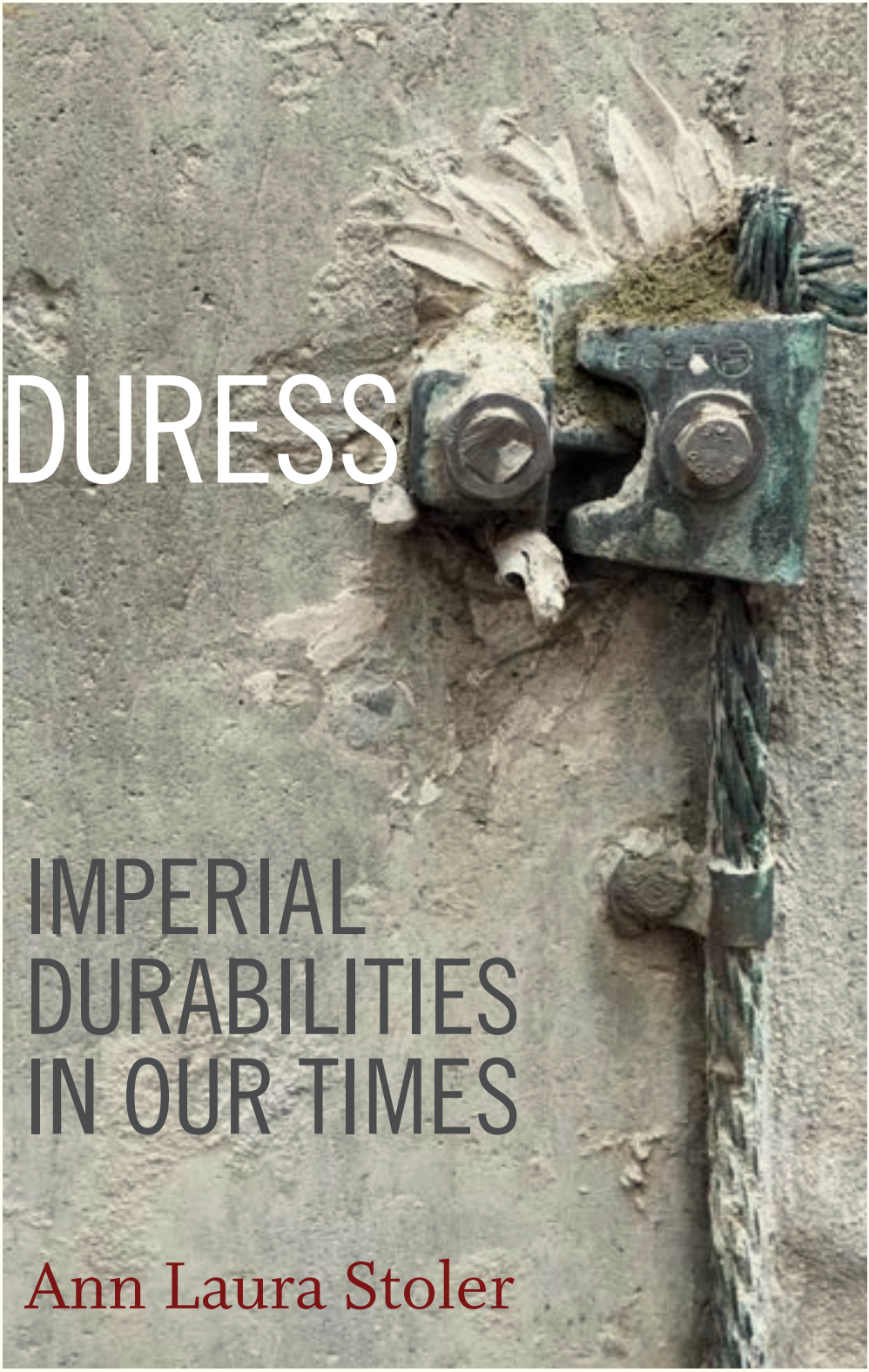
DURESS
IMPERIAL
DURABILITIES
IN OUR TIMES
Ann Laura Stoler

A JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN CENTER BOOK

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DURESS

IMPERIAL DURABILITIES IN OUR TIMES

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED to those living contained and constrained in two places I have been honored to teach: Palestine and at the Eastern Correctional Facility in Napanoch, New York. In their different ways, these colleagues, students, and friends have sharpened my capacity to look and feel for the forms that duress takes and the endurance it demands. Their insights—critical, conceptual, visceral, and acute—have clarified both those questions worth attending to and why they matter for those living in the shadows and glare of imperial formations.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

Use of the term "colonial studies" or "(post)colonial studies" rather than "postcolonialism" may call for some explication. I have avoided the term "postcolonial" for some time. Despite the warnings of those who rightly insist that it is not a time period but a critical stance. In practice, however, the term "postcolonial" often references a critical perspective on a past colonial situation (too easily made distinct from our own) or on those who bear the costs of living in a space that was once colonial and is no more. However finessed, the bottom line is something that this book attempts to tackle: the temporal and affective space in which colonial inequities endure and the forms in which they do so.

I have addressed these temporal difficulties here in several ways. No matter how "post" one's stance may be, the fact of living both colonial relations that are alive and well and postcolonial predicaments at the same time should command our political work and analytic attention. In arguing for a recursive history and the uneven sedimentation of colonial practices in the present, I intend to retain the "post" as a mark of skepticism rather than assume its clarity. I choose to avoid the artifice that makes the "cut" between the colonial and postcolonial before asking how those temporalities are lived. I prefer "(post)colonial" studies to emphasize a colonial "presence" in its tangible and intangible forms and to acknowledge that there are colonial "presents"—as those who work in Australia and the Americas would argue and those concerned with a Palestinian/Israeli context would contend.

For a more informal discussion of the trajectory of this book and the concerns that have informed its writing, see the interview done by Valentine Daniel for *Public Culture* (24, no. 3 [Fall 2012]: 487–508). I thank Val for crafting an interview that allowed movement among personal anxieties, political investments, and conceptual blockages, concerns that more often are submerged in formal genres of exposition. In the end, this remains a project in formation with more to unlearn and to change.

APPRECIATIONS

I think of appreciations to underscore the privilege and accrued value—rendered in a flash or in longer gestation—of thinking with colleagues, students, and friends. My hope is that their patience and persistence have made the arguments clearer, the arc of the book more accessible, and its form traceable to those who have inspired me along the way.

I thank Larry Hirschfeld, who persistently demanded a simpler word, a cleaner statement, a better parsed phrase, and Adi Ophir, with his fine-grained thinking about concepts (despite and because of my adherence to "conceptual labor" and his to "conceptual performance"), who has been such a generous presence and inspiration and who provided detailed comments on a condensed version of chapter 3. I thank Lila Abu-Lughod for her incisive comments on chapter 2. For help with chapter 4, I especially thank Didier Fassin, Eric Fassin, Larry Hirschfeld, Achille Mbembe, Richard Rechtmann, Janet Roitman, and Miriam Ticktin for their insights and comments. A shorter version of that chapter appeared in *Public Culture* (23, no. 1 [Winter 2011]).

Chapter 5 profited from close readings by Frederick Cooper, Fernando Coronil, Fasail Devji, Larry Hirschfeld, Amy Kaplan, Claudio Lomnitz, Ussama Makdisi, and the anonymous reviewers for *Public Culture*. The latter part of the chapter was thought through with graduate students in my first seminar at the New School for Social Research and especially with David Bond, who urged me to further specify what I meant by any particular term

and often offered an explication that was better than my own. An earlier version of this chapter appeared in *Public Culture* (18, no. 1 [Winter 2006]).

A first version of chapter 6 was prompted by an invitation from New York University's humanities initiative in the lecture series "Exporting Enlightenment: The Local Careers of a Global Idea" in 2008 and expanded with the comments of those, especially Allen Feldman and Robert Young, who engaged my incipient formulations. I thank Graham Huggan for his comments on an earlier version of chapter 4, published in *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*, which he edited. Chapter 7 first appeared as "Racial Histories and Their Regimes of Truth," in *Political Power and Social Theory* (Stamford, CT: JAI Press, 1997).

Chapter 8 is based on research done in the south of France in 1997–98 with the help of Frederic Cotton, Chantal Février, and Annie Roquier. Research in 1999 was carried out with Delphine Mauger, who at the time was an undergraduate in anthropology at the University of Michigan. The Literature, Science and Arts faculty fund, the Office of the Vice President, and the Institute for Research on Gender at the University of Michigan generously provided funding. A synoptic version of the chapter was published in the *Journal of the International Institute* (7, no. 1 [Fall 1999]). And a version of chapter 9 appeared in Anne Berger, ed., *Genre et postcolonialismes* (Paris: Éditions des Archives Contemporaines, 2011). The project that prompted chapter 10 was originally conceived with my former colleagues at the New School for Social Research, Adriana Petryna and Vyjayanthi Rao, in fall 2005. I thank both of them for thinking with me about the politics of scarred tissue, debris, and exposures. The chapter itself appeared in partial form in *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

Finally, I thank Ken Wissoker, who has always been the consummate editor and gently makes me know that revisions based on readers' responses, however trying, make things better. Both Charles McDonald and Katie Detwiler read through the essays, as the manuscript became a book in formation. Both of them, in their eminently incisive ways, pushed me to make explicit sensibilities that they each reminded me were my own. Finally Kevin Swann took on the task of preparing the manuscript for publication, at a time that it was not easy for him to do so and Erick Howard kindly and skillfully finished the preparation and rendered the index, what I always think of good references to be, a conceptual roadmap, attentive to those connectivities that most matter as readers cull what is useful to think with—for adjacent efforts or different tasks.

I. CONCEPT WORK

FRAGILITIES AND FILIATIONS

1

CRITICAL INCISIONS

ON CONCEPT WORK AND COLONIAL RECURSIONS

How do colonial histories matter in the world today? Are not these histories of a past that is over and done with, as former imperial polities and those once subject to them deal with more pressing issues: epidemics, disaster management, persistent racial inequities, ecological catastrophes, forced dislocations and refugee populations, humanitarian failures, border regimes, and security protocols that impinge on their everyday and future possibilities? Did not decolonization confer sovereignty and autonomy nearly fifty years ago on most of the world that was once colonized, making postcolonial disorders and globalization the issues at hand? And do not these histories matter more to a bevy of academics than they do in a contemporary world in which the past is something that needs to be reckoned with so younger generations can be freed to move on?

It is one premise of this book that these are indeed issues of the day but that many of the most urgent ones—be they toxic dumping in Africa, devastated "waste lands," precarious sites of residence, ongoing dispossession, or pockets of ghettoized urban quarters—are features of our current global landscape whose etiologies are steeped in the colonial histories of which they have been, and in some cases continue to be, a part. It is the contention of this book that many of these conditions are intimately tied to imperial effects and shaped by the distribution of demands, priorities, containments, and coercions of imperial formations.

Those connectivities are not always readily available for easy grasp, in part because colonial entailments do not have a life of their own. They

wrap around contemporary problems; adhere in the logics of governance; are plaited through racialized distinctions; and hold tight to the less tangible emotional economies of humiliations, indignities, and resentments that may manifest in bold acts of refusal to abide by territorial restrictions imposed or in the flare of burning tires in "sensitive" urban quarters. Colonial counterinsurgency policies rest undiluted in current security measures. Molten in their form, colonial entailments may lose their visible and identifiable presence in the vocabulary, conceptual grammar, and idioms of current concerns. It is the effort of this venture to halt in the face of these processes of occlusion and submersion, to ask about how they work, their differential effects; and on whom they most palpably act.

COLONIAL PRESENCE

Tyranny is a pedagogic scenario of pure loss. . . . The question of education is no longer the question of how to transmit knowledge but of how to suspend it.—Martin Heidegger, The Art of Teaching, *1945*

Some work in the field of (post)colonial studies has assumed that the connectivities joining colonial pasts to "postcolonial" presents are self-evident and unproblematically identified and accessed. This book starts from the premise that more often they are not. Many of the "vestiges" of colonial constructions seem as though in easy reach. Local and regional administrative units may be kept in place, albeit outfitted with new agents; the segregated divisions of colonial urban planning may be demolished but still mark the social geography of where upscale housing clusters and where dense settlements of privation remain. While many of the roads, railways, bridges, and canals built under colonial engineering projects with forced local labor may be in disrepair or bombed out, elsewhere they have been refurbished to move people and produce to service new profit-sharing ventures between national elites and foreign multinationals. Oil palm plantations may no longer serve to transform peanut butter into a U.S. staple. Indeed, they now do much more as their acreage has expanded to supply one of the major biofuels in the world today. Plush shopping malls built over razed squatter settlements with police dogs guarding their gates are the Janus face of the "postcolony" from Johannesburg to Jakarta.

But colonial constraints and imperial dispositions have tenacious presence in less obvious ways. The geopolitical and spatial distribution of ineq-

uities cast across our world today are not simply mimetic versions of earlier imperial incarnations but refashioned and sometimes opaque and oblique reworkings of them. Colonial pasts, the narratives recounted about them, the unspoken distinctions they continue to "cue," the affective charges they reactivate, and the implicit "lessons" they are mobilized to impart are sometimes so ineffably threaded through the fabric of contemporary life forms they seem indiscernible as distinct effects, as if everywhere and nowhere at all. The preserved disrepair of colonial buildings are top selling points in tourist excursions throughout the world: colonial homes refitted as colonial-era hotels confer the nostalgic privilege of those who can pay their price; girls' boarding schools are turned to the profit of "educational tourism"; slave quarters are now assigned as World Heritage sites; colonial ministries are updated as archival depots for the dissertation industry; plundered objects are refashioned as ethnological museums in metropolitan centers to valorize cultural difference. All are comforting affirmations that colonialisms are over, initiatives and gestures that firmly and safely consign those places and sometimes the people who once inhabited them as frozen icons of a shamed and distanced past.

But leftovers are not what most interest me here. Connectivities to those colonial histories that bear on the present can escape scrutiny: some of those that are most pressing evade recognition. I ask why and how that may be so. The analytical tools we use to identify either historical continuities or, alternatively, profound ruptures from the past may be obstacles rather than openings. Colonial archives can impede the task: They have a way of drawing our attention to their own scripted temporal and spatial designations of what is "colonial" and what is no longer, making it difficult to stretch beyond their guarded frames. Qualified and celebrated memories black out censored ones. Environmental effects of colonial agribusiness are renamed and compressed into more generic ecological hothouse phenomena in our climatically sensitized anthropocentric world, sharply cut off from the history of imperial mandates that set them on their damaging course. *The acrid smell of industrial rubble masks, and is often more palpable than, the toxins of imperial debris.*

Or perhaps there is a problem with our vocabularies. The scholarly romance with "traces" risks rendering colonial remnants as pale filigrees, benign overlays with barely detectable presence rather than deep pressure points of generative possibilities or violent and violating absences. The

"haunting" trace seems too easily unmoored from material damages and disseminated landscapes, or from border barricades installed as colonialism's parting gestures, now hardened and more intractable than stone. Duress, as I shall argue, has temporal, spatial, and affective coordinates. Its impress may be intangible, but it is not a faint scent of the past. It may be an indelible if invisible gash. It may sometimes be a trace but more often an enduring fissure, a durable mark. One task, then, is to train our senses beyond the more easily identifiable forms that some colonial scholarship schools us to recognize and see.

Not recognizing these colonial genealogies, however, may have as much to do with what the connectivities between past and present are *expected* to look like—what are imagined as the dominant features of colonial formations, the attributes assigned to what colonial governing strategies are thought to have encompassed, or what colonial racism is thought to have looked like (always posed as so much fiercer than they are today)—how tangible or intangible those effects are expected to be.

Here I consider what methodological renovations might serve to write histories that yield neither to too smooth continuities nor too abrupt epochal breaks. Each chapter attempts to capture the uneven, recursive qualities of the visions and practices that imperial formations have animated, what they have both succeeded and failed to put in place. Each works through a set of conceptual and concrete reconsiderations of the logics and sensibilities that pervade our imperial present, that evade easy access and still carve out the jagged lineaments, political scissions, and some of the deep fault lines of the world today.

ON THE LINEAMENTS OF DURESS

Duress (n.) *early 14 c., "harsh or severe treatment," from Old French duresse, from Latin duritia "hardness, severity, austerity" from durus "hard" (see* endure*). . . .* —Online Etymology Dictionary, 2014

French dure-r, to last, continue, persist, extend < Latin durare to harden, be hardened, hold out, last. Sense of "coercion, compulsion" is from 1590s.—*Dictionary.com, 2016*

1. *Hardness, roughness, violence, severity; hardiness of endurance, resistance, etc.; firmness.*
2. *Harsh or severe treatment, infliction of hardship; oppression, cruelty; harm, injury; affliction.*
3. *Forcible restrain or restriction; confinement, imprisonment.*
4. *Constraint, compulsion; spec. in Law, Constraint illegally exercised to force a person to perform some act.*—Oxford English Dictionary, 1989

"Duress" figures in the title of this book to capture three principal features of colonial histories of the present: the hardened, tenacious qualities of colonial effects; their extended protracted temporalities; and, not least, their durable, if sometimes intangible constraints and confinements. *Duress*, *durability*, and *duration* in this work all share a politically inflected and afflicted historical etymology. But *endurance* figures here, as well, in the capacity to "hold out" and "last," especially in its activated verb form, "to endure," as a countermand to "duress" and its damaging and disabling qualities.

How one chooses to address imperial duress depends in part on where and among whom it is sought, how it is imagined to manifest, the temporalities in which it is lodged, and the sensory regimes on which it weighs. As an object of inquiry, it demands that we ask how we know it and what the political consequences are of knowing in certain ways. One founding premise of this book is that the concepts called on to identify and make sense of the durabilities of colonial duress may be inadequate to the task. An excursion through the politics of conceptual labor is the meat of the chapters that follow. The political effects and practices that imperial formations impose and induce are its marrow.

Duress, then, is neither a thing nor an organizing principle so much as a relation to a condition, a pressure exerted, a troubled condition borne in the body, a force exercised on muscles and mind. It may bear no immediately visible sign or, alternatively, it may manifest in a weakened constitution and attenuated capacity to bear its weight. Duress is tethered to time but rarely in any predictable way. It may be a response to relentless force, to the quickened pacing of pressure, to intensified or arbitrary inflictions that reduce expectations and stamina. Duress rarely calls out its name. Often it is a mute condition of constraint. Legally it does something else. To claim to be "under duress" in a court of law does not absolve one of a crime or exonerate the fact of one. On the contrary, it admits a culpability—a condition induced by illegitimate pressure. But it is productive, too, of a diminished, burned-out will not to succumb, when one is stripped of the wherewithal to have acted differently or better.

In recounting his life as an invisible, racially marked man in the mid-twentieth century United States, Ralph Ellison described his writing as an effort to access "the lower frequencies" of human experience.[1] Duress may be one elemental attribute of that very domain: not manifest in the scenes

1. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952), 579.

of high-pitched drama but what is borne at "lower frequencies," the quotidian defamations of personhood inflected at an insistent pace, or punctuated, mercilessly, in non-verbal registers. If duress is borne, we might ask what forms it takes, the conditions that produce the silenced exertions it demands, encumbered possibilities, relations of power incrementally imposed. Situations of imperial duress might be measured by the force embodied in it and the frequency by which it is applied, by the limits on endurance and the refusals it produces in its wake. Duress as I conceive it is a relationship of actualized and anticipated violence. It bears on those who are its perpetrators, produces anxieties, and expanding definitions of insecurities that are its effect, a demolition project that is eminently modern, and as Franz Fanon conceived it, a form of power that slashes a scar across a social fabric that differentially affects us all.

Not least, the landscape of duress depends on the concepts we call upon, those seen as available and construed as relevant, those that call on us and command our attention.[2] Conceptual conventions may do more than get in the way. Such conventions can hamper our capacities to re-vision those histories and dislodge what we imagine already to know. At issue are the ready-made concepts on which we rely and what work we call on them to do; less obvious may be an adherence to an implicit notion of the stability of concepts, more fixed than are concepts themselves.

My interests are threefold: in the distributions of inequities that concepts condone, inscribe, and inhabit; in the challenges of writing new colonial histories that press on the present; and, not least, in unlearning what we imagine to know about colonial governance and why those understandings and misrecognitions should continue to concern us now.

In identifying the sinews and sites of duress, concepts emerge as seductive and powerful agents. They invite appropriation, quick citation, promising the authority that such invested affiliations are imagined to offer. They also invite unremarked omissions when their capacities to subsume are strained, a setting aside of what seems uneasily, partially, or awkwardly to

2. My use of the "we" here is not meant to assume a unified "we" or a striated unified one but to signal a disparate and dispersed "we" of those who each deal in our different ways with colonial histories and colonial presence. I make no assumptions that the "we" is shared in terms of intent, content, location, or form, but do contend that anyone working on imperial formations must grapple with the conceptual conventions and the currency of vocabularies called upon.

"fit" within the analytic repertoire of "cases" that confirm both disciplinary protocols and ready analytical frames.

The sort of conceptual labor I work through here attempts a venture unyielding to easy fit, one that is about neither the "usage" of concepts nor acts of "borrowing." It is, rather, an exercise in attentiveness and vigilance in a provisional, active mode. The challenge is both to discern the work we do with concepts and the work that concepts may explicitly or inadvertently exert on us. Rather than acquiesce to the resolute security that concepts may be marshaled to confer, we might better look to the unmarked space between their porous and policed peripheries, to that which hovers as not quite "covered" by a concept, as "excess" or "amiss," that which cannot be quite encompassed by its received attributes, when "portability" is not self-evident, to that which spills across its edges.

How to think otherwise (*penser autrement*)—a project that Michel Foucault took as his own task—is always the critical challenge. In an effort to do so, these chapters make two entwined moves: one to examine a set of concepts familiar to those concerned with colonial histories and imperial formations and to ask how well these concepts have worked; and two, to ask what sorts of rethinking and reformulations might allow a better understanding of the political grammar of colonialism's durable presence, the dispositions it fosters, the indignities it nourishes, the indignations that are responsive to those effects. The latter move is not necessarily offered as a replacement for those concepts, on some of which colonial regimes avidly called. Rather, thinking otherwise is to inhabit them differently, to envision how to recast the resilient impingements and damages to which imperial forms give rise. Not least, the task is to recognize the force field of colonialism's conceptual web in which many more of us than often acknowledged remain entangled. Some are elements in what I have elsewhere argued are the "imperial dispositions of disregard": that which makes it possible—sometimes effortlessly and sometimes with strenuous if unremarked labor—to look away.[3]

Each of these chapters is an intervention of sorts that reflects on the conceptual vocabulary and interpretive categories that might open to the occluded, alternative genealogies of imperial effects. Each seeks to think

3. For an earlier effort to capture what it is both to know and not know the imperial strictures to which one is tethered, and the demands to which one is bound, see Ann Laura Stoler, "Imperial Dispositions of Disregard," in *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 237–78.

through the conceptual habits we bring to the study of colonial presence, not least the assumption of "confident access" to what that presence entails: how it manifests and on whom it most impinges. These are the assumptions that these essays attempt to identify and from which conceptual conventions may turn us away.

DIS-ARMING CERTITUDES AND COLONIAL OCCLUSIONS

Each certitude is only sure because of the support offered by unexplored ground.
—*Michel Foucault,* The Politics of Truth, *1997*

"Duress" is central to this venture. "Occlusion" is, as well. In broaching what I call the occluded histories of empire, I intend to invoke acts of obstruction—of categories, concepts, and ways of knowing that disable linkages to imperial practice and that often go by other names. To occlude is an act that hides and conceals, creates blockage, and closes off. Underlying these chapters is an effort to treat occlusions as subjects of inquiry in their own right, not as obstacles on a predetermined track. That which occludes and that which is occluded have different sources, sites of intractability, forms of appearance, and temporal effects. They derive from geopolitical locations as much as they do from conceptual grammars that render different objects observable, that shape how we observers observe our chosen observers (as Niklas Luhmann might put it), and thereby construe the proper "lessons of empire" and what count as the salient "historical facts."[4]

Occlusion is neither an accidental byproduct of imperial formations nor merely a missed opportunity, rendered visible to a critical witness "after the fact." They are not just neglected, overlooked, or "forgotten." Occluded histories are part of what such geopolitical formations produce. They inhere in their conceptual, epistemic, and political architecture. One sense of occlusion comes particularly close to what I have in mind: "a line drawn in the construction of a figure that is missing [or more accurately 'disappeared'] from the finished product."[5]

Occluded histories in this book take varied forms. Sometimes they manifest as "benign" mislabelings, dissociating the social distribution of

4. Niklas Luhmann, *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 98–99.

5. "Occlusion," in *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2014, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=occlusion&allowed_in_frame=0.

contemporary privations from their ongoing histories of colonial effects. Chapter 2, "Raw Cuts," takes as its charge the occlusion of Israel as a colonial state in the field of (post)colonial studies, where it remained impolitic to discuss, eviscerated from any connection to U.S. imperial pursuits for so long. Israeli occupation of Palestine was treated as a Zionist issue, relegated as a "shatter zone" in international politics, as a salutary history of democratic nation making, as a liberation struggle from British rule. Only now are Israeli policies publicly and loudly enunciated as the combined ferocity of high-tech and lowly, daily creations and reorderings of ever more present distinctions and discriminations, as cumulative and amplified accretions of colonial presence, violently, deliberately, and carefully designed.

Much of my previous work has been tightly bound to colonial documents. The sites of the imperial landscape pursued here veer further afield in time and space from the colonial archives proper. Pursuit of these other sorts of documents offers openings to counterintuitive genealogies of imperial breadth. Sometimes at issue is a different sort of reading from within official colonial archives. But as often analytical traction comes from what resides on their edges and outside their received frames, the seemingly innocuous comparisons made to contexts that seem radically distinct from what count as part of the imperial world, attentiveness to the ways of knowing on which they relied, from which only certain narratives could be crafted with smooth coherence and authority. Chapters 2 and 3 take as their task a redrawing of a "virtual" colonial archive through a re-visioned conceptual map.

In that pursuit, some chapters might seem distant from, even only loosely tied to, the prevailing themes of colonial history as we know it, with an associative resonance that may, at best, seem tenuous. Working with and through these dissociations is at once my subject and opens to the brunt of the questions I ask. Sometimes occlusion is broached from reimagining how an imperial network otherwise might be thought and drawn. Such is the case in chapter 3, which looks to the children's agricultural colonies (*les colonies agricoles*) for wayward youths in mid-nineteenth century France that Foucault identified in *Discipline and Punish* as the signature sites of "the art of punishing that is still more or less our own."[6] Long relegated (as Foucault did) to the history of social reform in Europe, these *colonies* have been

6. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1977), 296.

severed from the broader imperial history of military intervention and installations, colonial recruitment and settlement, disentangled from the political matrix that joined the unsettled confinements of colony and camp, of which the redistributions of containments were a crucial part.

Chapter 4 on colonial aphasia seeks to make sense of how long and how viscerally colonial entailments have been absented from French national history and rendered outside its proper bounds. It addresses the issue of occlusion in a particular site, France, and specifically with respect to its racial register. It attempts to ask not why its colonial history has been so repeatedly effaced but, rather, how it is that such a history can be rendered irretrievable, made available, and again displaced.

Conceptualizing this striking irretrievability as *aphasia* is an effort to address what John Austin so famously articulated in his essay, "A plea for excuses," when some "abnormality or failure" signals a "breakdown" in conduct and when the retreat to ignorance, forgetting, or amnesia is not "excuse" enough.[7] Aphasia is a condition in which the occlusion of knowledge is at once a dismembering of words from the objects to which they refer, a difficulty retrieving both the semantic and lexical components of vocabularies, a loss of access that may verge on active dissociation, a difficulty comprehending what is seen and spoken. Colonial aphasia as conceived here is a *political condition* whose genealogy is embedded in the space that has allowed Marine Le Pen and her broad constituency to move from the margin and extreme—where her father was banished—to a normalized presence in contemporary France.

But colonial aphasia is not peculiar to France. A blog by Dutch activists embraced the term in protesting the continued celebration of what they saw as the racist image of "Black Pete"—the helper of Sinterklass and a Dutch national icon. The politics of aphasia clearly has had wider resonance.[8] In 2012, a young woman who had served in the Israeli army, after hearing my lecture on the subject, was palpably agitated when she blurted out that I had just described both her spliced self and the untenable contradictions in which she lived. This capacity to know and not know simultaneously renders the space between ignorance and ignoring not an etymological exercise

7. J. L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses: The Presidential Address," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 57, new series (January 1, 1956), 1–30.

8. For their use of the term, based on an earlier version of this essay, see John Helsloot, "*Zwarte Piet* and Cultural Aphasia in the Netherlands," *Quotidian* 3, 1 (February 2012). http://www.quotidian.nl/v0103/nr01/a01.

but a concerted political and personal one. "Self-deception" does not do justice to the ways we each find to turn away.[9]

Chapter 6, "Reason Aside," treats conceptual occlusion from a very different angle that seeks to reorient how the political rationalities of imperial forms have been conceived. It considers how a focus on the "supremacy of reason" as the master trope of colonial critique has displaced the enduring affective work that such rationalities perform. Here the concept-work is around the sentiments and sensibilities that notions of security produce; on the subjects they endeavor to create; on the manipulations of space they condone; and on the objects of fear they nourish, reproduce, and on which they depend.

One might argue that these are simply a few among many of the histories that we have inevitably "missed," were innocent and ignorant of, have not gotten around to writing, or just could not possibly know. Some may be, but as a research strategy I suspend that judgment. Nor do I think we can assume that what escapes inquiry is "unthinkable," epistemologically out of reach, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot once so cogently argued that the Haitian Revolution was for French colonials.[10] I would argue instead that the forms of counter-violence and refusal were *too* politically thinkable, eminent potentialities in wait—not that they were not.[11] I am more convinced that our conceptual currencies may be curtailed by political logics and epistemic assumptions that render some events, contexts, and comparisons easily dismissed as forced and counterintuitive, as too difficult to track, as interpretive stretches that reach beyond what we can really know.

The occluded histories that concern me are not those that bear on redeeming the past. My assays push in another direction: to ask how the uneven sedimentations of colonial reason and the affective sensibilities on which they depend—whether under the rubrics of "security," "terrorism," "defense of society," or "race"—participate in shaping the possibilities for how *differential futures* are distributed and who are, and will be, targeted as those to be exposed, both external and internal enemies in the making. Rendering these histories to their contemporary valence, then, is as much

9. On the "politics of disregard" see Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 237–78.

10. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon, 1995).

11. Dale Tomich makes a related point in "Thinking the 'Unthinkable': Victor Schoelcher and Haiti," *Review* 31, 3 (January 1, 2008): 401–31.

about the inequities inscribed in how common sense is forged as it is in anticipatory dangers in the conditional and future tense.

Some features of this occlusion stem from assumptions of (post)colonial studies itself. After some thirty years studying colonial governance and the racialized techniques and intimate practices that provided its relay and support, I am increasingly convinced of a slippage, an unremarked analytical gray zone, between what we who devote ourselves to discerning the machinations of colonial practice think we know about those practices and how we imagine they manifest now. Embarking on a tracking of these occlusive processes with an expectation of a repetition of earlier colonial policies is a misguided task. The chapters that follow reflect on that expectation or, alternatively, on the assumption of a clean temporal break. Critique here is not about "fault finding" and judgment but about restoring the forms that occlusion takes and the questions that its effects may lead us to ask.[12] Thus, the effort is to understand that occlusion is an ongoing, malleable process, sometimes in a form already congealed and seemingly over as it acts on the present, making of us unwittingly compliant observers, nearly always belated in identifying just how it works.

ON THE FRAGILITY OF CONCEPTS

Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things.—Friedrich Nietzsche, On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, *1873*

In pursuing this venture, I find challenge in a number of commanding questions: How might we trace new genealogies of imperial governance that are not constricted and policed by the colonial archives themselves—or by the dominant readings of them? As I ask in chapter 5, what are the effects of Victorian India providing the quintessential form of imperial sovereignty when such stark evidence should lead to other sites and in other directions? What imperial history is being rehearsed with this model in mind when more gradated forms of sovereignty have been equally effective and perva-

12. I think here with Judith Butler's invocation of Raymond Williams's and Michel Foucault's rejection of "fault finding" as foundational to critique, replaced with an investment in the "specificity of the response" as "a practice": see Judith Butler, "What Is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," in *The Political: Readings in Continental Philosophy*, ed. David Ingram (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002): 212–28.

sive (think of Morocco, Palestine, Puerto Rico, and Vieques) and make up not the exception to imperial governance but such a widespread norm? This range of occlusions may seem to address disparate issues, incommensurate misrecognitions, unique arrangements, and legal confusions. It is my contention that they do not.

What has long made the U.S. military base of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean a "secret history," or the nuclear test sites that have ravaged large swaths of reservation land in the United States a "Native American problem," or consigned the Mariana Islands as outside the field of (post)colonial work? Why have these not been considered nodal points of an imperial history rather than grist for the case that the U.S. remains an imperial exception?[13]

Again, some occlusions derive from colonial scripts: some derive from the *conceptual habits* we bring to them and the implicit assumptions that our conceptual repertoires leave unaddressed. Sometimes that distinction is hard to draw. Occlusions have multiple sources not easily untangled. Some occlusions are the disparaged remainders cast out from the categories and concepts of colonial narratives. Some derive from how we inadvertently call on colonial logics, treated simultaneously as both worthy of scrutiny and suspect. What catches us within the confines of those very rubrics as we move awkwardly against and along their grain?

Identifying imperial fields of force is a multiplex exercise: it entails seizing on the comparisons—of visions and practices—imperial architects and agents themselves performed, locating their temporal and spatial coordinates, and only then recharting the shadowed zones of governance—smudged and effaced, rendered illegibly blurred—on imperial maps. To compare is a situated political act of discernment, a virtual performative that can implicitly confirm the pre-emptive rationale for future violences (as in "imperial lessons" to learn) and create the fears that strategic comparisons only profess to name. The paradox of comparison is that judgment of pertinence rests on "the equation of unequal things;" and it is precisely around the *equivocations* about the adequacy of those *equivalencies* that the political weight of comparison, like that of concepts, depend.

One task is to identify what for some time I have referred to as the "epistemic politics" that often sever colonial pasts from their contemporary

13. David Vine, *Island of Shame: The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base on Diego Garcia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

translations—sometimes simply dismissed, sometimes with more finesse.[14] The historical epistemologies of race used to distinguish colonial racism from contemporary racism examined in chapter 7 are exemplary of what I have in mind. The sweeping turn to "ontology" in current anthropology and the contention that epistemological concerns just get in the way seems to miss a crucial point. Ontologies are accessible only if we engage how a category such as race is secured and made credible and on which its effects rely. These need not be mutually exclusive analytical strategies.[15] Here I ask the reader to reconsider how "racial regimes of truth" and our historiographic narratives of them have produced recurrent declarations of "new" racisms. In an essay that has had several incarnations, I examine what I see as the hardened assumptions about what colonial racism once looked like, arguing that these characterizations make little room for the *mobile essentialisms* that produce racism's protean qualities.

Chapter 8 reckons with the common sense of the French radical right in the late 1990s—and how those characteristics have morphed into a broader, normatively endorsed racialized common sense in Europe today. The chapter is not a "snapshot" of another time. Rather, I treat it as a diagnostic to argue that the French extreme right has not been an aberrant or unique development, as it has sometimes been cast, but part of the deep, racialized features of colonial and contemporary France. Throughout this work, the reader is asked to reconsider the subject of "relevance" as a political issue and to reflect on the implicit measures both we and those we study use to assess it. On what grounds has "intimacy" become shorthand for domestic relations, affections, child care, and sex but used less often to refer, as I ask in chapter 9, to other forms of bodily exposure: to intimate violence and humiliation in the nondomestic space of prisons, checkpoints, and immigration offices that open to embodied and affective injuries of a different intensity?

The final chapter on imperial debris turns to other sites that are sometimes off the radar of (post)colonial studies as once conceived to ask explic-

14. Ann Laura Stoler, "Epistemic Politics: Ontologies of Colonial Common Sense," *Folk Epistemology* 39, 3 (Fall 2008): 349–61.

15. Ethnography's "ontological turn" subsumes a wide range of adherents, from Eduardo Viveros de Castro's formative work to that of Phillipe Descola, and Martin Holbraad. For a careful critique of its assumptions and political effects, see Lucas Bessire and David Bond, "Ontological Anthropology and the Deferral of Critique," *American Ethnologist* 41, 3 (2014): 440–56.

itly how the "slow violence" of imperial formations is dislodged from the politics of its making and renamed.[16] It addresses the toxic consequences of imperial debris and duress on matter and mind; of what is left and what people are left with, as it attends too to the resurgent resentments marshaled as a critique of those histories, not as acquiescence. I look to Agent Orange—the spreading of twenty million gallons of deadly herbicides across Vietnam by U.S. forces from 1961 to 1971—long studied as part of the history of warfare and combat zones and as environmental history but rarely joined with the enduring violence of compounded forms of imperial governance. It is far from the only one. We might look to Vasiliki Touhouliotis's trenchant account of the continued violence of undetonated bombs supplied by the United States that Israel sprayed across southern Lebanon in the war of 2006, impaling a civilian population with shrapnel and cancers that do not go away.[17] An account of the imperial commensurabilities that produced the blueprints for Bantustans in South Africa, designed on the model of Canadian native reserves that South African officials culled on their reconnaissance trips to Canada in the 1950s, has yet to be written.

WHAT IS CONCEPT-WORK?

I consider this project one of "concept-work" for colonial histories and for "our times" to underscore the sort of analytical and methodological exercises that I see concept-work demanding and enabling, and the political entailments it requires engaging, the labor to be performed. Cognitive psychologists tell us that concepts are organizing guides that provide stability to our conceptual world. In the abstract they may be right, but what they typically fail to address are the relations of force in which concepts are embedded, the fictions of their "stability" that entail violences of their own. Stability is not an a priori attribute of concepts. Concepts are construed as more stable and made more stable than they are—as are the distinguishing features of the members assigned to them. There is work that goes into

16. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

17. I thank Vasiliki Touhouliotis for allowing me to draw on her dissertation, "Weapons between Wars: Cluster Bombs, Technological Failure and the Durability of War in South Lebanon," Ph.D. diss., New School for Social Research, New York, 2014.

securing that stability and into their repeated and assertive performance.[18] As Nietzsche insisted, the stability of concepts is a false one. His observation that "every concept arises from the equation of unequal things" offers more than a warning: If stability is not an intrinsic feature of concepts, then one task must be to examine how their stability is achieved, how unequal things are abstracted into commensurabilities that fuel our confidence in those very concepts that then are relegated as common sense.

Concept-work as I conceive it demands "mobile thought," Foucault's term, in advocating an "ethics of discomfort."[19] He invoked both terms in the context of reviewing the fearless writing of Jean Daniel, an Algerian-born Jewish journalist who founded and remains executive editor of one of the most widely read French weeklies, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and who was largely condemned for his support of Palestinian rights during and after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. What was "mobile" about Daniel's writing in Foucault's account was his capacity "to never cease to think about the same things differently."[20] But there was also something more: Daniel's capacity (and Foucault's, because in many ways the essay was a statement about his own endeavor) to reflect on how "an obvious fact gets lost." It is not regained, he writes,

> when it is replaced by another which is fresher or cleaner, but when one begins to detect the very conditions that made it obvious: the familiarities which served as its support, the obscurities on which its clarity was based, and all these things that, coming from afar, carried it secretly and made it such that 'it was obvious.' "[21]

This is more than a methodological invitation; it is an alert, a challenge, and a political demand. Imagining that we know how different colonial racism is from racism today, that we know what a "colony" is, or that we readily recognize what the "legacies" and "vestiges" of colonialism looks like renders each too "obvious" to elicit scrutiny when they could be seized as analytic provocations, prompting moments of arrest. "Mobile thought," here, opens to what concepts implicitly and often quietly *foreclose*, as well as what they

18. For his development of the performative quality of concept formation, see Adi Ophir, "Concept," trans. Naveh Frumer, in *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon* 1, 1 (2014). http://www.politicalconcepts.org/issue1/concept.

19. Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, 122.

20. Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, 136.

21. Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, 145.

encourage and condone.[22] It entails keeping the concepts with which we work provisional, active, and subject to change; it entails retaining them both as mobile and as located as they are in the world.[23] In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault chides his readers from the outset for being duped by the appeal of vacuous historical terms (such as the "spirit [of an age]" or "[Western] influence"), which are endowed with a "virtual self-evidence" that should sound an alarm rather than warrant the trust too quickly invested in them.[24] Most pointedly, he cautions that concepts are no more than "ready-made syntheses."[25] The task is "to free the problems they pose." Nor are concepts "tranquil," stable configurations in a resting mode but in restive agitation.[26] Concepts are moving targets. They act in concert, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari repeatedly remind us.[27] A concept accumulates force from the other concepts that congeal, collide, and rearrange themselves around it. Replacing a concept not only displaces another. It breaks up contiguities and can render invisible the mutual dependencies (such as that between "colony" and "camp," as I argue later) that join them to a problem, the articulations through which they do their work.

Such a venture raises methodological challenges, not least because concepts and the processes of occlusion they afford and the misrecognitions to which they give rise, are not external to the durabilities of imperial formations. Nor can we assume that what endures in distorted, partial, or derisive form—whether conventions of locution and turns of phrase; forms of disregard, subjugation, or acquiescence; techniques of containment; security measures; or sites of enclosure—are merely unwelcome "leftovers,"

22. A case so well made in Janet L. Roitman, *Anti-Crisis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), with a different referential matrix from the one I draw here.

23. Paul Rabinow's rich formulations of concept work are formative, important, and complementary in this regard. His projects over the years foster an exemplary care for concepts in a collaborative mode that entails genealogical, ethical, and diagnostic labor. Some of this work is spelled out by him and by those with whom he has worked at www.anthropos-lab.net and is discussed in various of his books, usually with reference to whatever specific concept is under consideration. See also Anthony Stavrianakis and Gaymon Bennett, "On Concept Work: Somatosphere," September 25, 2012, http://somatosphere.net/2012/09/on-concept-work.html.

24. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 26.

25. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 22.

26. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 26.

27. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 18.

dim traces of dismantled colonial systems, shorn of their potency and commanding force.

TOUCHSTONES OF POLITICAL CONTEST

Imperial formations prodigiously produce specialized lexicons of legal, social, and political terms, concepts, and enduring vocabularies that both innocuously and tenaciously cling to people, places, and things. The narratives in which they are habitually embedded do so, as well, unevenly irrupting in spasmodic expressions of unaccountability, disparagement, and blame.[28] Paradoxically, these expressions are neither only available as the armature of those political pundits who celebrate colonial policies of the present or past or the property of those who condemn it. Like racial discourse and practice, they can be mobilized for different projects; they have "polyvalent" signatures, their potentialities undecided and unfixed, yielding different agendas and possibilities.[29]

28. When Eric Fassin was recently asked in a French televised forum who was to blame, or culpable (coupable), in the brutal beating of a sixteen-year-old Roma boy in one of the "hot" outskirts of Paris, Fassin did not hesitate for a moment: the question was not who was *coupable* but who and what was *responsible* for the relentless tying of "insecurity" to the Roma presence, to their behavior and to their "nature": see Eugénie Bastié, "Roms: Pas, ça, Fassin!" Causeur, June 18, 2014, http://www.causeur.fr/roms-lynchage-racisme-28125.html#; Éric Fassin Carine Fouteau, Serge Guichard, and Aurélie Windels, *Roms et riverains: Une politique municipale de la race* (Paris: Fabrique, 2014).

29. We might take Kwasi Kwarteng's *The Ghosts of Empire: Britain's Legacies in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011) as an example, where he argues that much of the British empire's spread to its "possessions"—Iraq, Sudan, Burma, and Nigeria—had nothing to do with central planning or design but was appropriated "unintentionally" and haphazardly by "men on the spot,":28. Kwarteng, described in reviews as an "old Etonian" with a Cambridge doctorate in history, commanded ephemeral attention with his composite cultural capital—Tory member of Parliament, Oxbridge, from Ghana, black. Despite laudatory reviews, his account was as problematic as the ad hoc history of imperial acquisitions he chronicled.

More disturbing was the appeal of his narrative. Not one review questioned his recourse to "individual" initiatives, neither to the connections made to the ad hoc forms of authority and sovereignty he claimed nor to his attribution that colonial violence was confined to the activities of "men on the spot." Kwarteng's book was a minor moment, and a tedious rehearsal of a familiar plot. Still, it was one of those small events that signal the appeal of "lessons" the United States should learn from its British predecessors, who, with the "goodwill" of "well-meaning" and well-heeled colonial civil servants, carried out imperial initiatives. British empire here remains no more than a "series of improvisations and haphazard policy-making," a formula for the "instability"

Few would take these occluded sites of blockage any longer as the perennial and pedestrian problem of historical retrieval hampered by disappeared documents, traumatized memory, and inevitable loss. But could we not take them as opportunities instead? Here I treat them as productive *touchstones of political contest* and subjects of analysis—*as occasions rather than obstacles* to ask how conceptual claims assert themselves; as entry points of inquiry into racism's multiplex genealogies; into the historiography of reason, colony, "legacies," "colonial intimacies," and imperial sovereignty. We need not partake in the high drama Foucault accords the task of banishing the deceptive work of concepts as "ready-made syntheses" or his (Enlightenment) quest to "drive [them] out from the darkness in which they reign." Still, we may profit from taking seriously what goes into their "ready-made" quality and the attributes that make them "obvious."[30]

Epistemic, legal, and political clarity have rarely been defining features of colonial polities. It is in the messy, troubled spaces of ambiguous colonial lineages that this book's venture uneasily rests. Rather than dismiss these sites as exceptional, marginal, or quasi-imperial space, here I treat them as key points of access to imperial logics that depend on the differential allocation of resources and rights—and the racialized distinctions in which they are cast.

Attending to these occlusions is a lesson that an immersion in the paper trails of colonial documents underscore, one that those who wrestle with the restricted rubrics of colonial official documents confront at every archival turn. The challenge of archival labor is to resist the reversion to received terms or the retreat to those in our ready repertoire—when one knows (in those dark conversations with oneself) that one has compromised, too quickly finessed what matters, and impatiently settled for a gloss. At issue could be any number of conceptual terms held too tightly and deactivated, depleted of their relational predicates and visceral force. What were the idioms in which "security" was flagged on colonial terrain; when and where do dangers appear; and what might their placement tell us about what

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bequeathed to the former territories of empire. Kwarteng got it right and wrong: wrong that these partial sovereignties were not by design, right that they were far more varied than the favored imperial model of clear cut imperial borders suggests. His rendering simply rehearsed the welcome fiction that ambiguous forms of sovereignty were unintended consequences of individuals, not part and parcel of colonial histories and contemporary formations.

30. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 22.

required "defense" as it was conceived in the nineteenth century and as it is redeployed today? Is a "paradigm of security" really, as Giorgio Agamben wrote, the hallmark of modern states any more than it has been foundational to the very installments of imperial authority and racial formations for so long?[31]

The concepts focused on here are those that have disrupted what I once assumed were obvious, fixture features about how imperial governance works. Warding off certainty is partly about prolonging how long one can admit to an unresolved space of one's own doubt—and, not least, the doubts and insisted-on certitudes of those whose perceptions and practices we imagine to comprehend. Attending more closely to how doubt manifests, is placated, soothed, dismissed, or remains dissonant puts strain on conceptual habits and methodological conventions. At its productive best, doubt opens to disruptive genealogies, truncated possibilities, and sharper questions about how those possibilities were foreclosed.

Not least, warding off certainty provides opportunities to ask what implicit knowledge makes up colonial common sense and why certain kinds of colonial situations have been taken as patent and prototypical and not others. In that pursuit, I think repeatedly throughout this book with how Foucault so acutely and sparingly defined an "event": as "the breach of self-evidence," as those moments in which what is taken as common sense no longer works, in which clarity gives way to doubt, in which epistemic habits fail to do their work, in which, even for a brief moment, what once seemed "normal" and "obvious" is open to reflection and no longer looks the same.

In these chapters, I take a number of different tacks in working to identify these occluded genealogies and identify their recursive qualities. Chapter 5, "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," attempts to rethink the ambiguous zones of imperial governance, not as inert residuals, but as troubled geopolitical and social forms. Chapter 10, "Imperial Debris and Ruination," works cautiously in an experimental mode between the lively materiality of debris and "rot"—and their intangibilities. Here I take these metaphors as a provocation, as the anticipatory indistinct zone that may capture more than available concepts do and that may enable new conceptual purchase if still

31. Agamben makes this claim in a number of places and in different ways, such as where he writes that the "state of exception has been replaced by an unprecedented generalization of the paradigm of security as the normal technique of government": see Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 14.

evasive clarity. Each chapter asks what to do when colonial effects are literally dismembered from the conditions that made them possible, from their content and context, and called by other names. The terms substituted may not be problematic in themselves, but they are not innocuous. As subjects of conceptual politics, these other names condone the distractions of other attentions.

THE METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHTS OF GENEALOGY

Each of the chapters thinks in different ways with the work that Foucault's treatment of genealogy might help us do. I take genealogy to be not an abstract, "theoretical" program but a grounded, enabling political methodology. Genealogy has been subject to more than overexposure. And despite efforts, such as those of Wendy Brown, to underscore its political acuities and the traction it can offer to think history as a "field of eruptions, forces, emergences and partial formations," genealogy too often remains invoked as a fashionable substitute for "history," stripped of its opening to displaced histories as a political force and potential resource.[32]

Here I treat genealogy as a working strategy—a conceptual alert, if you will—that is responsive to historical roads not taken, to brazen and impossible alternatives proposed and squashed, to muted dissensions and suspended plans. Genealogy advocates for attention to messy, bellicose beginnings rather than originary moments for beginnings that seem to be re-marked and effaced over and again. Its focus on dissension and dispersion underscores contingencies as it avoids the assumptions of thinking historical trajectories as a coherent and singular master plan. As method, it insists on more than a refusal to search for distilled origins. It attends to differential histories (of battles lost or won) as the products and productive potentials that emerge from tracking unrealized possibilities, arrested and failed experiments that commonly remain unmarked as "proper" historical events because they were never fully realized and thus were not understood to have been possible or to have "happened."

This particular notion of history attuned to unachieved visions and interrupted imaginaries, attends to more than dispersion. It demands alertness

32. Wendy Brown, "Genealogical Politics" in *Politics out of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 117. But see also Martin Saar, "Understanding Genealogy: History, Power and the Self," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 2, 3 (September 2008): 295–314.

to those haphazard moments when narratives are revised, when dissension is demoted or displaced—to those small gestures that have made some historical accounts more cited, speakable, credible, and amenable to recounting than others. It demands a vigilant watch over what is strategically excised from the imagined colonial order of things and what is affirmed as clear, reasonable, and common sense. It reminds us to pause in the face of how we read for "relevance." One might take genealogy as a priming to the unsettled features of common sense, to differentials of worth embedded in the most seemingly innocuous interstices of words, intimacies, and things. It insists on perspectival agility—and thus a questioning of those histories that are imagined as more pressingly present than others.

Chapter 3, "A Deadly Embrace," is perhaps the clearest and most challenging genealogical work I have in mind. It begins with nineteenth-century documents in which colony and camp appear and reappear as distinct, substitutable, adjacent, and interdependent forms of containment: barbed wire, walls, checkpoints, internment camps within the colony, refugee camps that produce new (and expanded) borders for the colony, military camps outfitted with potential settlers.

Here the genealogies splay in different directions; the logics circle back and implicate one another again, with "defense" of society and security producing ever more sweeping containments and movement and enclosure. Tracking colony and camp in this way addresses what such a genealogy might look like that bridles against the convention of treating "colony" as a commonplace noun. It accredits its diffuse and seemingly disparate course through histories positioned as nonaligned. What emerges is not only the "colony" as a subjacent political concept. The "camp" also emerges as if in double exposure or, alternatively, as its twin, on its edges, not merely its mirror but its other face. The politics of confinement and containment emerge not on the fringes of that which defines it but as constitutive of its suffocating closures.

ON RECURSIVE HISTORIES: BEYOND RUPTURE AND CONTINUITY

Imperceptible moments of change, displacements, slidings, cracks, turn-abouts, gaps that increase, decrease, paths that get far, cave in and suddenly turn back.—Michel Foucault, The Politics of Truth, *1997*

One distinctive, troubled feature for those of us whose research and pedagogy revolve around colonial histories of the past is how to convey how those histories remain present. Two distinct postures could be said to

inform the contested and troubled fields in which colonial history figures. One analytic posture treats colonial history with clear temporal and spatial demarcations—well-documented histories whose violence has been scrupulously described; whose agents and subjects can be relatively clearly discerned; and whose disparate dispositions as colonizer and colonized are relatively clear, if not unproblematic. Such a posture often assumes that we know the colonial past and can now move easily to identify the more complex contemporary machinations of racial inequities as "colonial vestiges" or (unwelcome) "legacies" in the (post)colonial present. Within such a frame, colonial agents were distinctly different from those who manage politics today, committed to an imperial world that they wholeheartedly (but those who see themselves as critical world citizens decidedly would not) embrace. That moral high ground often turns the writing of colonial histories in Euro-American, French, German, and Dutch academe into a self-congratulatory tale, safely "Other" and distant, a purifying, redemptive exercise that distinguishes "us" from a distant "them."

The other posture refuses that clear break, insists on a more seamless continuation of colonial practices that pervade the present. But here the invocation can come in different historical and political semantic forms that slide between tenses and may implicitly or explicitly draw on metaphor, simile, or analogy to make a case. Thus, something may be designated "colonial" which is not to say that it is colonial but to say that it is like, akin to, or as oppressive as a colonial situation. Some may take the form of (1) analogic comparison to prior colonial practices (insinuating a future [desired or feared] trajectory); (2) condemnation of contemporary discriminatory practices (with the term "colonial" hurled more as an epithet, metaphorically hurled to cast blame); or (3) assertion that the present is the site of colonial practices in the active tense and that some populations are still subject to instantiations of those practices themselves.

The first stance depends on rupture; the latter, more on continuity. Both, I would argue, get us in trouble, leaving unaddressed (if not directly evading) the most difficult issues around the durability and distribution of colonial entailments that cling—vitally active and activated—to the present conditions of people's lives. The answers may be elusive in part because we have not yet even sufficiently formulated a workable set of questions about the multiple temporalities in which people live: what is past but not over; how the articulation of past and present may recede and resurface; how colonial relations are disparately and partially absorbed into social relations

and ecological disparities and are productive of very distinct dispositions toward how—and, indeed, whether those histories matter today. Can we provide an adequate vocabulary to identify what a "colonial presence" looks like? Is it lodged in the figure of the stateless migrant, the killing machine of the drone, ashen landscapes, or the global philanthropic industry? Overarching "Theory" may not be the way to go. Recharting imperial effects seems to demand another sort of labor on another scale: one that attends to their partial, distorted, and piecemeal qualities, to uneven and intangible sedimentations that defy easy access in the face of the comforting contention that there really is no imperial order of things.

Interpretations of Foucault's historical analytics may be both part of the problem and an entry point for thinking beyond the bifurcated alternatives that continuity and rupture invite. While his treatment of historical transformations have been central to writings of colonial history, on this particular issue of historical ruptures, what has been borrowed from his analytical lexicon has been selective, at best. Discontinuity and rupture have long been taken as key features of Foucault's innovation, a rejection of the smooth continuities of the sorts of Braudelian history against which his interventions were aimed.[33]

But there is a more productive feature to his work on historical transformations, one that is rarely given the due it should rightly claim—namely, attention to what I call, for lack of a better term, "recursive analytics," or history as recursion. This sort of history is marked by the uneven, unsettled, contingent quality of histories that *fold back on themselves* and, in that refolding, reveal new surfaces, and new planes. Recursion opens to novel contingent possibilities.[34] "Recursion" in mathematics is a process of

33. See, e.g., Judith Revel, *Foucault, une pensée du discontinue* (Paris: Mille et Une Nuits, 2010). Revel offers a subtle analysis of Foucault's "strange singularity" and a nuanced treatment of "discontinuity" as his signature feature, 14. Pointing to the complex ways in which discontinuity figured for Foucault, she aptly quotes Foucault's introduction to a text of Canguilhem, republished in the late 1970s, "The history of discontinuity is not acquired once and for all. It is itself 'impermanent' and discontinuous." It is this element of his thinking with and about history as a deeply philosophical project to which her work is addressed: Revel, *Foucault, une pensée du discontinue*, 19–20.

34. "Recursivity" and "recursive functions" are mathematical concepts that figure in Niklas Luhmann's understanding of information systems but do different work from that I do here with a focus on historical movement: see Luhmann, *Theories of Distinction*, 98–99; Heinz von Foerster, "For Niklas Luhmann: How Recursive Is Communication?" trans. Richard Howe, in *Understanding Understanding* (New York: Springer, 2003), 305–23 (originally published in German as *Teoria Soziobiologica*, 2 [Milan: Franco Angeli,

"repeating items in a self-similar way." As I use it here, though, recursion is precisely *not* to imagine that social and political processes ever play out in a repetitive and mimetic fashion.[35] These histories are marked less by abrupt rupture or by continuity and not by repetition of the same (a point on which Foucault was to insist). Rather, they are processes of partial reinscriptions, modified displacements, and amplified recuperations.

There are some explicit moments in which Foucault underscored this approach, but more often these moves are gestured toward, more pronounced in his choice of vocabulary, and demonstrated rather than commented on. I was first struck by these "recursions" nearly twenty years ago. Vocabulary, as I said, is key. Thus, in volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality*, he wrote about an earlier symbolics of blood that is not replaced but, rather, "reanimated" and "converted" into a modern analytics of sexuality, the former "lending its weight" to a power exercised through the "deployment" of the latter.[36]

The force of that "weight" remained opaque, but its consequences for the analysis become increasingly clear. One has the sense that Foucault was in the midst of working these recalibrated techniques through for himself. Recursion seemed to underwrite both an analytics of historical process and a description of his own style of work. It makes its appearance most forcefully in the mid-1970s, but even in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, where his concerns are so discursively bound, he sought "recurrent redistributions [that] reveal several pasts."[37] Jonathan Goldberg, commenting on the same "conversion" from

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1993], 61–88). In a book about the generative work that anthropology can do by making room for other conceptualizations of truth and verification to subvert anthropological conventions of analysis, truth, and concept formation, Martin Holbraad uses the term "recursive anthropology" in what I see as a complementary but different venture. Both his and my own efforts are designed to unsettle the stability assigned to, and imagined to be, what concepts do: see Martin Holbraad, *Truth in Motion: The Recursive Anthropology of Cuban Divination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

35. "Recursion," *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, August 3, 2015. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Recursionandoldid=674378167.

36. As I wrote at that time, "At issue here is not rupture, but the tension between rupture and recuperation. Thus, just as a reader may think that the thematic of blood disappears with the analytics of sexuality, Foucault reveals the symbolics of blood as a living discourse that 'lent its weight' to a power exercised through the deployment of sexuality": Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 38–39. See also Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 38.

37. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 5.

a symbolics of blood to an analytics of sexuality, also noted a "*strange continuity* with the old supposedly outmoded regimes of alliance."[38]

"Strange continuity" is precisely the point about colonial presence. The colonial configurations are different, as are the actors, but the tactics of instantiating difference and forging an "internal enemy" are colonial reverberations with a difference—and with more than a distant semblance to earlier racial logics, engendered fears, and counterinsurgent tactics from which they gained their support. There is neither abrupt disappearance of the one nor clean and clear emergence of the other. At issue is how their force is exercised and reanimated. It is their weighting, combination, and recruitment of earlier idioms of practice and perception that map the configurations of change.

Recursion is a more explicit analytic strategy and description of how things work in the Collège de France lectures of 1976 on racism and biopolitics. In *Race and the Education of Desire*, I suggested that "what occupies Foucault (with respect to racisms) are the processes of recuperation, of the distillation of earlier discursive imprints, remodeled in new forms."[39] "Displacement" of certain elements and "conversion" of others are methodological linchpins to these processes and his analysis of them.[40] The alert is pivotal but suggests what *not* to expect (a return, a repetition, a clean break) more clearly than what to look for, leaving us to discern what is subject to conversion and what is displaced.[41]

Still, this is a far more challenging historical analytics than what came before—one that is emphatic about multiple forms of power operating not sequentially but simultaneously. Moreover, it opens to that "reflective prism," that "practico-reflexive system" Foucault sought to isolate in the lectures that would follow.[42] The adjective "reflexive" does important work, for it insists on

38. Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 16; emphasis added. This quote remains as a footnote, a measure of my tentative register of the issue at the time, in Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 40, fn. 53. But Matthew Kurtz deftly builds on that tentative claim: see Matthew Kurtz, "Ruptures and Recuperations of a Language of Racism in Alaska's Rural/Urban Divide," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96, 3 (September 2006): 601–21.

39. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 68.

40. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 71.

41. In 1995, frustrated with his opacities, I simply noted that "what remains unclear . . . are the mechanisms that account for the selective recuperations of some elements and not others": Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 89.

42. Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population: Cours au Collége de France*, 1977–78 (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 2004), 282.

asking how something has come to be reflected on, has become made "real" as a discernible knowledge-thing epistemologically (how do we know what we know; how did they think they knew what they knew?) and politically (what are its effects and how does a set of reflexive, reflective strategic alignments in the making of knowledge create that which is purported only to be described)? The "prism" signals a crucial reworking, as well, because it is this "prism" that elsewhere comes to be vaguely designated as a "set of correlations" that will mark this analytic moment as different from what came before.

This is a more compelling analytics that not only makes more room for multiple forms of power operating simultaneously but also accounts for the reflexive thinking that their co-presence demands, the mechanisms weighing differently, recombining, and producing new calibrations and configurations with different effects. Foucault will state this most clearly in the lectures of 1978, but I would hold that is already operating as a strategy of historical analysis in the lectures of 1976 in how a much earlier "perception of the war between races" will reconfigure as a grid of intelligibility and operate differently when working through a biopolitical form.[43] In *Security, Territory, and Population* he puts it more boldly:

> *So there is not a series of successive elements, the appearance of the new causing the earlier ones to disappear.* There is not the legal age, then disciplinary age, and then the age of security. Mechanisms of security do not replace disciplinary mechanisms which would have replaced juridico-legal mechanisms. In reality you have a series of complex edifices . . . in which *what changes is the dominant characteristics, or more exactly, the system of correlations* between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security.

And if this is not difficult enough, he strains our analytic capacities even more, noting that "there is another history . . . more general, but of course much more fuzzy history of the correlations and systems of the dominant feature which determine that, in a given society and for a given sector . . . a technology of security will be set up, taking up again and sometimes even multiplying juridical and disciplinary elements and redeploying them within its specific tactic."[44]

43. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76* (New York: Picador, 2003), 88.

44. Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, 8–9.

Thus, it is sometimes "reutilization," such as within state racism, of an earlier anti-Semitism, "which had developed for other reasons." Or, as we find with the new technology of power in the second half of the eighteenth century, it "is not disciplinary" Still, it "does not exclude disciplinary technology, . . . but dovetails into it, integrates it, modifies it to some extent, and above all uses it by sort of infiltrating itself, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques."[45] Here Foucault compels us to turn away from totalizing regimes and analysis and toward the ways in which new techniques "exist at a different level, on a different scale," with a "different bearing/surface area" (*une autre surface portante*) and "using different instruments."[46]

To my mind, this insight is enormous. We no longer ask about the definitive break between "new" and "old" forms of power replacing each other wholesale; "colonial" as opposed to "postcolonial" makes much less sense, with the former "leftover," dead matter in a wholly new present. We are asked instead to cut a different swath through the given rubrics for macropolities—democratic, colonial, fascist, and their conceptual knowledge-bearing supports, those "ready-made syntheses," that conceal so much more than they reveal, that confer common features contrived as shared. Instead we are urged to attend to scaling, to co-temporalities, to the specific sites where they are threaded through one another; not to what particular forms of governance are and call themselves but what a sedimented set of governing techniques with a different distribution do.

In this "recursive analytics," there is no question of an earlier historical discourse called on in toto, but rather in strategically altered, piecemeal combination. Again, what is retrieved is not a matter of mere recurrence. It can never look the same. And again, too, the language is crucial to the analytics: at issue are amplified reinscriptions, "retranscriptions," and recuperations.[47] Deleuze offers a related observation on Foucault's analytics: reactivations and traces are rarely isomorphic with what came before. They can cross thresholds, occur at different levels, cut transversal swaths on a diagonal axis—or, as Foucault would express it, in "orthogonal articulation."[48] This is a luminous insight and again is methodologically and historically difficult

45. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 89, 242.

46. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 216; Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, 242.

47. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 216.

48. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, repr. ed. (London: Continuum, 2012), 22; Foucault *Sécurité, territoire, population*, 253.

to track and discern. If colonial "reactivations" do not occur at the levels at which they once appeared, on the planes of social relations in which they were once activated, how do we identify their morphings and morphologies? How do we cipher the readjustments that activate familiar forms on new planes?

Such protean forms with moving parts require those charged with governance—their practitioners—to be opportunistic, to reflect on the consequences of readjustments in calculated consideration of more direct pressure or less, less discipline or more "self-cultivation." Such recursive moves invite us to refuse the quick resort to "before" and "after"—and even to work against the wooden, if all too common, conceptual containers of "past" and "present."

This recalibration of Foucault's thought makes crucial sense of his understanding of the "reflective" quality of governance (how they thought about how they thought). For imperial governance, where disciplinary, sovereign, and biopolitical power quintessentially meet in the administering of security, these perceptions and practices prompt an avid concern not only for what is but for *what might be*. As we shall see in chapter 6, "Reason Aside," the temporal thrust of the biopolitical state, with racism buttressing its logic, manifests in an obsessive concern for the protection of society from itself, its internal threats, producing an ever amplified attention to the conditional, subjunctive, and future tense. Predictive assessments join here with preemptive angst in the name of security for (a Euro-colonial) society's defense. "Security" has long been the conceptual and political nexus of the expulsions and containments in which imperial formations invest. They are decidedly not the same as—but they are embedded in—the consolidated and honed technologies of security that thrive today.

There is no methodological programmatic plan in Foucault's projects—an endeavor he adamantly refused, a conceit he claimed to abhor. Nevertheless, this quality of recursion is at once an analytic thread and a methodological incitement to work more closely in the obscured folds of history and not to assume, with all due respect to Marx, that earlier imperial practices were tragic and that the distilled, revised, and reassembled techniques in which that history bears on the present are merely repeated as farce.

Foucault's struggle with the nature of recursive history, as a history that builds on earlier strategies of governance without rehearsing what became before, offers the closest rendition I know of how to think about how colonial histories are taken up and "recombined" with enduring presence

today.[49] They alert us to avoid the assumption that they should appear in the same locations and with the similitude of easily identifiable forms. Few studies of Foucault explicitly seize on the specifically historical implications of his insight or work through how these recuperations, reactivations, and recombinations of familiar forms pre-adhere to new practices while obscuring relational histories that have been pulled apart.[50] Recursion surfaces in both what is rendered as imperial aftermath and what is discerned as active imperial forms. Thinking with the processes to which a recursive sense of imperial history attends may be an opening to alternative ways to understand what imperial debris might look like, as I explore in chapter 10; how racialized dispositions are entrenched and refigured; how people's capacities are disabled or incited; and how colonial pasts are mobilized to matter as political acts of the present. As Luhmann reminds us, what we take to be objects of those whom we observe in their acts of observing are "nothing but" products of the very observing systems of which they are a part that use and reuse their previous distinctions. The formulation is unduly involuted, but I think it captures something fundamentally similar to what I hope to pursue in the chapters that follow.

49. On Foucault's sustained concern in later years, not with epochal breaks but with "redeployments" and "recombinations," see Stephen J. Collier, "Topologies of Power: Foucault's Analysis of Political Government beyond 'Governmentality,' " *Theory, Culture and Society* 26, 6 (November 1, 2009): 78–108, whose incisive treatment of Foucault's analysis makes a complementary observation from a different vantage point. See also Paul Rabinow's earlier insistence that Foucault would turn away from "epochal" thinking in his later work: Paul Rabinow, *Anthropos Today: Reflections on Modern Equipment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 14. Both note this later modification. I would argue that his commitment to "ruptures" was a strategic intervention from the start, responsive to the prevailing modes of historical narrative at the time, never one that he categorically embraced *tout court*.

50. For an important exception (but oriented to a very different argument about the relationship between philosophical and historical inquiry), see Phillipe Artières and Matthieu Potte-Bonneville, *D'après Foucault: Gestes, luttes, programmes* (Paris: Contemporary French Fiction, 2012). Artières and Potte-Bonneville describe *Discipline and Punish* as a text with a "relatively linear trajectory" that nevertheless, from a "historical point of view is broken/interrupted in the middle of the book" in such a way that "Foucault carries out a striking turn back (*retour en arrière*). . . . He goes back, from the 18th century to the 17th century, and . . . retraces at the same moment the historical period that he just finished analyzing." As they so keenly put it, "At the same time, Foucault complicates the supposed unity of each period, showing that the classical age, in a sense, while organized by the political figure of the sovereign, is simultaneously penetrated by the implementation of another type of power relation." They call this feature a "double dispersion": Artières and Potte-Bonneville, *D'après Foucault*, 100–101.

THE TROUBLE WITH TEMPORALITIES

Recursion as both a mode of history making and a mode of historical analysis speaks to a problematic that threads throughout this book and for which each chapter seeks to find an adequate vocabulary. Is it possible to dispense with the sharply defined temporalities that past, present, and future invoke as discrete time frames? Can we use these terms but still understand that they are not sequential ways of living time and colonial duress, but they can exist simultaneously, recessed and seized on, with different weightings?

For my purposes here, I make a distinction between a "colonial present" in the sense that Derek Gregory so appropriately uses that term to describe Iraq and Palestine today, and a colonial *presence* that I see marking the interstices of what once was and what is, reworking both.[51] Thinking with the multiple tenses that "colonial presence" intends to invoke is one of the ways in which I try to distinguish between a past that is imagined to be over but persists, reactivates, and recurs in transfigured forms. But it is also to argue that colonial sensibilities, distinctions, and discriminations are not just leftovers, reappointed to other time and place. Nor are they abstract "legacies." Colonial presence is an effort to make room for the complex ways in which people can inhabit enduring colonial conditions that are intimately interlaced with a "postcolonial condition" that speaks in the language of rights, recognitions, and choices that enter and recede from the conditions of duress that shape the life worlds we differently inhabit.

These temporal overlays and the sensory regimes (of sound, touch, and taste) that can bring the persistence of a past to the immediacy of the present are issues that Henri Bergson and Maurice Merleau-Ponty so famously articulated in their work and that subsequent philosophers have called on to rethink duration and temporalities.[52] The philosopher Alia Al-Saji makes a powerful case for this simultaneity of past and present with a vocabulary shared with Merleau-Ponty and Bergson, drawing on Merleau-Ponty's

51. Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004). For an interesting and resonant, if somewhat different, treatment of "presence" as a "theoretical paradigm," see Ranjan Ghosh and Ethan Kleinberg, eds., *Presence: Philosophy, History, and Cultural Theory for the Twenty-First Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

52. For a very different engagement with Bergson's understanding of "duration," see Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "Bergson in the Colony: Intuition and Duration in the Thought of Senghor and Iqbal," *Qui Parle* 17, 1 (October 1, 2008): 125–45.

"*simultaneité passé-present*" to describe the "now," but with a precision that is distinctively her own. Joseph Massad, as we shall see in chapter 2, signals that those subject to colonial conditions live in a different temporality from those who are protected and secured from their damaging effects.[53] I am more convinced that few selves are properly "buffered" from the weight of colonial relations. But in attending to the quality of that distribution and the intensity of what has to be borne and by whom, I call on his insights to amend his claim. Raphaëlle Branche, the French historian of the violence of colonial Algeria, similarly writes about the "coexistence" rather than the "division" that produces a historicity that cannot be untangled from its historical ontology—a historicity shaped by its colonial formation.[54]

Sometimes at issue might be what Merleau-Ponty referred to as "*un passé qui n'a jamais été present* (a past that has never been present), calling on the possibility of activating those elements and sensibilities of a past that could not be realized or "actualized" at an earlier moment but that "adhere"—shadowed or amplified in the present in new and unexpected ways.[55] The issue of how to think about and imagine the past and the metaphors called on to invoke it—its very stability—is crucial to the political and affective practices that speak to colonial presence today. Al-Saji insists on recognizing the "instability" of the past to attend to what gets released, transformed, activated, and clogged within contemporary situations. "Instability" of the past is a good starting point for thinking about what is mobilized of the past and what features of earlier relationalities are requisitioned for new projects and thereby rendered more durable than others.

"Memory" may be inadequate to account for these quixotic regroupings. Memory suggests that the past resides predominantly in how we find to remember it, rather than in the durable and intangible forms of its mak-

53. Joseph Andoni Massad, "The 'Post-colony' Colony: Time, Space, and Bodies in Palestine/Israel," in *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 13–40.

54. Raphaëlle Branche, *La torture et l'armée pendant la guerre d'Algérie, 1954–1962* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001). See also David Lloyd's thoughtful work in *Irish Times*, where he writes about "multiple and often incommensurable temporalities for which the terms 'tradition' and 'modernity' are only partial and certainly inadequate designations": David Lloyd, *Irish Times: Temporalities of Modernity* (Dublin: Field Day and Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2008), 6.

55. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 242; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1968), 244.

ing. Colonial entailments endure in more palpably complicated ways. As Al-Saji puts it, "The past . . . overflows that which can be consciously recollected."[56] Arguing that "the past retains the trace of its own temporal becoming," she demurs from the notion that the modality of pastness implies "irreversibility," "immutability," and completion. Instead, she reaches for another formulation that sees the past "so close to the present as to be its lining." It is here that she, too, draws on Merleau-Ponty's enigmatic phrase "a past that has never been present" in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, written at the tail end of one catastrophic Holocaust moment and on the cusp of another: the Nakba.[57]

A "past that has never been present" is not a phrase that Foucault cited, but the genealogical method could be construed as attempting to capture just that: to think about sites of confluence and cohabitations in abeyance, about the muffled possibilities that defy the fixed divisions so deeply etched in the incompatible common sense of categories of people pitted against one another in colonial situations as they attempt to extricate themselves from those social derangements. These cleavages may be built and demolished with mortar and stone, but they are not fixed once and for all by them.

The resonant call on recursion here is hard to miss. Recursive histories may be about not only how imperial formations call on their earlier manifestations but, more importantly how those who live them move in and around the constraints imposed—the visions failed and the desperate, indignant, and defiant acts that duress can produce. My responses to the quandary of an impoverished political lexicon for describing this retroactive and refractive pull that presses on the present are provisional, at best. This response merely underscores that the convention of past, present, and future are not only inadequate. They occlude how imperial regimes work and what they do to those living the subaltern and privileged sites within them.[58] We need to do better to understand the nature of imperial duress,

56. See Alia Al-Saji, "The Past," in *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon* at www.politicalconcepts.org. Forthcoming.

57. I thank Alia Al-Saji for sharing her reflections on Merleau-Ponty's treatment of history and especially her essay "'A Past Which Has Never Been Present': Bergsonian Dimensions in Merleau-Ponty's Theory of the Prepersonal," *Research in Phenomenology* 38, 1 (September 2008): 41–71. I also thank Keith Whitmoyer, on whose dissertation defense in philosophy on Merleau-Ponty I assisted in 2013, and who introduced me to Al-Saji's work.

58. A bibliographic accounting for the various ways in which students of colonialism have attempted to reckon directly or indirectly with these temporalities would call for another essay. But they might be tracked through the range of historically inflected

the anxieties and fears it produces, the potentialities it short-circuits, the possibilities it enables, and the force it galvanizes to ensure that viable futures are not foreclosed. Accounting for what duress looks like needs the poetics of thought to make its case. Whether this entails calling on poets or finding that poetics are already central to concept formation, as both George Steiner and Giorgio Agamben rightly claim, the sensorial insights are crucial to the critical impulses that hover unarticulated on our tongues and that flourish in what some are already saying and others of us cannot hear.[59]

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ethnographies that have also struggled to come up with a language adequate to the task. A very incomplete list might include Richard Price, who writes that "time . . . is like an old–fashioned Martiniquan concertina—alternately being squeezed and pulled apart, compressing some things, stretching out others": Richard Price, *The Convict and the Colonel* (Boston: Beacon, 1998), xi. It might also include Heonik Kwon, *Ghosts of War in Vietnam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jennifer Cole, *Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); the contributions in Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); David Scott, *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015). Both Scott and Wilder identify their central concerns to be "with temporality" and Wilder, to be with "utopian potentiality"—to name but a very few.

59. Perhaps our resources are already abundant and available in the explosive power of poetry and literature and the generative conceptual forms they enable: see, e.g., Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*, trans. Sinan Antoon (Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago, 2011), which has so figured for those writing on the long colonial present in Palestine; Raja Shehadeh, *A Rift in Time: Travels with My Ottoman Uncle* (London: Profile, 2010). The spare, piercing prose in Assia Djebar, *Algerian White: A Narrative* (New York: Seven Stories, 2000), evokes how it feels to lose one's dearest friends to a colonial war and then to an internal Algerian one. Or we might look to the dark description of a ruinous colonial past as "the rot [that] remains when the men are gone"—my opening to thinking the politics of metaphor, concept-work, and imperial debris in the final chapter: Derek Walcott, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory," in *Nobel Lectures in Literature: 1991–1995*, ed. Sture Allen (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1997), 20.