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THE BRINY SOUTH

DISPLACEMENT & SENTIMENT IN THE
INDIAN OCEAN WORLD

Number of Miles

NIENKE BOER

THE BRINY SOUTH

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THE BRINY SOUTH

A THEORY IN FORMS BOOK

Series Editors Nancy Rose Hunt and Achille Mbembe

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DISPLACEMENT AND SENTIMENT

IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD

Nienke Boer

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Kerst & Marieta Boer

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INTRODUCTION

Enslaved, Indentured, Interned

Upon receiving these blows the prisoner expressed himself, without equivocating, as such: I do not want to be silent, and must retain my right to speak; adding: Sir must stop hitting me like that.—CAESAR VAN MADAGASCAR, 1793

The Council of Justice at the Cape of Good Hope tried Caesar van Madagascar in 1793 for grabbing and slicing in two the *sjambok* (a kind of rawhide whip) that the slaveholder, Daniel Malan, had been using to whip him.¹ Caesar was sentenced to twenty-five years of hard labor, in chains, on Robben Island. His words underscore what seem to be self-evident truths: that the right to speak is a necessary precondition for resistance and speech a form of expressing the internal self. In the absence of autobiographical narratives by the enslaved from the Indian Ocean world, it is tempting to turn to the detailed legal records from the Dutch and later British courts in these regions to find the voices of the enslaved.

These represented voices, however, cannot be taken at face value, as they are always mediated through documents of imperial power. *The Briny South: Displacement and Sentiment in the Indian Ocean World* examines the supposed sentiments of the disempowered as they appear in various genres: court records, political pamphlets, memoir, and fiction. From the seventeenth-century Dutch colonial occupation at the Cape of Good Hope to the twentieth-century segregationist apartheid state, this book examines the danger of sentiment when recorded in archives—both legal and literary—of imperial violence. Throughout, I chart a path between analyzing the imperial context of subaltern sentiment and attending to breaks in the archive of imperial control, through which a glimpse of “subjectivity in bondage” can be seen.² Between these two forms of analysis lies a history of sentiment as violence in the development of a racialized order in the Indian Ocean.

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Caesar van Madagascar's example, supposedly a direct quote, reads like a political claim to the right to speech, particularly when coupled with his action of destroying the weapon with which the man had beaten him. The phrase with which his manner of speech is described, *without equivocating* (*zonder bewimpeling*), even seems to express a kind of admiration for the directness of the utterance. But the court officials recorded it as part of a narrative about insubordination, in which the exact details (such as Caesar's recorded statement that "I was awake early, but because the weather was bad, I did not want to get up") evince "excessive and inappropriate remarks," and thus justify his cruel punishment.³ The proximity of speech to violence in Caesar's recorded remarks, in which he seems to couple his right to speak to his demand that the slaveholder stop hitting him, is mirrored by the proximity of the act of recording speech and the violence of the courtroom. This reflects the complex relationship between the representation of subaltern speech and the exercise of symbolic violence in the naming and creation of identities. Whether or not Caesar uttered these exact words, once they enter the archival record, they are framed by the prosecutor in a way that exceeds the moment of utterance. At the same time, these words linger on the page, becoming legible to future researchers in a different way from how they were received at the time, creating a small rift through which it becomes possible to imagine the subjectivity of the enslaved.

If increased mobility, in the form of voyages of exploration, territorial conquest, and settlement, marks the advent of European modernity, the other, or obverse, side of that coin is the forced or coerced mobility of millions of enslaved persons, penal deportees, soldiers, indentured laborers, and war prisoners. These individuals are set in motion by the twin demands of imperial expansion: war and labor. Such forced displacement remains the side of empire experienced by most of the world. *The Briny South* deals in this obverse empire. In this book I discuss accounts of enslaved persons transported to the Cape of Good Hope by the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or VOC) from their Indian Ocean outposts in South and Southeast Asia and East Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; narratives by and about South Asian indentured laborers sent to the British colony of Natal between 1860 and 1911; and the writings of South African war prisoners shipped to camps in British India and Ceylon during the second South African War (1899–1902). These three groups comprise the majority of unfree migrants crossing the Indian Ocean under European imperialism. While individual systems of forced or coerced displacements in the Indian Ocean have been the subject of several excellent

studies, *The Briny South* juxtaposes these three forms of displacement, using the depiction of speech and silence as a locus to examine how sentiment functions in the formation of displaced identities.⁴

The term *sentiment* in this book denotes the depiction or representation of emotions. I start from the premise that we have no access to the immediate experience of emotion, particularly in historical subjects: all we can analyze is how emotion is conveyed. The somewhat stilted term, *sentiment*, stresses that there is nothing unmediated about these depictions. *Sentiment* also differs from *affect*, which was first used in psychoanalysis to distinguish the feelings discerned by the analyst, considered nonnarrative, from the emotions explicitly expressed by the analysand.⁵ *Affect* thus describes the realm of nonverbal expressions of emotion: facial expressions, tone of voice, and so forth. *Sentiment* here refers to how emotion and affect are described and recorded, in legal, political, and personal writing. Sentiment, then, is particularly vulnerable to manipulation. The use and misuse of sentiment works to both silence and racialize the subaltern transnational subjects I study. Sentiment informs how individuals are imagined, as slaves or indentured laborers—and, eventually, how they can imagine and represent themselves. As Lisa Lowe explains, “Elaborations of racial difference were not universal or transhistorical; they did not occur all at once but were local, regional, and differential, articulated in dynamic, interlocking ways with other attributes of social difference within various spaces in an emerging world system.”⁶ This book focuses on the forms of racialization that emerge out of the displacement of individuals across the Indian Ocean and the role played in this process by the representation of sentiment in documents of imperial control.⁷

When speaking particularly about the most marginalized subjects of this book, the enslaved and indentured, the truth is that the sentiments ascribed to them by others are the only aspect of their inner lives we can access. Whether in court records, as described by witnesses or accusers, or in the political pamphlets written by abolitionists or anti-indenture activists, we can only read what is recorded. Even Caesar van Madagascar’s voice, expressing anger and rebellion, is mediated by the legal archive. Hence my focus specifically on sentiment, as a mediated representation of emotion. In the cases where we have access to individuals representing their own emotions as sentiments, in autobiographical writings, these are relatively privileged subjects as compared with the enslaved and indentured: an abolitionist writing about the British Cape Colony, for example, or a Boer war prisoner publishing a memoir after the war. The term *sentiment* still applies though, as even in fashioning their own narratives, these individuals are responding to

historical pressures to frame their emotions, and the emotions of others, in a certain way.

Take, for example, a pamphlet written by Mohandas K. Gandhi during his time in South Africa, titled *The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa: An Appeal to the Indian Public* (1896). In this pamphlet, he indicates that his previous complaints to the British authorities had been dismissed as “grievances . . . more sentimental than material.”⁸ Partly because of the sentiment-laden appeals of earlier abolitionists, British officials, Gandhi suggests, were no longer responsive to appeals foregrounding the sentiments of the powerless. Gandhi’s response is to foreground the material consequences of anti-Indian rhetoric and policy. When Gandhi thus describes one particular case involving an indentured laborer, he is careful to balance his description of the suffering of the man with concrete evidence of bodily harm, while showing the man as capable of writing out his own complaint. Gandhi’s pamphlet can be directly contrasted to an 1826 pamphlet by Scottish abolitionist Thomas Pringle on the enslaved at the Cape Colony, in which they are depicted as dismal, silent victims, while the abolitionist speaks on their behalf.⁹ In the seventy years between these two texts, the strategy regarding the representation of the emotions of the marginalized as sentiment has shifted, reflecting both historical changes and the relative positions of privilege occupied by Pringle and Gandhi, respectively. The use of sentiment is thus always contingent upon the conditions of its legibility, which are set by the powerful.

The ability to control the depiction of sentiment is dangerous. It is dangerous because of the ease with which these sentiments can be manipulated, controlled, and rewritten by the keepers of the documents of power. This danger plays out slightly differently throughout this book, as I move from the Dutch Cape of Good Hope to apartheid-era South Africa. Initially, it may be surprising that the sentiments of the enslaved did not require suppression or censorship in eighteenth-century court records, but the texts I examine in the first chapter begin to demonstrate how sentiments can be manipulated, both in the court records and in literary discourse more broadly, to ascribe specific characteristics to the enslaved. In the nineteenth century, sentiment-filled writing by both pro- and antislavery activists is used to render the enslaved as inarticulately suffering: an insidious form of racialization that infantilizes the enslaved while centering the authority of the abolitionist or slaveholder. Turning to writing about indenture, we see Gandhi acknowledging the dangers of sentiment in his suggestion that the political use of sentiment by the oppressed is easily dismissed by those in power.

The dangers of sentiment become particularly visible in the twentieth century. While sentiment is initially subject to vigorous censorship in the British prisoner-of-war camps where captured Boer fighters find themselves, something disturbing happens when sentiment is seized upon by later Afrikaner nationalists: sentiment becomes a justification for the oppression of others, including the descendants of indentured laborers and the enslaved. Apartheid theorists and lawmakers explicitly deploy sentiment to perpetuate the precarity of South Asians in South Africa, whereas Afrikaners are, partly because of the now-enshrined suffering of the Boer war, seen as rooted in the soil. Sentiment, while sometimes treated as a form of resistance that needs to be suppressed by those in power, never successfully becomes a weapon of the subaltern, suggesting that the language of sentiment is always biased toward the powerful.

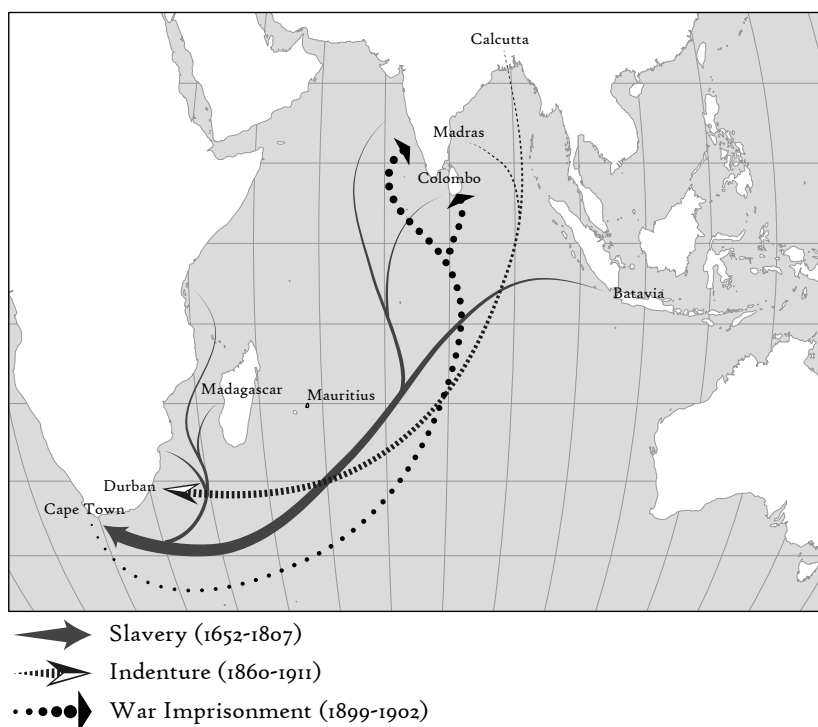
For those displaced across the Indian Ocean during the period under consideration, the ocean forms the backdrop against which their new lives must play out. The ocean is the start (and sometimes the end) of their journey, and even though they may never cross the ocean again, this oceanic displacement can never be completely forgotten. These are oceanic stories, even as they are not all stories about the ocean. Many of the sources I examine document the desire, on the part of these individuals, to turn away from the ocean—to establish a life outside of slavery or indenture; but these acts of escape still take place against the backdrop of the oceanic journeys that lead to these individuals' appearance in the archives. These journeys thus suggest a productive intersection between two contemporary approaches within the humanities: Global South studies and ocean studies. Both fields emerge as ways of investigating an increasingly global, transnational literary terrain that is no longer tied to nation-states or continental area studies.¹⁰

This intersection between Global South and ocean studies, which I term the *briny South*, mobilizes the strengths of these two approaches to map an imagined cartography that combines the historical depth of ocean studies with the political and ethical drive toward understanding the subaltern experience of globalization that marks Global South studies. *Briny* here, of course, refers to the ocean ("of or pertaining to brine or the sea; saturated with salt," an adjective used in this context since 1618), to reflect the saltwater that continues to mark the lives of these oceanic migrants.¹¹ It also refers to the more colloquial use of the term as a noun to refer to the ocean—the briny—to indicate the vernacular nature of the kinds of networks studied under this heading. Drawing on the increasing geographic fluidity of both

fields, the *South* in *briny South* does not refer to the geographic South but acknowledges that all oceans have histories in which global Souths and global Norths are entangled: voyages of conquest and exploration involved the labor of innumerable sailors, ship's cooks, indigenous navigators, and so forth, who have been largely rendered anonymous in historical memory, while the same ships that transported captive Africans to the "New World" also carried settlers, adventurers, and merchants profiting from the trade in human lives.¹² The briny South paradigm focuses on the role of the world's oceans in perpetuating forms of oppression and exploitation throughout history, but it also draws attention to the emergence of oceanic lines of subaltern connection, solidarity, and shared resistance to globalized networks of power. This book imagines the Indian Ocean as a specifically briny South site: a site of subalternization and solidarity, of violence and care, with a long history of transnational exploitation and connection.¹³

The transatlantic slave trade has dominated understandings of modern slavery. Shifting focus to the Indian Ocean, however, allows for a change in perspective on involuntary displacement and bonded labor, emerging out of the differences in legal systems, local histories, languages, and imperial documentation styles prevalent in these two oceanic worlds. The Dutch East India Company adapted and expanded various forms of preexisting slave trading networks in the Indian Ocean world from the seventeenth century onward.¹⁴ Whereas the Atlantic slave trade was unidirectional (the enslaved were transported from Africa to various regions of the Americas), the enslaved in the Indian Ocean were transported in multiple directions, between Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Mascarenes, Madagascar, and Africa.¹⁵ The Cape of Good Hope, for example, served only as a destination for the enslaved, as the African indigenous inhabitants of the Cape could not be captured or sold into slavery.

As the enslaved came from South and Southeast Asia, as well as Madagascar and the eastern coast of Africa, the racial dynamics of enslavement were different than in the Atlantic. The types of sources available to us from the Indian Ocean also differ: Dutch, French, and eventually British courts in Ceylon, Batavia, the Malabar and Coromandel coasts, the Mascarenes, and the Cape of Good Hope tried both enslaved and free inhabitants in the same courts, thereby producing volumes of historical records in which details about the everyday lives of the enslaved are documented. The story of Indian Ocean involuntary displacement is one of recorded legal speech and autobiographical silence, as opposed to the anglophone Atlantic world, which produced autobiographical narratives but legal silence. The glimpses of



MAP 1.1. Map of the Indian Ocean, showing the routes taken by the enslaved, indentured laborers, and war prisoners between South and Southeast Asia and Southern Africa. Map by Areet Roychowdhury with revisions by Geoffrey Wallace (G. Wallace Cartography & GIS).

“subjectivity in bondage” from these oceanic worlds complement each other, even as the Indian Ocean narrative of unfree labor has, until now, only been told in parts.

This story of unfree labor begins in 1653, one year after the first Dutch settler ships arrive at the Cabo de Goede Hoop, at the southwestern tip of the African continent. This is when the first enslaved man, Abraham van Batavia, landed at the Cape on the VOC ship, the *Malacca*. Following this, other ships from South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Africa, and Madagascar would transport the enslaved to the Cape. In the early years of the settlement, the most important source of forced labor was the Indian subcontinent (Arakan/Bengal, Malabar, and Coromandel) and Ceylon. Though persons continued to be traded from South Asia well into the eighteenth century, after 1731 more individuals came from Southeast Asia (Sulawesi, Java, Dutch Timor, and Malacca). A further source of forced labor, which became increasingly

prominent under the later British occupation of the Cape, was eastern Africa, with enslaved persons coming from East Africa, Madagascar, and Mozambique. By 1795, the official figures listed 16,789 privately owned persons, and 400 to 650 persons owned by the company, though historians agree that the former was probably an underreported number. The enslaved joined a growing community of sailors, soldiers, farmers, servants, and administrators from various parts of Europe. The Khoikhoi and San people—the indigenous inhabitants—were, at the same time, being displaced and coercively employed by these Europeans.

As part of the French Revolutionary Wars, the British occupied the Cape (along with Malacca, Cochin, and other Indian Ocean VOC settlements) in 1795, continuing to buy and transport a large number of enslaved persons from various parts of the Indian Ocean. While there were inquiries made into curtailing the importation of the enslaved into Cape Town as early as 1797, slavery was described as a “necessary evil” at the time by a member of the Council of Policy, who wrote, “Yet, the business is done. Slavery exists and is now even indispensable.”¹⁶ In 1808, the British Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1807) was enforced in the Cape Colony (as the, by now, far larger settlement is known), and in 1834, the enslaved at the Cape were emancipated.

The next chapter of this story takes place on the southeastern coast of Africa, in Natal, colonized by the British in 1818 after the end of the slave trade. Following the emancipation of the enslaved in the British Empire, British and other colonies turned to indenture—a system whereby workers signed indenture contracts to labor for a specific period of time in another part of the world in return for passage (usually return passage) and wages—as a source of labor. Under this system of indenture in the nineteenth century, 1.5 million laborers traveled from South Asia to British and Dutch Guiana, Trinidad, the French Caribbean, Fiji, British East Africa, Natal, and Réunion.¹⁷

The substantial sugar plantations cultivated by British settlers in Natal starting in the late 1840s required cheap labor—and in 1860, the *Truro* landed at Durban carrying 342 indentured laborers from British India. Over the next fifty years, 151,842 more indentured laborers traveled to South Africa, under contracts ranging from three to five years. The transport of indentured laborers to Natal continued (with some modifications and occasional suspensions) until 1911. While some of these laborers returned to India, many chose to stay and settle in South Africa.

Tensions between Dutch settlers and their descendants, who became known as the Boere (farmers), and English-speaking British settlers, were

simmering at the Cape even before the British occupation of 1795 and resulted in the so-called Great Trek that began in 1835, when many Dutch-speaking settlers moved to occupy the interior of South Africa, beyond the territory occupied by the British. By the end of the nineteenth century, this conflict between the British and the so-called Boer Republics, the South African Republic (Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek) and the Orange Free State (Oranje Vrijstaat), had escalated into two wars, the first South African War (1880–1881) and the deadlier second South African War (1899–1902).¹⁸ During the course of the war, the British military authorities shipped around twenty-four thousand war prisoners to islands within the empire (Bermuda, St. Helena, and Ceylon) and eventually to the mainland of British India. Between August 1900 and May 1901, 5,127 war internees were transported to Ceylon, and from April 1901, 9,131 prisoners were transported to India, where they were kept in a number of different camps in the Punjab, Bengal, Madras, and Bombay Commands.¹⁹ Prisoners were allowed to return to South Africa at the conclusion of the war on May 31, 1902, if they agreed to take an oath of allegiance to the British Crown.

The juxtaposition of these three groups in one study should not suggest equivalence. Reading the narratives by and about these groups next to each other, however, allows me to highlight unexpected connections. As a methodology, connected histories is particularly productive for a space like the Indian Ocean, where historical connections between different oceanic rim communities predate European interventions in this arena.²⁰ On one level, this project follows the trajectory of those who crossed the Indian Ocean at the whim of empire, traveling between Southeast Asia, South Asia, and southern Africa. But I also trace the less obvious textual connections between forms of displacement through the figurative deployment of speech and sentiment.

The censored sentiments of Boer war prisoners, for example, resurface as the sentimental claims of belonging to the land that animate the racial thinking of an early-apartheid legal theorist against South Asian would-be settlers. Or, take the affective connection with Ceylon expressed by Boer war prisoner J. N. Brink, engendered by his childhood memories of songs about the island. To fully grasp the depth of that connection, the modern reader must understand the lines of continuity between the Dutch and British Indian Ocean empires. Gandhi's efforts to highlight the material, rather than sentimental, grievances of indentured laborers stem from earlier abolitionist use of sentiment in advocating for the enslaved—a strategy that, Gandhi suggests, no longer worked in the late nineteenth century.

Such lines of connection are often invisible, not only in traditional area studies approaches, where the history of South Africa is treated as separate from that of Asia, but also in studies of South Asian diasporas (which focus only on journeys outward from South Asia), or empire studies (in which Dutch, British, and French empires are usually studied as separate systems). These displacements are forms of “minor transnationalism,” as described by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih. Dutch Indian Ocean slavery, indenture in South Africa, and the internment and transportation of Boer prisoners of war have all been overshadowed by other narratives: enslavement and indenture in the Atlantic Ocean world and Boer war concentration camps for women and children. As Lionnet and Shih point out, rather than placing the minor in juxtaposition to the major, there is value in examining the unexpected connections that emerge when putting the minor in conversation with other minors.²¹

Taking a *longue durée* view of each of these systems of coerced displacement allows me to demonstrate the interplay of different empires and their afterlives, showing how, for example, the Dutch imperial footprint at the Cape influenced the British legal system and how, in turn, British systems of displacement and control influenced later apartheid lawmakers and theorists (the indenture contract providing a model for apartheid theorist Geoffrey Cronjé, for example). This is a form of what Laura Doyle refers to as *inter-imperiality*: the understanding that empires, and those at the mercy of empires, exist not independently but in a web of relations, which include the realms of language and aesthetics. As Doyle suggests, labor and the control of labor power lie at the heart of the imperial project, but, as my project also shows, hegemonic control includes the “near monopoly of the power to name relations and ‘identities’—a wish to control the terms of relationality.”²² It is this relationship between the control of labor and the control of naming that I locate at the intersection of law and sentiment.

Legal genres are continually entangled with sentimental expressions: from the early court records to Gandhi’s legal pamphlets, sentiment is deployed as a weapon to silence, rather than reveal, the inner lives of the powerless. Over the course of the book, I examine court cases, laws, ledgers, complaint books, correspondence, pamphlets, censors’ reports, public commissions, articles, newsletters, and folk songs, as well as South African and South Asian works of fiction and autobiography such as Gandhi’s autobiography, Ansuyah R. Singh’s novel *Behold the Earth Mourns*, Pringle’s poetry, and memoirs by Boer war prisoners. These texts were selected because of their relationship to the archive of imperial dominance and control, circling outward: from court

records and legal complaints, laws, imperial ledgers and complaint books, public commissions and censors' reports, where the words and voices of the oppressed appear only in strict constraints, to the pamphlets, articles, and newsletters that represent the official response to those imperial documents, to works of autobiography and fiction increasingly distanced in time from the original acts of displacement and violence, these documents allow me to investigate the strategic use of sentiment as a silencing force.

My approach in each chapter is twofold. First, I describe and analyze the conditions of possibility for speech to both be recorded and understood. These conditions are both formal and legal—the rules that govern the recording and legibility of speech depend both on the form in which it is recorded and the actual laws governing the circumstances under which it can be recorded or understood. This is an historical project, in which I engage with the texts and narratives within the context of the period in which they were written.

Second, then, once the limits governing the recording and legibility of speech have been established, I attempt a more utopian project of attending to the unspoken, or barely spoken, or unheard, along the margins of the recorded and archived. Here, I engage in what Ann Laura Stoler calls reading “along the grain” of the archives, or Stephanie E. Smallwood theorizes as “the counterfact, by which I mean the fact the archive is seeking to ignore, marginalize and disavow—the detail it does not want to animate and make narratable,” or Stephen Best calls attending to “impossible speech” or “gossamer writing” (“a writing predicated on knowing what withholds itself from the possibility of being known, one that sought to acknowledge without actually knowing”).²³ As this list suggests, my methodology builds upon the work of scholars of colonialism and slavery in other contexts—historians and literary theorists who have also grappled with the question of how to engage with archives of power, acknowledging the distorting effect of that power without giving up the possibility that an alternative viewpoint can be wrested from the discourse of absolute control. By attending to the modes of expression adopted by the powerless within the limits established for their possibility of speech, I offer a glimpse, not of the voice of the oppressed or their inner lives, but of an opaque, counterfactual, impossible, or gossamer form of subjectivity that can be conjectured but not fully grasped.

The chapters in this book are organized chronologically to tell the story of unfree transnational displacement, sentiment, and law in the Indian Ocean from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

Chapter one, “Representing Speech in Bondage in the Court Records of the Dutch Cabo de Goede Hoop, 1652–1795,” examines the witness statements, interrogations, sentences, and confessions in eighteenth-century Cape court cases, asking why lawmen of the time chose to include supposed direct speech, and specifically speech expressing strong emotion, by the enslaved in these documents. I argue that the inclusion of these fragments of direct speech forms part of a larger system of legal verisimilitude that creates plausible narratives through the inclusion of actions, speech, untranslated exclamations, and visual description, rather than exposition or summary. In the final part of the chapter, I suggest that portraying enslaved voices in the archives also allows for textual friction—heteroglossia, ambiguity, and untranslatability—to infiltrate these records, such that contemporary readers can glimpse an alternative to the slave archive as purely crypt or tomb.

In chapter two, “Silencing the Enslaved: The Aesthetics of Abolitionism in the British Cape Colony, 1795–1834,” I analyze discourse by abolitionist Thomas Pringle, slaveholder S. E. Hudson, and the civil servants working at the Office of the Registrar and Guardian of Slaves to show that the enslaved are silenced in similar ways by abolitionists, slaveholders, and civil servants alike, through the erasure of their imagined direct speech in all these writings. Though the disappearance of direct speech by enslaved persons may seem like a minor change, I contend that it is part of a larger process by which the enslaved are increasingly spoken for, or ventriloquized, by pro- and antislavery activists alike. Abolitionist discourse produces the figure of the slave that will persist in the public, and administrative, imagination: inarticulate, suffering, and lacking in moral complexity or depth. Turning briefly from Pringle’s Romantic poetry to the question of visual representation, the final part of the chapter asks about different ways of imagining the enslaved, suggesting that slave ledgers offer an unsettling alternative aesthetic compared to Romantic depictions of the enslaved circulating at the time. These ledger pages, I propose, invite an ethically engaged contemporary artistic encounter with the archive of enslavement.

Chapter three, “‘Grievances More Sentimental than Material’: Representing Indentured Labor in Natal, 1860–1915,” examines the distinction drawn by Gandhi in an 1896 pamphlet on British Indians in South Africa between “material” and “sentimental” grievances, demonstrating how the indentured community at large increasingly reframed their legal complaints as the former. These texts by and about indentured laborers show that, in contrast to the effectiveness of sentimental descriptions in abolitionist discourse, appeals to the sentiments of contemporaneous readers are seen as less effective

than concrete demonstrations of material harm. This chapter concludes by briefly turning to contemporary debates about indenture as either a new system of slavery or a form of free labor migration to demonstrate the enduring impact of equating indentured laborers with the enslaved. Examining sources from the indentured diaspora beyond Natal, I suggest more nuanced frameworks for thinking about indenture and its legacies today.

The first three body chapters of this book respond to the lack of conventional autobiographical material produced by the enslaved and indentured in the Indian Ocean. Focusing mainly on legal documents, I ask whether these imagine and depict the subaltern displaced subjects as speaking, or silent. I thus take literally Gayatri C. Spivak's famous question about subaltern speech and adapt it slightly to ask under which circumstances the subaltern *can be depicted as speaking*.²⁴ The first two chapters reveal an evolution in the conventions governing court records, which mirrors public discourse on slavery more broadly. While expressions of sentiment on the part of the enslaved are intelligible, and valid, in earlier Dutch court records, legal documents are increasingly scrubbed of sentiment at the same time as abolitionist authors weaponize the expression of sentiment in writing. Later in the nineteenth century, when indentured laborers are transported to Natal, the illegibility of sentiment as a valid form of official complaint can be seen when Gandhi stresses that material grievances are more effective in law. These two centuries thus see a solidification of the conventions of legal complaints, court cases, and public discourse such that expressions of sentiment become invalid, or at least illegible, in these forms.

The final two body chapters ask, then, what happens to sentimental utterances in the writings of private individuals. In which forms can sentiment be expressed, and how is this affected by genre? These chapters demonstrate that the dichotomy of speech and silence is never clear-cut: even in writing memoir and fiction, genre shapes and constrains the forms in which experiences can be described, and the sentiments that can be expressed. In Lauren Berlant's useful working definition, genre is "a loose affectual contract that predicts the form that an aesthetic transaction will take."²⁵ Genre conventions and sentiment are closely linked: certain genres demand specific sentiments and govern the way in which those sentiments are expressed.

Titled "A Sentimental Education in Boer War Imprisonment Camps in South Asia, 1899–1902," chapter four examines how expressions of sentiment regarding both the Boer Republics and the British Empire change over time: from letters and newsheets written in Diyatalawa to memoirs published immediately following the war to memoirs published in the 1930s

and 1940s as Afrikaner nationalists were consolidating power. The British attempted a sentimental education in the prisoner-of-war camps, using the censorship of news from South Africa, amongst other strategies, to turn unruly Boer rebels into pacified British subjects. This sets the scene for understanding newssheets circulating in the camps during the war and memoirs written by former war prisoners immediately afterward. Both memoirs and newssheets read not, as one would expect, as prison or war writing, but as travel literature. The descriptions of landscapes and sightseeing excursions in these texts suggest a cultural imaginary built on travel and cultural exchange, as opposed to the insular Afrikaner nationalism that would follow empire. By inscribing their work in the narrative tradition of European explorers and travelers, these writers both occupy and satirize the position of the British subject. However, comparing these immediate postwar memoirs with ones edited and published in South Africa in the 1930s and 1940s demonstrate how, in these later texts, sentiments of nostalgia for the South African landscape begin to dominate the narrative, reflecting a growing national myth of Boer war suffering and ties to the land.

The final chapter turns to the writings of South Asians living in South Africa as apartheid gains ideological ground, to see how these authors mobilize the sentiments associated with the settler narrative to combat the lawfare of the segregationist state. Chapter five, “Sentiment and the Law in Early South African Indian Writing, 1893–1960,” traces the afterlife of the indenture contract in fictional and autobiographical texts by South African Indians, including Ansuyah R. Singh’s *Behold the Earth Mourns* and Gandhi’s *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Placing Gandhi’s autobiography in conversation with lesser-known narratives written by South African Indians allows me to reinterpret it as typical of a certain kind of “settler” narrative in which both the descendants of indentured laborers and traders who traveled to South Africa imagine themselves as settlers. However, the specter of the indenture contract introduces the rhetoric of law into their work, at odds with the sentimental language associated with settler narratives. The turn to the settler novel as a form of resistance in apartheid-era South Africa makes sense when read alongside apartheid legal theorist Geoffrey Cronjé. Cronjé deploys specific sentimental tropes we begin to see emerging in the previous chapter about the relationship between the Afrikaner and the land to argue for the perpetual outsider status and permanent exclusion of so-called Asiatics.

The conclusion, or coda, “No Human Footprints,” collapses the time between the imperial Indian Ocean world and the present moment. In this

short coda, I turn to the invocation of Robinson Crusoe—both as a character in the eighteenth-century novel but also as the fictional incarnation of Robert Knox, a seventeenth-century captive on the island of Ceylon—in recent legal documents about the Chagos Archipelago, a series of islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean. References to “man Fridays” and “human footprints” in British claims justifying the deportation of the descendants of the enslaved and indentured laborers from these islands exemplify the invocation of literary expressions of sentiment in shaping legal narratives about displacement even today.

Increasingly, works on enslavement and its afterlives in the Atlantic context have been reckoning with the violence of research on slavery itself: in the now-famous formulation posed by Saidiya Hartman, “How does one revisit the scene of subjection without replicating the grammar of violence?”²⁶ Scholars like Stephen Best and Christopher Freeburg have traced the development of scholarly approaches on slavery, from works that saw enslaved Africans as rendered childlike and powerless by the fact of enslavement, to social histories concerned predominantly with identifying moments of resistance and agency, to what Best calls a current thread of “melancholic historicism” concerned with the “taking possession of . . . grievous experience and archival loss.”²⁷ This latter kind of work, Best contends, sees in the horrors of enslavement both the origin and the mirror of contemporary experiences of Blackness.²⁸ In this work, I avoid both simply diagnosing the agency, or lack thereof, of the subaltern and collapsing the distance between the present and the past. Shuttling between different historical moments, I see the relationship between them (borrowing again from Best) as one of neither pure causality nor pure analogy.²⁹ The past does not lead inevitably to the present, but neither is the present simply a repetition of the past. During apartheid, slavery in South African history became, for many writers, simply an allegory for apartheid.³⁰ In the postapartheid years, slave memory has, as Pumla Dineo Gqola describes, played a prominent part in reconstructing or remembering postapartheid identities.³¹ Rather than attempting to locate the genealogy of the present in the past, however, each of the chapters in this book aims to immerse the reader in the archival materials from that period. While I remain thoroughly aware of the dangers of working with the imperial archive, and the inability of texts—even memoir and fiction—to fully escape its mediation, I also try not to succumb to the melancholy that Best diagnoses. In each chapter, I point to strategies (whether historiographic, artistic, literary, or political) through which we can attend to speculative glimpses of subjectivity in bondage—flashes of a world in

which someone like Caesar of Madagascar would have a “right to speak,” and have his words heard, more than 220 years later. What emerges from this methodology is, on one level, a transnational history of apartheid, tracing the centrality of different forms of forced imperial displacement, and the legal frameworks that accompanied them, to apartheid ideology. However, forced displacement is also one of the key features of imperialism as it played out across the globe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At a broader level, then, this book is a study of the effect of displacement in the formation of racialized identities across the imperial world, the consequences of which still reverberate today.

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- 1 Worden and Groenewald, *Trials of Slavery*, 613. My translations throughout, with reference to the translations provided by Worden and Groenewald.
- 2 Simon Gikandi suggests that the challenge to scholars of the Black Atlantic is to “recover black subjectivity in bondage.” Gikandi, “Rethinking the Archive of Enslavement,” 91.
- 3 Worden and Groenewald, *Trials of Slavery*, 612–13.
- 4 For studies of Indian Ocean displacement, see, for example, Clare Anderson and Kerry Ward on convicts in the British and Dutch empires, respectively; Nira Wickramasinghe on slavery in British Ceylon; Megan Vaughan on slavery in Mauritius; Pier M. Larson on slavery in Madagascar; Marina Carter and Khal Torabully on indenture in Mauritius; and Robert Shell on slavery at the Cape. Anderson, *Subaltern Lives*; Ward, *Networks of Empire*; Wickramasinghe, *Slave in a Palanquin*; Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island*; Larson, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement*; Carter and Torabully, *Coolitude*; Shell, *Children of Bondage*.
- 5 My understanding of these terms is influenced by the work of affect theorist Sianne Ngai, who summarizes the differences between *affect* and *emotion* in *Ugly Feelings*. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*.
- 6 Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 7.
- 7 Ann Laura Stoler points out that, far from separating reason from emotion, Dutch colonial governance was particularly interested in sentiment. She argues that “the ‘political rationalities’ of Dutch colonial authority—those strategically reasoned forms of administrative common sense informing policy and practice—were grounded in the management of such affective states, in assessing both appropriate sentiments and those that threatened to fly ‘out of control.’” I draw on her understanding of sentiment and its role in governance and racialization in my analysis. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 59.
- 8 Gandhi, *The Grievances of the British Indians*, 361. I return to Gandhi’s writings in chapter three.
- 9 Pringle, “Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope.” I return to Pringle’s writings in chapter two.

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- 10 For a summary of developments in ocean studies, see Bystrom and Hofmeyr, "Oceanic Routes." For more on the Global South as a framework in literary studies, see Mahler, "Global South," and Armillas-Tiseyra and Mahler, "Introduction: New Critical Directions."
- 11 "briny, adj.1," OED Online, accessed June 1, 2020, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/23400>.
- 12 Regarding the nongeographic nature of the South in the Global South, Magali Armillas-Tiseyra argues that a "non-locational understanding of 'Southness'" allows for "wide-ranging and flexible frameworks of association rooted in the identification of processes and shared experiences rather than location." Armillas-Tiseyra, *The Dictator Novel*, 20–21. For more on moving away from traditional geographic notions in ocean studies, see Cohen, "The Global Indies."
- 13 For other potential uses of the framework of the *briny South*, see Boer, "The Briny South."
- 14 For an overview of the Indian Ocean world, see Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe*, Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, and Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*. For more on early Indian Ocean systems of slavery and bondage, see the various case studies found in these edited volumes: Reid, *Slavery, Bondage*; Campbell, *Structure of Slavery*; Campbell and Stanziani, *Bonded Labour*; Chatterjee and Eaton, *Slavery and South Asian History*; and Alpers, Campbell, and Salman, *Slavery and Resistance*.
- 15 For more on the history of Indian Ocean slavery under European empires, see, especially, Allen, "Satisfying," and Schrikker and Wickramasinghe, *Being a Slave*. Marcus Vink, in an overview of Dutch slavery in the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century, estimates that, in 1688, there were about four thousand company-enslaved persons and sixty-six thousand individuals enslaved by private slaveholders spread out in settlements across the Indian Ocean. The main overseas Dutch entrepôts at the time were Batavia (Java) and Colombo in Ceylon. Vink, "The World's Oldest Trade," 167.
- 16 Crais and McClendon, "The Necessity of Slavery," 47–48.
- 17 For more historical background on nineteenth-century indenture, see Northrup, *Indentured Labor*; Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*; Jung, *Coolies and Cane*; and Shimpō et al., "Asian Indentured and Colonial Migration."
- 18 For a comprehensive bibliography of the second South African War, see van Hartesveldt, *The Boer War*.
- 19 War Office, *General Questions*, 4–5.
- 20 One very influential argument on connected histories is Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories."
- 21 Lionnet and Shih, *Minor Transnationalism*.
- 22 Doyle, *Inter-Imperiality*, 4.
- 23 Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*; Smallwood, "The Politics of the Archive," 125; Best, *None Like Us*, 25–26.
- 24 Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"
- 25 Berlant, "Intuitionists: History and the Affective Event," 847.
- 26 Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 4.

- 27 Freeburg, *Counterlife*; Best, *None Like Us*, 15.
- 28 Jared Sexton and Frank Wilderson's work on Afropessimism as a philosophical worldview falls into this category, as does Christina Sharpe's compelling *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Wilderson, *Afropessimism*; Sexton, "Afropessimism: The Unclear Word;" Sharpe, *In the Wake*.
- 29 Best, *The Fugitive's Properties*.
- 30 On the use of slavery as an allegory for apartheid in literature, see Johnson, "Representing Cape Slavery."
- 31 Gqola stresses the "ongoing entanglements" of the past with the present that produce what she calls the "cost of rememorying"—that "changes the present as well as conceptualisations of the past." Gqola, *What Is Slavery to Me?*, 19.

CHAPTER 1. REPRESENTING SPEECH IN BONDAGE IN THE COURT RECORDS OF THE DUTCH CABO DE GOEDE HOOP, 1652–1795

- 1 Worden and Groenewald, *Trials of Slavery*, 163. My translations throughout, with reference to the translations provided by Worden and Groenewald. Sequential quotations from *Trials of Slavery* are indicated by in-text parenthetical citations with the name of the person accused and year, as well as the page number from *Trials of Slavery*. In some cases I have consulted additional archival documents not published by Worden and Groenewald. These are indicated in the text by the abbreviation CJ (Council of Justice) and their archival reference number. While I have largely attempted to preserve the long sentences and convoluted references of the original, I have added quotation marks to instances of direct speech for ease of comprehension.
- 2 Gikandi, "Rethinking the Archive of Enslavement," 91, emphasis added.
- 3 Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 3.
- 4 For a discussion of the enslaved as represented in French legal systems in Mauritius and Louisiana, respectively, see Vaughan and White. Matthias van Rossum, Alexander Geelen, Bram van den Hout, and Merve Tosun have published a collection of court cases from Cochin on the Malabar Coast under the Dutch. Nira Wickramasinghe's *Slave in a Palanquin* looks at court cases from Ceylon, but in the period I study in the next chapter, after the British take over these Dutch colonies in 1795. Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island*; White, *Voices of the Enslaved*; Van Rossum et al., *Testimonies of Enslavement*; Wickramasinghe, *Slave in a Palanquin*.
- 5 Christopher Freeburg elaborates on these dichotomies and the historiography of slavery in the Black Atlantic. Freeburg, *Counterlife*.
- 6 Worden and Groenewald, *Trials of Slavery*, 163.
- 7 Lynn Festa charts the use of the term *sentimental* as well as the link between sentimental writing and sympathy as understood in the eighteenth century in Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire*.
- 8 Worden and Groenewald, *Trials of Slavery*, 163.
- 9 Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire*.