As with any commanding term elevated to a concept, the Enlightenment is a 'point of condensation' that gathers in its components, as it draws in affiliate concepts that provide resonance and make it 'work' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 20). It prescribes a *directionality*, pre-empts and prompts certain lines of enquiry. Most importantly, it forecloses and precludes others. It promises access and legibility, generalizations that comfort as they bind and arrest.

¹² On Kant's 'architectonics of reason', see Derrida (2005: 120).

Peter Gay, who has sought to remind us of the diverse and acrimonious currents within the Enlightenment, still celebrates it as a period marked by ‘the recovery of nerve’, a ‘ubiquitous and irresistible’ commitment to an ‘ardent and unshackled spirit of inquiry’ (1996: 11). Many historians might agree that nineteenth-century imperial projects relished that encyclopedic quest for knowledge and displayed that nerve, albeit in brash and destructive ways. But one might be equally struck by how much imperial management produced and displayed the opposite: a nervous reticence about what to know, distrust of civil servants who knew too much, a bureaucratic shuffling that regularly moved officials from one region or district to the next, favouring a bracketed know-how, stupefied states of ensured ignorance (as Avital Ronell 2002 might call them), and—ostensibly to curb collusion and corruption with local rulers—truncated local ties and thin familiarities. Local knowledge was filtered through and schooled in Dutch institutions in the Netherlands, a requirement for access to all but the lowest civil service positions. Only then was knowledge of Java brought back to Java. Valorized and relevant local knowledge, as I have long argued, could not be really local at all.

During the opening of East Sumatra’s plantation belt in the 1870s such strategies served them poorly. In the final chapters of *Along the Archival Grain* (2009), I recount the story of the abrupt dismissal of a certain newly transferred district officer, Frans Carl Valck, who, confronted by an unprecedented series of murders of European planters in the months before his arrival, was unprepared (and some thought unhinged) by the multiple acts of violence in and around the estates but as much by the wooden categories in which he was schooled to make sense of them. Outraged at the false facts imparted by planters, he was ultimately undone by what he knew, what he asked, and what he did not then know about the principles of imperial disregard expected of civil servants stationed near the European estates (181–236). He gave native rumours credibility over the confected facts plied to him by planters committed to maintaining their unencumbered control. Valck was ousted from the service and excised from colonial hagiographic history for knowing both too little and too much.

The iconic Enlightenment motto ‘dare to know’ may have animated some of the new ‘self-consciously scientific Orientalists’ that Christopher Bayly describes in his study of British political intelligence in northern India in the 1790s (1996: 118). And Andrew Goss (2011) may be right that the ‘floracrats’ in Java who collected and classified plants ‘strove for’ an Enlightenment ideal of ordered knowledge. But such quests and bravado were hardly typical of Dutch colonial practice in the Netherlands Indies. Massive compilations of statistics, scientific initiatives, and political intelligence were joined with a circumspect disposition toward knowledge of the world in which colonial civil servants lived. Someone like Frans Carl Valck was not alone in having to reckon with the failure of what he was schooled to take as prevailing common sense. It proved to be a poor guide for when and from what he should have properly turned away. Trust, the backbone of civil service collegiality, was strained in a social environment where people could not be sure to belong to the legal (European) status they claimed or to be whom they morally claimed to be. Or perhaps distrust was more deeply carved into colonial

relations among Europeans by the compounded illegitimacies of the profits and privileges accrued from their ventures.

The notion that the Enlightenment enforced a reduction to the 'calculability of the world' had more success in some domains of Indies administration than others. If the moral sciences were born of Enlightened Reason, the Dutch colonial archives tell other tales: ones in which the tools for delineating racial categories proved too blunt to do their work, inadequately sharpened to read those 'invisible ties', affective bonds and moral proclivities for which physical attributes provided poor access. Intuitions about comportment, habits, and affiliations filled in that with which more scientific criteria and measurements could not contend. If statistics was designed to subject social relations to the 'sweet despotism of reason', as Ian Hacking argues, it was a tool of limited use (1990: 35). It could not predict the political aspirations of those who threatened the state's projects nor could it identify the abnormally strong and wilful sentiments that coursed among them. It could not distinguish true Europeans from those who sought sundry means to claim that status. Not least, it could not identify those who would remain reliably loyal from those whose sentiments might turn them recalcitrant, stubbornly resistant to higher command, or subversive.

Let me underscore a critical point: at issue was not a 'failed' project of reason that nevertheless held dominant sway. There were successes and failures to be sure. My point is that rational, scientific ways of knowing the world were insufficient for governance. They were inadequate to describe the temperament of rule, nor did they capture how it worked. Priya Satia, in an incisive study of what she calls Britain's 'covert empire' in the Middle East, argues that intuitions guided intelligence strategies precisely because rational knowledge could not. This 'intuitive mode' may have been a 'radical departure from the dogged empiricism of earlier and contemporary efforts to gather information' within the British Empire, as she argues. Still, it was neither an invention emerging with the Great War nor was it specific to British intelligence operations as she repeatedly claims (Satia 2008: 6). Intuitive knowledge not only directed early twentieth-century spies on the edges of empire. In the Netherlands Indies, it also shaped the archives of security that document nineteenth-century imperial governance, the imagined and real threats on which those intuitions fed, and the intimate, secreted domains of bedroom and nursery into which the quest for 'security' invariably sought to reach (Stoler 1995, esp. ch. V). What separated grounded intuitions from extravagant fabrication was not always clear. However we might describe that space in between, it would not be captured by a commitment to 'rational knowledge'.

Nor was this the case just for the Indies. Thomas Richards argues that an 'epistemological paranoia' that 'conflated knowledge and terror' was the hallmark of a British 'corporate subject' in whom that paranoia 'can be seen as part of a larger and systematic phenomenology of rearmament'. Richards' insights about 'epistemological panic' draw on colonial fiction but these are descriptions that make sense of a much wider imperial phenomenon across the globe (1993: 14). From what was then the Netherlands Indies to South Asia, the 'supremacy of reason' might better be termed a fantasy of reason applied to the phantoms of empire.

Already figured as a key diacritic of the Enlightenment and of empire, as colonial historians we are quick to question the authority of Reason, but not its authority among colonial agents themselves. Doing so exposes equivocations that otherwise would have no rightful place. For example, if we take one common definition of ‘rational knowledge’ as that which allows one to order categories, recognize viable categories, and include or exclude members from them, its pre-eminent authority seems more tenuous, more fragile, less suited to bear its authoritative weight. Among empire’s agents, category errors were rampant, markers of difference were fluid and vexed. Orphanage directors had only vague guidelines when confronted with light-skinned children who chose to stay with their native mothers or fathers. Colonial lawyers filled their briefs on the regulation of mixed marriage with dense footnoted exegeses on the barrage of claims to European rights and membership (or outright rejection of them) that laws could not help them assess.

‘Rational knowledge’ did not always fail its purveyors and practitioners, but in situations in which it did so, it tended to do so again and again. Decisions about who counted as a European and by what measure, whether racial attributes derived from the tainted milk of a native woman who was or was not an infant’s mother, at what age a child of mixed parentage could be lost or redeemed as European, whether a Maltese or Italian in colonial Algeria was really French or merely ‘neo-French’ as the historian Pierre Nora once disparagingly called them (only designated as French by their ‘identity papers’, as he wrote), relied on multiple ways of apprehending and evaluating what Clifford Geertz once called ‘the tonalities and temper’ of the common sense of their social world (Nora 1961; see also Stoler 2011). Reasoning, as the philosopher Susan James asserts, is ‘arduous’. By popular Enlightenment notions of reason, it was ‘severe, rigorous, strict, exact, and above all *unpersuasive*’ (1997: 215). In the Indies, intuitions and the ‘considered thought’ of common sense, conveyed in ‘temper’ and ‘tonalities’, could sometimes have more purchase in the grey borderlands of race and in the invisible networks of ‘the enemy’ that imperial intelligence was charged to trace (Geertz 1983: 84). Racialized exemptions and exclusions did not depend on a fixed set of essentialisms but on protean and strategic rearrangements of them (Stoler 1997). The Enlightenment notion of reason—which James describes as ‘strict’ and ‘exact’—did not.

Intuition, as Aristotle imparted to his disciples, was the basis of reasoned wisdom, but colonial intuitions were turned to other ends. They emanated from an elaborately imagined world of potential enemies in the making, poised to storm their guarded privilege and sequestered space. What historians of science Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison call ‘epistemic worries’ were the constant concerns of governing agents (2007: 35). They were more aware than we, who feverishly cull their archived inscriptions, of their piecemeal knowledge and how much evaded what they were charged to count, measure, anticipate, and control.

If these tasks were usually seamlessly carried out, as my first distracted readings of the Dutch colonial archives’ formulaic narratives seemed to suggest, in repeated returns I have come to see more the uneasy labour that could appear as surface tremors through tedious reports and rote refrains. Contexts were never givens. The choice

of one rather than another could give credence to one set of truth claims, dismiss the validity of another, or frame the parameters and thus the 'causes' sought to explain an 'event'. Choices of context imply epistemic commitments, how they are contested and change. Whether the slashing of a European planter and his family was attributed to an Aceh-based Islamic assault on European rule or to the idiosyncratic passions of an abused and vengeful estate worker marshalled both different kinds of 'proof' and different ways of assessing mental states. What emerges as a choice of context indexes both how people imagine they know what they do and the affective grids of intelligibility on which they draw.

How words are used and repeated in these archives draws us close to this epistemic unease to broach something more than the strictures of bureaucratic conventions. Phrases and wording sometimes adhered to protocol; sometimes they marked falterings about the suitability and proper use of received designations. Such hesitations unsettle the sure-footed criteria of what 'goes without saying' so central to the force of common sense and to the fictive clarities of a taxonomic state.

The intensity and density of the debates that crescendoed in the late nineteenth century around one particular social category, that of the *inlandsche kinderen* (who were neither natives [*inlandsche*] nor children [*kinderen*] as a literal translation would suggest), offers a 'paradigmatic' site of this unease, in the sense that Agamben understands a paradigm, where the contradictions are on the surface—acute and exposed (Agamben 2009: 18). What colonial agents had to say about the category of *inlandsche kinderen* (a designation that constantly slipped between 'poor whites', Indo-Europeans, déclassé Europeans born in the Indies, and those who were mixed and veered more toward native cultural sensibilities than European ones)—and who officials differently imagined they were—is a story about the making and unmaking of that crafted clustering in the Indies' racial history. But it is not about that alone. It is also about the competing intelligibilities that racial regimes called forth. Hesitations about social labels and uncertainty about their use provide entry points to identify a 'breach of self-evidence'—Foucault's provocative definition, as we have seen, for a historical 'event'.¹³ These are moments of discernment, when colonial common sense and convention failed them, when that which people thought they knew, and how they might know it, they found they did not.

Inlandsche kinderen was a mobile designation about social milieu, an appellate and a political fact. That many Eurasian children were raised in 'respectable' families made no difference to the reams of colonial literature, newspaper articles, and confidential official documents that worried incessantly about the micro-environments in which they lived: whether children were acquiring the dispositions and cultural competencies to be European or in the case of poor mixed-blood children, whether they were properly

¹³ Foucault's phrase is actually a '*rupture des évidences*', but I prefer Paul Rabinow's rendering of it as a 'breach of self-evidence', which better captures than would a literal translation something between a 'break' and 'gap' and Foucault's identification of that which at one moment seems so obvious and at another no longer is so. See also Rabinow (2003: 41).

schooled in the unspoken rules that would limit their aspirations. Racialized perceptions and practices are rarely diminished or deterred by contrary empirical evidence. These are the complex social imaginaries that shape the emotional economies and sensory regimes by which people distinguish 'us' from 'them'.

Displaced histories are folded within the changing contours of who 'fitted' or refused the labels assigned to them. There is no colonial mindset lurking in the pen's shadow, no overarching *mentalité* floating in the ether of colonial space. We would do better as historians of colonial governance to attend to the ground lying between the resiliency and fragility of categories, to the moments when reasonings went awry, when the rubrics of 'poor whites' and 'mixed bloods' made little sense because people and things were not what and where they ought to be. Under such conditions the 'ought' could waver, either reassert its authority or dissolve in the face of its contradictions; a term might be abandoned, substituted, and changed. The contested epistemics of race emerge in these moments, the explicit and oblique ways of knowing on which the knowledge of social kinds relied. Social ontologies (and specifically racial ones) were reassembled and remade. Much of the provocation for *Along the Archival Grain* came from pausing when racial attributes once accepted as signature features of social membership were questioned or emphatically reaffirmed. Such unanticipated interruptions invite us to attend to what people did next. Some sought to press their queries further; others rapidly recoiled from their own doubts and disregarded what they saw or heard in favour of what they knew they were supposed to have witnessed, or what those they hoped and needed to trust, chose to report and said.

Epistemic labour is wedged within their narratives, sometimes slicing through received rubrics with uncensored turns of phrase, hesitant asides in marginalia, brash queries slashed across a page in the imperative or acquisitive tense. Confused assessments, parenthetical doubt about what might count as evidence, eyewitness accounts by those with dubious credentials, dismissed rumours laced with pertinent truth, contradictory testimonies called upon and quickly discarded—these are when words slip from their safe moorings to reappear unauthorized, inappropriate, and unrehearsed. In the epistemic politics of empire, it is not Enlightenment reason that guides their disquiet. Uncertainty provides the subjacent coordinates.

For the Indies, the Weberian model of rationally minded, bureaucratically driven state actors buttressed by accredited knowledge and scientific legitimacy, and backed by a monopoly on armed force demands modification. If homage to reason was a hallmark of rule, it was neither pervasive nor persuasive, nor yet its sole guiding force. As prominent in these colonial archives that range across public and secreted documents, official and private correspondence, and commissioned reports is not the rule of reason but what might be (mis)construed as its opposite—a discursive density around sentiments and their subversive tendencies, around sensibilities and their political consequences, around intuitive know-how, around assessments of affective dispositions and their beneficent and dangerous political effects.

I have fleshed out parts of this argument in *Along the Archival Grain* and will not do so here again. But it might be useful to elaborate on some key points. The 'political rationalities'

of Dutch rule—those strategically reasoned forms of administrative common sense that informed policy and practice—were grounded in schooling appropriate sentiments, in shaping appropriate and reasoned affect, in directing affective judgements, and in deterring those that collided with administrative control.

SENSIBILITIES IN POLITICAL RATIONALITIES

One defining feature attributed to the Enlightenment project was the normative guide it is said to have offered for subordinating individual passions to their rightful place in the social realm, and for the clear and principled distinctions it made between reasoned judgement and affective life. Both features have been subject in recent scholarship to critical re-evaluation. Students of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy are increasingly prepared to argue, as does Susan James, that the passions have been systematically ignored as a ‘central topic [in] the heartland of early-modern [Enlightenment] philosophy’ (1997: 25). It was Bacon who held that governance required knowing ‘how affections are kindled, and incited; how pacified and refrained, how they disclose themselves, how they work, how they vary, how they gather and fortify, how they are enwrapped one within another’. Members of the Indies administration understood that well. Colonial statecraft took seriously the force of affect and strove for its mastery. The concern in seventeenth-century political thinking that states should be called upon to harness individual passions, to transform and civilize the sentiments of their subjects through counteracting ones, as Albert Hirschman recognized, was ‘to prosper... as a major tenet of nineteenth-century liberalism’ (1977: 19). It was also to flourish as a key diacritic in distinguishing race.

Hirschman’s history of the passions suggests another genealogy. It would not be a history that starts with the supremacy of reason in the nineteenth century and then traces it back to the Enlightenment roots of rationality. It would rather set out one of equal force, and with as long a *durée*. It might register how much political theory and moral philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries contested the role of the sentiments in issues of governance. As numerous philosophers of the period now insist, the sentiments and affections were not always opposed to reason but were its ‘underbelly’ (Gaukroger 1998). Our genealogy might look to that eighteenth-century ‘culture of sensibility’, which tied material power and moral weight to the taste and character of cultivated and lettered men.

Most importantly, it would not start with a clear-cut division between reason and sentiment as distinct and given conceptual realms. Rather, it would track how they were entangled, disassembled, and conjoined. It would trace that sustained oscillation and ambiguous distinction between the two, not the definitive dominance of the former and their pointed severance. It might go further and attend to those moments—and events—in which the two did not collide as separate recognizable faculties but inextricably meshed. It might start from an observation shared among many across the

disciplines, that ‘emotions’ are not outside reason but privileged sources of critical judgement (Solomon 1988, 2004; see also Nussbaum 2001). It might pursue William Reddy’s claim that modernity’s early moments in the ‘age of reason’ could as accurately be characterized as an ‘age of sentiments’.¹⁴ It would register the work of sentiment in *constituting* both reason and political rationality in eighteenth-century philosophical debates. It might track the recursive features of that entangled political space.

Not least, it might allow us to work differently through the politics of the darker sentiments and sensibilities that imperial projects of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries continued to produce and on which they have continued to depend: anxiety, fear, and paranoia. These were fundamental to forging the technologies of security that cordoned off persons and space; that forced migration or restricted movement; and that legitimated expulsions, manhunts, and incarcerations. It is these affects that account for what Rob Nixon (2011) has called ‘the slow violences’ to which imperial polities adhered, violences that rational knowledge could not explain nor wholly help us comprehend.

Gertrude Himmelfarb argues that we have all been misled by imagining that the Enlightenment belonged to the French, or that their ‘ideology of reason’ faithfully captures what the Enlightenment was about. By her account, its more ‘enlightened’ expression emerged from the analytic and political impulses of British and Scottish moral philosophers with their attention to the ‘social affections’ (2005: 19). She is right to point to the affections but grossly misconstrues the sorts of political work those affections were enlisted to do. Her account of the beneficent virtues does not stray from Europe or the US. But the distribution of compassion, sympathy, and pity—who had them and to whom they were rightly directed—was pivotal to the workings of imperial formations. Each was part of the durable architecture of empire, with exacting exclusions and inequities structured through them. They charted the affective grid that separated true Europeans and their colonized others and provided the affective grounds on which racially distinguished ‘benevolent’ institutions were formed. Social hierarchies were created and bolstered by sympathy for empire’s subjects (Rai 2002; see also Stoler 2006b). Pity demanded distance and preserved it as forcefully as did segregated housing, pools, and schools (Boltanski 1999).

Himmelfarb’s chosen contemporary exemplar of an Enlightenment legacy makes precisely this point despite her own intention. She finds it alive and well in George W. Bush’s solution to curb welfare and social services for the poor, what he called ‘compassionate conservatism’, an aggressively punitive social project that she praises for ‘encourag[ing] the social affection of the one while respecting the moral dignity of the other’. On the contrary, compassionate conservatism was boldly marked by a racialized principle of distinction between those deserving of public welfare and those who were

¹⁴ William Reddy makes this argument explicit in his unpublished manuscript, ‘The Emotional Common Sense of True Modernity’, but more generally suggests such a rethinking in *The Navigation of Feeling* (2001) and *The Invisible Code* (1997). I thank him for allowing me to quote from this unpublished manuscript.

not. Not unlike Thomas Haskell's description of the principles that guided humanitarian sensibility in the early nineteenth century, sympathy provided 'an ethical shelter', a way of confining one's responsibility to a fraction of 'suffering humanity without feeling that we have thereby intended [to do so]' (Haskell 1985: Part 1: 352). That is the genealogy that should be tracked. As Hannah Arendt parsed pity, it is the pleasure of 'being sorry without being touched in the flesh' (1965: 80).

Partha Chatterjee has held that Reason with a capital R went 'untouched and unscathed' in the colonial project, following Hegel's lesson that because reason does not work directly on the subject or lower itself to becoming a particular thing, it cunningly makes the individual's passions work in its service. Some of the British colonial elite may indeed have seen empirical science as universal rational knowledge, free from prejudice and passion. But, as Johannes Fabian makes the case, the practices of British scientific explorers in Africa showed otherwise. In *Out of Our Minds* (2000), which he calls a 'critique of imperialist reason', Fabian argues that the accumulation of ethnographic knowledge was inseparable from the prejudices and passions that equally guided these men. Affective and emotional registers of experience were prerequisites, not hindrances to what they sought to know and how they were able to know it.¹⁵

If knowledge production among some scientific explorers was dependent on affective knowledge, the art of governance was as well. Like Hume, the Indies' governing elite saw the sentiments as contagious and portable. They pondered how far and fast social passions and political sensibilities could traverse the colony and globe. Dutch colonials wrote incessantly of the '*stille kracht*' (the hidden force of the Indies) that could destroy their collective project, the European community's security, an individual's sense of composure: what counted toward maintaining a European self and soul. This is not to rehearse *Heart of Darkness* but rather to underscore a point to which Edward Said hinted in his 1966 study of Conrad's letters. Conrad and those Europeans about whom he wrote did not live with the assurance of Reason at their backs, but with a troubled relationship to what they knew or, as Said put it, a 'problematic knowledge' of themselves. The 'syntax of reason' was found wanting, an impoverished grammar of intelligibility, for what they needed to do and act upon, and where they needed to locate themselves. It was not only then in the allegedly mystical, tradition-bound world of the colonized other where passions went amok and where people were animated by spectral fears and visions. Panivong Norindr (1996) is not alone in claiming that it was 'phantasmatic Indochina' rather than anything else that most French knew so well.

It was not just the failures of reason that disrupted the coherence of colonial agents and the policies they were charged to enforce. It was also an exuberant imaginary

¹⁵ It is hard not to notice that many of those most concerned with this relationship are eminent students of South Asian history and of the British Empire in particular. I would only note that just as our understanding of the graduated degrees of sovereignty on which imperial formations have been based do not coincide with the South Asian template, Dutch, French, US, German, and Spanish historiography has been far less bent on granting a rule of reason—or assaults on it—such a prominent place.

that produced a commitment to something else; what one might argue was a fundamental and frequent turn *away from reason* organized a spectrum of nervous, expectant, protective small and large-scale gestures: infeasible blueprints for colonial projects, improbable security measures, a continually shifting set of confinements, detentions, and displacements that were to reorder and bind the social and spatial partitions of their privileged, profitable, and insecure world, and could never do so enough.

EPISTEMIC PRACTICE

Recent thinking about the politics of epistemology and empire leaves little room to examine the *lived epistemic space* in which empire's architects and agents operated. What colonial actors imagined they could know and, more importantly, *what epistemic habits they developed to know it*, required competing, often implicit and changing epistemic frames. Rather than treating epistemology as a domain of the foundational, architectural, and fixed, I share a premise of historical and social epistemology: epistemic considerations are neither transcendent nor abstract. They are squarely of the colonial world. Treating epistemology as a navigational strategy alters field and ground and shapes what questions we ask. People sought to identify things they knew they could not see, 'racial membership' or political desires unavailable to ocular evidence. They sought to distinguish politically motivated passions from private ones, to know when the latter could turn into the former—and to know when they needed to act upon them.

In the Indies, the project and problems of the 'making up of people' pervaded the administrative archives, the Dutch-language press, and a century worth of colonial fiction; it also fed the epistemic anxieties that eddied around them. The production of social kinds entailed the codification of 'self-evident' measures to distinguish social privilege and political exclusion. In a colony where the legal stipulation for being granted European equivalent status entailed evidence of being 'at home' in a European milieu, what counted as adequate knowledge went beyond the preparatory courses for a civil service career. In distinguishing race, upbringing could be given more weight than paternity, comportment more credence than colour, and cultural competence more weight than birth. In this trained and strained social space, colonial agents relied on an intuitive reading of sensibilities more than science, on a measure of affective states—of affiliations and attachments—more than origins, and on assessments of moral civilities that were poorly secured by colour-based taxonomies or visual markers.

Surface perceptions were deemed unreliable, producing what the Dutch called 'fabricated' and 'fictive' Europeans, 'Europeans in disguise', and what French officials in Indochina most feared, natives and *métis* who 'fraudulently' were legally recognized and 'passed' as European. These categorical errors could only be accessed by another kind of

knowledge of 'hidden properties' of human kinds and interior dispositions, of inclinations secreted in their depths, probabilistic predictions about the political consequences of people's affective and moral states.

This, I have argued, is the space of colonial governance where truth claims compete, crushed by the weight of convention or resilient in the immediate threat of the everyday, where certainties are put to the test and credibility wavers. Classical probability theory in the Enlightenment, as Lorraine Daston aptly reminds us, was designed to measure the incertitudes of a modernizing world (1988: 6). Colonial civil servants were charged to do the same. In Daston's reading it is not Reason but Uncertainty that is key. I would agree. As interpretative communities both depended on rules of reliability and trust, on a shared common sense about what was likely that did not always serve them well. The historian of science Hans-Jörg Rheinberger too reminds us that a defining feature of scientific inquiry was a shifting 'boundary between what is thought to be known and what is beyond imagination' (1997: 11). In the domain of governance, it is that expectant space in between which has produced improbable strategies of defence and security and ever more elaborately streamlined profiles of the enemy. New epistemic objects with political import are produced in that haze between what one does 'not quite yet know' and that for which there is not yet a name. The making of colonial categories occupies this epistemic space. New social objects were the archives' product and only then turned into subjects of enquiry and objects of documentation.

Because imagining what might be was as important as knowing what was, these archives of the visionary and the probable should command our attention. Marked by erratic movement in verbal tense, the conditional mood could powerfully reshape an immediate response, revise the present and near future, and refigure events that had long passed. Prolific in producing the feared, the unrealized and the ill-conceived, such visions provide traces of troubled social topographies and agitations of a peculiar kind that prompted infeasible plans (such as those that the fascist linked Fatherland's Club proposed to set up agricultural colonies for mixed-bloods on the Indies' fringe in New Guinea) that could not be carried out, and even if they were, could not be sustained (Stoler 2010b: 106–8). That political scientists today are able to posit a new obsession with the anticipatory future tense in contemporary security regimes as a hallmark of our current political moment belies more than an historical myopia. It does more than grossly truncate the historical depth of these imaginaries. It foreshortens the imperial coordinates of a quest to specify the interior states of those whose reasoned affects remain unintelligible to the sorts of reason defined by imperial control.¹⁶ To follow these breaches and falterings renders the panoptic state based on rational knowledge a frail conceit. Even in such a quintessential product of bureaucracy and reasoned procedure as the state commission, preconceived protocols failed.

¹⁶ See for example, Colonomos (2010), who distinguishes today's security regimes from earlier ones and today's justification for 'preventive warfare' by justifications for the future.

For the European Pauperism commissions of 1901, proof of the difference between destitute whites and Indo-European paupers continually escaped the categories that field officers were directed to apply. 'Objective' data never told them enough. What they resorted to were conversant notions of who 'belonged' where, how people spoke to their young, sat, ate, and dressed. Neglect of children, indifference to work, succumbing to native standards were affective states not easily captured in numbers; condemnations of the sensory world in which poor whites lived shed more palpable and convincing evidence of what colonial agents already thought they knew about sorts of people and how race shaped their habits and inclinations. For such commissions on race, it is not science alone to which they turned but other ways of reading and rendering what distinguished social kinds. Both the Poor White Commissions of South Africa from the late 1920s and those of the Indies from 1900 and earlier, explicitly linked domestic relationships—between parent and child, nursemaid and infant—to the security of the state. Relations between people and everyday things—clothing, furnishings, room arrangements, and window-openings—were benchmarks of racialized distinctions. Eyewitness testimonies to intimacies of the home became data of a particular kind, critical to the state's audit of its commitment to the public good, to racial differentiation, and to its own viability (Stoler 2006a).

One is reminded of Max Weber's contention that bureaucracies excise those domains they cannot measure, by 'eliminating from official business love, hatred and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation' (Pugh 1990). But in the Dutch colonial bureaucracy such 'emotional elements' bore epistemic and political weight. To whom one expressed attachment vs. contempt, concern vs. indifference, respect or disdain provided cultural and legal 'proof' of who one really was, where one ranked and racially belonged. These were as much the grammar of rule as anything else. These were judgements and interpretations of the social and political world. They served as incisive markers of rank and the unstated rules of exemption.

Administrative anxiety was riveted on those affective states of European colonials which could not be easily gauged, on those neither within the state's reach to manage nor assess. An extraordinary public demonstration by European and Creole whites in Batavia in May 1848 (described at length in *Along the Archival Grain*), when family attachments threatened to crash against the demands for state loyalty, underscored how much those in charge of the city and the colony recognized that habits of the heart were both the subjects and objects of their political rationalities and could not be cordoned off. Such sentiments constituted the political, affected the internal workings of state, and shaped its course. Whether it was parental rage (at prolonged separation from their children who required schooling in Holland for elevated positions in the colonial civil service) or sentiments spawned by ferment in the streets of Paris and Amsterdam in the preceding months, were questions the authorities asked repeatedly among themselves. Again, a commitment to some notion of a universal reason proved insufficient to account for what those well-heeled among them would risk and demand.

CRITICAL HISTORY AS FIELDWORK IN PHILOSOPHY

The French historian Robert Darnton once defined ‘history in an ethnographic grain’ as history that attends to ‘thought about how they thought’ (1984: 3). It is not a bad starting point for reflecting on the conceptual clusters that imperial governance promoted and what those convergences looked like on the ground. But if it is methodological traction we are after, then it is not when common sense operated that should draw our attention but when it failed. More purchase still might come by staying close to those ‘epistemological details’ to which people attend, to the conceptual and non-conceptual tools they create, to how they imagine they know the interior states of others. Such a venture might be captured by what Pierre Bourdieu and Paul Rabinow, following John Austin, have called ‘fieldwork in philosophy’. For Bourdieu, that project entails a sociological mapping of the privileges on which elite knowledge formations draws, and on the exclusions that its procedures serve (Bourdieu 2000, 1990; Rabinow 2007; see also Austin 1957). Rabinow has pushed the venture further to identify the labour that goes into assembling ‘knowledge-things’ and to describe the practices that confer their authorization (2003: 85). In my view, ‘fieldwork in philosophy’ is equally about the making of ontologies and the inchoate processes that produce concept formation in lived epistemic space. It asks, historically and in our political present, how styles of political reasoning shift and endure, how structures of racial feeling are tacitly lived and framed (Williams 1977: 134). Fieldwork in philosophy, by my account, might track how new epistemic things emerge as responses to new political urgencies and historical contexts. Such an approach invites us to ask what methods colonial agents imagined were useful to make their worlds more intelligible, without assuming that reason rather than unarticulated sentiments and sensibilities were their guides.

SECURITY: BETWEEN REASON AND DÉRAISON

Any reading of Dutch colonial literature astounds one with its obsessive concern with a (supposedly fragile) *orde*. (Anderson 1966: 98, emphasis mine)

These lines, written by the eminent Indonesianist scholar Benedict Anderson in an 1966 essay, would seem to warrant little rewriting. But when republished twenty-four years later, the crucial parenthetical phrase—‘(supposedly fragile)’—disappeared, replaced by ‘a menace of order’ (1990: 133). For Anderson it might have been a trivial revision (with the snide adverbial remark ‘supposedly fragile’ perhaps excised as redundant given that reference to a Dutch ‘obsessive concern’ with order, already nailed the critique). But I would argue otherwise, that it is in the slippage between