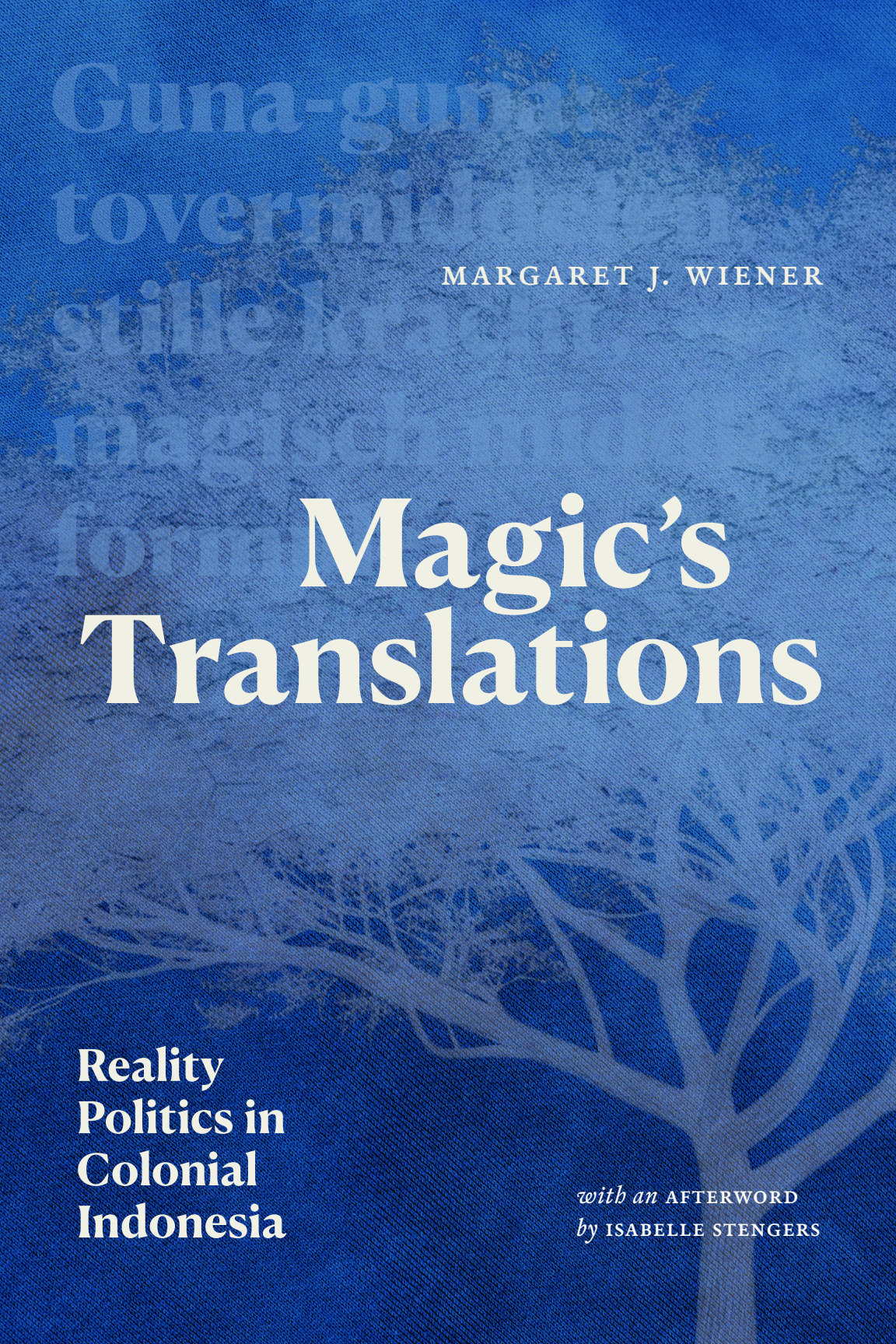
MARGARET J. WIENER
Magic's Translations
Reality Politics in Colonial Indonesia
with an AFTERWORD by ISABELLE STENGERS


Magic's
Translations
BUY
Djimatnja Koes

Reality Politics in Colonial Indonesia

Magic's Translations

MARGARET J. WIENER

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Acknowledgments

I'll be frank. If I had had any idea where my curiosity about the word *magic* would lead me, I never would have started this book. It all seemed innocent enough. I envisioned thinking about magic through Foucault's power-knowledge. I went up to Cornell and over to the Netherlands over a summer break to create an archive. I started at the card catalogues in Cornell's Echols Library and at the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (now folded into Leiden University's library), looking for anything with even a remote connection. The next summer I branched out to other libraries and archives. Reader, I photocopied everything, an entire file cabinet of paper, all of it in Dutch.

What was I thinking? I loved fieldwork—hanging out, looking, listening, joking, asking annoying questions, trying to explain why the United States on TV wasn't like the United States of lived experience, conversing about what I was discovering and discovering how much I had missed. Learning was living, and vice versa. I knew from archival research for my dissertation that I did not enjoy plowing through documents. Why did I think I could carry out a project based entirely on texts, with no chance to chat about them? My antiquated references to "card catalogues" and "photocopies" reveal how badly I judged the time this project would take: to figure out key categories, to translate (major chunks of text, when I feared missing something important), and especially to think about it all.

And that's the other thing. Foucault went out the window almost immediately. My then colleague Judy Farquhar invited Bruno Latour to give a talk; before I knew it, I was gobbling up books in science studies, often by assigning them in graduate seminars (thank you to all the students who joined me on those journeys!). It wasn't enough to read, though. Happily, for a while Matthew Hull was my colleague at UNC. Not only did we teach a seminar together on actor-network theory, but he read what I was writing, gently pointing out where I remained stuck in habits of thought I had learned in graduate school that were at odds with the approach I was trying to adopt. Like struggling to maneuver a massive container ship, I slowly turned myself around. In a very different way than fieldwork (it was a much more cerebral process), I unlearned and reassembled my conceptual practices on the scaffold built through ethnography. Whew! That was hard.

I have already begun to mention some of the debts accumulated over the many years it has taken to finish this book. Given our long-standing reciprocity over many, many years, I am sure I am not done thanking Chris Nelson, who patiently read every piece of this book, some multiple times. I benefited not only from his kindness and encouragement, but from offhand comments about matters beyond my experience that opened unexpected paths. To Anjana Mebane-Cruz, on whose refrigerator I saw the cartoon with which I begin the book, deep and joyful thanks for her steadfast sisterhood, with just the right mix of support and admonishment, as well as for her astute insights into colonial processes. To Anne Cunningham, for her always practical advice and support and for actual help when I was mired in the morass of my references (above and beyond, Anne, as always!). Molly Mullin is not only a cherished friend but has an acute editorial eye; much gratitude for casting it my way. For perspicacious comments on early drafts of specific chapters, I owe much to Judy Farquhar, Jim Hevia, and Brad Weiss (who also has often provided sustenance for body as well as mind). My debts to Ida Bagus Kakiang and Dayu Niang cannot be paid; this book has kept me away from them, which makes me sad.

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back to Science versus the sciences and elaborating on our shared interest in the capacity of the reclaiming witches to spark thinking.

Who would have thought that at UNC I would discover not only a Dutch librarian, but also a colleague who teaches Dutch, whom I troubled periodically when unsure of my translation of some bit of weird colonial prose? I can't express how much I appreciated the help of Joanneke Fleischauer, who showed me just how remarkable a research librarian can be; she even enlisted her son, Thomas Elliott, an indefatigable researcher, in locating materials on the lives of several figures important to chapter 5. Nor can I thank Dan Thornton enough for his willingness to provide input as I tried to render an archaic and sometimes exotic form of Dutch into readable English. However, as all translations are mine (unless otherwise indicated), so are any errors.

Laurie Maffly-Kipp first introduced me to the phenomenon of writing groups by inviting me to participate (with Sylvia Hoffert and Sarah Shields) in the first of many, often sponsored by UNC's Center for Faculty Excellence. All were wonderful in different ways. The most recent lasted for years. To Emily Bagaranawath, Herica Valladares, Tricia Sullivan, and Meenu Tewari: thank you, comrades, for your company on this journey!

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As some of these appreciations suggest, portions of this book have previously appeared in journal articles and book chapters. In particular, I began writing about Klungkung's heirloom keris in my very first publication; as they have continued their journey, they have continually provoked me to return to them. Guna-guna also prompted revisits. I thank editors (especially David Akin) and peer reviewers for their invaluable feedback.

Last, but never least, I thank my daughter Sophie, who grew with this book from infancy to adulthood, and managed, despite my distraction, to turn into an extraordinary person.

INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, when I first began to think about the genealogy and checkered politics of magic, a classic anthropological category, I saw a cartoon featuring two famous magical figures on a friend's refrigerator door (see figure I.1).

Her hooked nose, black pointy hat, and broomstick allow us to instantly identify the woman in the hospital bed as a witch. The witch doctor, who is the witch's doctor, is nearly as instantly recognizable by his immense carved mask with feathers, armbands, shell necklace, and grass skirt. While the witch springs from the imaginary of American popular culture—think Margaret Hamilton in *The Wizard of Oz*—she originated across the Atlantic. She emerged in an allegedly enlightened Europe where the embers and lingering odor of smoke from the witch trials belonged to a safely distant past, even as a frisson of menace could be repurposed to scare or entertain children.[1] The witch serves as shorthand for processes that sutured together a host of practices, forms of life, and ontologies as "magic" and then spat them out as relics of a time gone by in forming the two vast networks called "religion" and "science." No wonder the witch is in a hospital!

Some of the same developments condensed in the figure of the witch also contributed to making the second figure, including his hybrid name *witch doctor*, which simultaneously marks his role as a specialist in undoing the effects of malevolent magic and recognizes his ambiguous powers to harm and heal. He is a figure not from Europe's past, but from the eternal present

FIGURE 1.1: JackZiegler/CartoonStock.com, www.CartoonCollections.com.

of some vaguely tropical place, a member of the obscure tribe nineteenth-century anthropologists called the primitives. Blasted out of time to embody humanity's ancient history, no wonder he wears chrono-tech on his wrist. His presence at the ailing witch's bedside is also fitting. For it was by scholarly necromancy, conjuring up humanity's past through living persons, that Europeans revived the witch, bringing a figure that was supposed to be dead back to life.

The witch and witch doctor emerged as entangled products of unholy alliances in the making of modern onto-political formations. The witch materialized as a threatening object across Europe and over the Atlantic as dead cows and blighted crops, inquisitors with a growing expertise on pacts with the devil, printing presses that proliferated such knowledge, technologies to extract confessions, and competing polities and theologies allied against persons (often elderly women) with few supporters among their neighbors or kin. For nearly three hundred years, as Europeans embarked on voyages of exploration and trade, these associations continued to gain traction. But then networks were reshuffled; the witch ceased to be an object around which powerful collectives mobilized. She found herself transmuted into a symbol of modern reason's routing of illusory belief, still

lingering, perhaps, in isolated rural pockets and folklore, and eventually finding a place in new cultural spheres growing up around the modern child.

And then she was translated to Africa, where (among other alterations) she underwent a partial sex change to morph into the stereotypical witch doctor. As he coalesced through the reports of explorers, missionaries, and administrators, the witch doctor fueled native superstition, perpetrated fraud, and threatened social order. Travel literature, colonial rule, and fiction secured the witch doctor and the witch as matters of concern in Africa and in anthropology. As noted, however, the cartoon witch doctor does not heal the witch's victims, but the moribund figure herself. And where do they meet but in the biomedical hospital, a sanitary space emblematic of the triumph of enlightened European science over superstition.

This cartoon illustrates magic's life in translation. I argue that magic is not a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon. Carried by Europeans around the world, it formed an essential ingredient of colonizing projects, differentiating Europeans from others, and strengthening the reality of some worlds (particularly those summarized and ideologically rendered as Science) at the expense of others. My goal in this book is to track some of magic's travels across time and space, looking at what it gathers and the friction it generates as it moves. I take current concepts and the figures of popular fantasies to be the accreted sediments not only of creative and intellectual labor, but also of relations of power and tricky commensurations. That we now use *magic*, a concept with deep roots in Europe's past, to refer to congeries of practices and phenomena across the globe raises questions about the work of making equivalent, and about the making and unmaking of realities.

ISABELLE STENGERS, ADDRESSING Whitehead's concept of adventure, offers a significant elaboration: "'Adventure' . . . implies that all continuity is questionable, and that no principle of economy should prevail that allows us to forget that the resumption of a seemingly similar theme takes place in circumstances that are different every time, and with stakes that are always different. The question 'what has happened to us?' is . . . a resource for telling our stories in another way, in a way that situates us otherwise—not as defined by the past, but as able, perhaps, to inherit from it in another way" (2011b: 14). I treat this inquiry into magic as such an adventure. Rather than proposing a new theory of magic, I attend to how the concept operates. Drawing inspiration from Stengers's (2005a) injunction to slow things

down to avoid lazy thinking, and Latour's call for a slow-ciology (2005b), I also take heed of the productivity that resulted when Gramsci found himself forced to avoid language from the Marxist canon (Hoare and Smith 1971: xi). Rather than deploying or extending the familiar vocabulary of terms magical, I aim to decelerate the all too fast work of translation, putting tacks in the road to burst the tires of speeding thought-vehicles, and putting up barricades to divert travel from speedways to back roads. Being slow is not always a virtue. But it offers a way to reconsider, some helpful resistance to traditions and structures of feeling that have both political and ontological consequences, beginning as they do with a problematic judgment that existing categories and analytic procedures are adequate to all worlds. While I visit some classic anthropology of magic, I do not rehearse that vast literature systematically. For anthropologists, magic involves not only a body of theory and adroit analysis but tacit habits and unexamined assumptions. By imposing constraints, I aim to open up room for invention.

How, then, did a host of disparate activities and statements come to be treated as fundamentally alike? Through what extensions and modifications did magic emerge as a descriptor of specific practices, relationships, and experiences, and with what consequences? How was magic made *between* the West and the rest, and how did it even produce that *between*? What *reals* gain and lose strength by diffracting practices and entities through magic? What subjects and objects does magic bring into existence?

To answer these questions, I track Dutch invocations of magic in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Indonesia, then a colony of the Netherlands known as the Dutch East Indies, and one of many places shaping images of "the mysterious East." I follow the work magic did when Europeans transported it to a place where such concepts did not exist in order to make sense of subject populations and of their own experiences living there. Traffic in magic, however, hardly moved in only one direction. The practices made into magic in the Indies traveled back to Europe, through anecdotes, objects, expert knowledge, practices, and books, fueling fantasies and adding strength and solidity to scholarly projects, occultist movements, and tourist itineraries.

Moving and Commensurating

> Translation is the mechanism by which the social and natural worlds progressively take form.
> —Michel Callon

We usually understand translation as a semiotic act, a rendering of what is expressed in one language in the terms of another. Such everyday word magic is certainly relevant to this book. By translation, however, I do not refer only to a semiotic process but also to practices of transportation, commensuration, and connection (Callon 1986; Latour 1988, 1993, 2005). The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) provides three definitions for *translate*. The first has nothing to do with language.[2] In keeping with its Latin origins, to carry or bring across (an etymology that suggests passage over a boundary, border, or chasm), to translate is to "bear, convey, or remove from one person, place or condition to another," "to transfer, transport."[3] But transference doesn't simply mean taking something from one place and plopping it down in another. *Translate*'s third meaning highlights what such movement entails: "to change in form, appearance or substance; to transmute; to transform, alter." Concepts are not, in short, merely brought to new places. They mutate as they travel. Deployed in new situations, to address new experiences, concepts are bent and reworked, and modify in turn those situations and experiences. To translate is to convey something across space, time, and circumstance, with unpredictable outcomes.

As these entries highlight, translation involves more than the treacherous activity of commensuration. Semiotic technologies are only some of the means by which terms, concepts, and the practices associated with them *moved* around the globe, materializing new objects, and generating unanticipated effects.[4] Europeans deployed magic in part to make unfamiliar situations and experiences more familiarly unfamiliar. Such movements built magic into a category with apparently universal and transhistorical reach.

By emphasizing movement and alteration, however, I by no means intend to dismiss the *OED*'s second definition of *translate*, its "chief current sense": "To turn from one language into another; 'to change into another language retaining the sense' (Johnson); to render; also, to express in other words, to paraphrase." Not only is this the commonsense understanding, but such processes are critical to any investigation of magic's modern making, to the origins of my own interest in the topic, and, more broadly, to processes of commensuration and clashes among worlds.

This project took shape when I started to question both the vocabulary of magic and the long anthropological tradition of theoretical analysis in which it is embedded. The impetus came when my colleague Mark Hobart wondered why, in my first book, I rendered the Balinese and Indonesian word *sakti* as *magical power*.[5] That translation was neither unusual nor original. Quite the contrary: bilingual dictionaries (Balinese-Indonesian,

Balinese-English, and Indonesian-English) commonly gloss sakti by modifying *power* with words such as *magical*, *supernatural*, or *sacred*.[6] Consulting such dictionaries had shaped my understanding of the term. But the question led me to reflect upon the work that magic does in such definitions, as well as in anthropology (including my own) and in past and current imaginaries.

Much literature on translation examines its operation as both a specialized and mundane semiotic practice.[7] Many have challenged the notion that translation simply communicates information or meaning, or that translators shuttle seamlessly between (bounded, distinct) languages. Translators intervene by the choices they make, deciding to what degree the structures or modes of expression of the "source"—the material being translated—will shape the "target." Selecting along a spectrum that runs from loose paraphrase, aimed at making (common) sense, to word-for-word rendering, a translator may strive to sound idiomatic in the target language (domesticating strategies) or capture some flavor of the source (foreignizing strategies).

If domesticating strategies erase evidence of friction, favoring smooth locutions that keep others from sounding like idiots, foreignizing ones highlight limitations of the target language, stretching the experience of readers and auditors (Venuti 2002 [1995]). Advocates of foreignizing invariably return to Benjamin's "Task of the Translator"—mainly to requote Rudolf Pannwitz's withering critique of domesticators: "They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. . . . The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue" (quoted in Benjamin 1969: 80–81). This position originated with efforts by German romantics to contest dominant translation practices in France and England that were, in turn, influenced by a Roman text (Venuti 2012). As Venuti stresses, domesticating is an imperial strategy, useful for assimilating and dominating territories. To cram unfamiliar practices into the language and categories of dominant societies is never neutral. Those categories domesticate other worlds, rather than foreignizing their own.[8] German intellectuals also rejected the theory such strategies imply, in which language merely expresses ideas rather than constructing them.

To think of translation as shuttling between languages involves more than treating language as primarily a system of referents; it also assumes a common world, a domain of things-in-themselves to which languages refer.[9] But this also falls short in addressing how language operates. As

Silverstein (2003) highlights, translation is never only a matter of matching up words with common referents in a single unitary world. Words are a tiny part of language. Not only does syntax differ among languages, but so does pragmatics, the situations indexed and implied in language use. Translation always extends forms of life, situated in time and space. Any translator worth her salt must know more than the meanings of words or felicitous syntax; language is embedded in modes of life—what anthropologists commonly call culture.

Translating discourse therefore inherently bleeds into what Wagner (1975) calls the invention of culture, processing the material and signifying practices encountered during fieldwork through professional and ambient concepts and categories. In fact, beginning in the 1950s British social anthropologists presented as their goal the "translation of cultures" or "cultural translation," which aimed to convey "modes of thought," the logic or idioms through which others made sense of the world (Asad 1986). It cast the anthropologist as a translator of (non-European, marginalized, and dominated) forms of life for "modern" readers, in dominant languages, especially English. Anthropological texts extended dialogic feelers not only toward the source language/culture, but also to at least two target languages/cultures: those of professional anthropology and those of the anthropologist's native tongue and world.

But translating an (always inferred) culture through dominant categories impedes the project's envisioned goals. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro argues that cultural translation rests on "uncontrolled equivocation." As he explains it, uncontrolled equivocation "concerns the process involved in the translations of the 'native's' practical and discursive concepts into the terms of anthropology's conceptual apparatus," a process usually "implicit and automatic (and hence uncontrolled)" (2004b: 4). This habitual practice establishes equivalence without attending to the commonsense—and the world—built into professional categories.

Viveiros de Castro (2004a) actually raised another question about culture that explicitly addresses that world. The concept of culture brings with it a presumptive ontology: a single nature, on which there are many perspectives. The world may be multicultural, but it is mono- or uninatural. This dramatically limits relativist claims. On the one hand, we all have different ways of thinking about, viewing, or speaking about a common world. But science's account of that common world is more than merely one among many—and scholars typically presume that science informs their

own society's common sense (Latour 1993). As I elaborate below, some work in science studies proposes that there is no nature and no culture, but rather naturecultures, collectives, or worlds, that take shape through practices.

To return to the problem of equivalence in translation: to make something unfamiliar familiar involves finding similarities. But what does it mean to say two things are similar? Or different? As poets know, any two things may be made similar: hence the disruptive wonder of metaphor. In the provocative aphorisms he termed irreductions, Latour highlights translation as the fundamental problematic of knowledge: "Nothing is, by itself the same as or different from anything else. . . . There are no equivalents, only translations. If there are identities . . . this is because they have been constructed at great expense" (1988: 162). Equivalence, in short, is never simply given; things are not naturally "the same" or "different" but must be established as such. This involves work, and even conflict: such judgments "are the consequences of trials of strength, defeats and victories" (1988: 162).

In this light, consider Latour's apparently odd equation of the "work of translation" with networks (1993: 11). Here Latour engages in the very work of translation he is elaborating, by making a surprising connection that simultaneously alters what is meant by translation and by networks. The "work of translation" refers to the labor of relating one phenomenon to another, as opposed to distinguishing and dividing them—what he calls "the work of purification" (which includes analysis and critique). To translate is to associate, to forge a link.

Translation, whether as a semiotic practice for rendering languages and cultures comprehensible, an analytic technique for categorizing unfamiliar phenomena, or a mode of transport, is built on differences. Equivalences do not simply exist. They must be made, through assemblage and power. Ultimately, translation is a process of bringing things together, with all the tension and reshuffling this entails. What translation does, in short, is make relations.

I call translation a knotting technology. If "the work of translation" is synonymous with networks, networks themselves are arrangements of intersecting lines. Knots mark points of intersection, the binding together of different trajectories. Of course, more than two trajectories may be knotted together to make thicker nodes, some so thick that unknotting to see what they are made of becomes a daunting task. As knotwork, translation braids worlds together.

This book involves translation in these multiple senses. In tracking the movement of concepts and things, words count. I trace shifts, for example,

from Indonesian vernaculars to Dutch terms in colonial texts, as well as the replacement of older by newer Dutch terms in accounts of Indonesian practices. In the most prosaic sense, this is also a book based on my own translations of Dutch sources into English. Those sources, written in forms of Dutch that, due to changes to the language over time and hybridities peculiar to colonial Dutch, themselves appear odd to current Dutch readers and speakers. I draw on both concepts and my field experiences in Indonesia to complicate what Viveiros de Castro terms equivocations. In the process I aim to knot Indonesian practices into different networks, to extend and strengthen other possibilities for world-making.

Translating Magic and the Problem of Reality

The issues addressed so far would be relevant to any commonplace conceptual device used to aggregate far-flung practices from across the planet. Translation is a feature of all acts of commensuration, of finding equivalence, a condition of inter/intra-collective engagements. But not all translations have the same political or ontological effects. Magic differs from other instruments that stock the anthropological tool kit or pervade popular imaginaries. If translation in general entails knotwork, we might call translating magic (k)not-work, to highlight the simultaneous *not*-work its knots involve. While in other instances as well forging links may occasion decoupling, *nots* are built into magic's modern construction.

Consider, for instance, how familiar anthropological accounts of magic define it in opposition to other categories, as similar to but *not* something else. Early works in anthropology, for example, contrasted magic to religion, science, or both. For Durkheim (1995 [1912]), magic was to religion as the individual was to society. "There is no Church of magic," Durkheim famously declared, and Mauss (1972) argued that the power of magicians stemmed from their position outside of social institutions. For Frazer (1922), magic served as humanity's first stumbling attempt to know and control the world, no longer adequate given the sciences of the nineteenth century.

Such *nots* reiterate and amplify prior ones. Hildred Geertz, commenting on the work of historian Keith Thomas, highlights how they operated: "The attack on certain beliefs as 'magical,' in the senses of 'not-religious' or 'not-reasonable' or 'not-practical' [terms taken from Thomas's book], was a constant part of English religious rhetoric from at least the fourteenth century on. The common core of meaning was always disapproval, but what was not so stable, from person to person and from era to era, were the

grounds upon which these beliefs were to be dismissed" (1975: 75). Magic truly appears to be a "floating signifier," attaching itself to an attitude rather than to specific contents (Lévi-Strauss 1987 [1950]: 63). Serving as an offensive weapon, a strategy to array forces in battles over reality, it judges and finds an absence: of piety, of reason, of good sense.

"Not-religious" speaks for itself as a continuous theme, though for anthropologists, religion refers to a theoretical construct rather than, as it did in England, to Christianity. In many parts of the world magic remains the antithesis of proper, pious religion, especially, but not only, monotheistic religions (Davies 2012: 5–8; Van der Veer 2014). As for reason and practicality, they are laminated into commonsense understandings of science. And among the *nots* that magic invokes must be added not scientific, not modern, and, crucially, not real.

Magic does not contrast with reality in all of the knots that it makes. When some Christians or Muslims speak of magic, often in the mode of attack, they consider it very real—and very dangerous. Consider Geertz again, who ended up questioning whether anthropologists should indeed treat magic as a stable transhistorical and transcultural object: "[T]he construct 'magic' as used in much of today's thinking about exotic belief systems draws its aura of factualness from its place in our own culture and its legitimacy from the social prestige of the cultivated groups who employed the construct as an ideological weapon in the past" (1975: 88). Magic here is hardly a neutral descriptor with universal reach, a fact about human societies. Instead, it is an instrument of power. "Its aura of factualness," as well as the accumulation of *nots*, is the outcome of historical struggles "in our own culture." Both the witch hunt and its rejection made magic a problem for shared good realities for European elites—even as neopagans now deploy it to propose (and make) different good realities. But in contrast to Geertz, I urge that these struggles were not internal to North Atlantic societies; instead, they emerged in relations with others.

Definitions of magic as *not* something else are intimately entwined with the production of modern reality, with what John Law (2015) calls the one-world world. The modern making of magic is caught up with hegemonies of the real. Magic and its cognates, in short, did more than render the meaning of a phrase or categorize a practice. Their movement always entailed what I call *reality politics*: fostering some entities, transmuting others, and making still others—and the relations and practices in which they are embedded—vanish from public view.[10]

Drawing matters under the capacious umbrella of magic, of course, has many effects, depending on what, who, when, and where, why, and how. In contemporary metropolitan discussions, for instance, magic has largely positive associations. It forms a major component of the popular genre of speculative fiction, especially in the subgenre of fantasy. No surprise that university students in the United States flock to courses with magic in their titles, associating the word with Harry Potter, Narnia, and *The Lord of the Rings*. Tell acquaintances you are writing about it and pupils dilate. Its aura of mystery, hint of hidden ancient knowledges, and promise of transformation increasingly add seductive glamor to accounts of my own field area of Bali (Abram 1997 ; Stuart-Fox 2015).

This magic does more than attract; it inspires. It summons dreams of metamorphosis, of another world that may be not only possible but achieved without painful struggle. The magic that works in the vein of hope even feeds academic work. It was surely not only anthropology and dictionaries but also my taste for fantasy that informed my use of *magic* to translate what I learned from interlocutors in Bali. But it is worth noting what *fantasy* implies. Imaginary worlds speak to what During (2004) terms "fictionality," a historical emergence of experiences that temporarily suspend a hegemonic real. Fantasy, in short, is *not* real, even if imagination constitutes a potent component of and spur to world-making.

This book tracks some of the complex effects of translating magic, which include magic's allures. But in the one-world world of a host of dominant institutions, including the academy, diffracting the practices and statements of others through magic embroils and embroiled them especially in a particular kind of real: a preexistent, singular, external, and objective nature. The truths of that nature were discoverable through Science, the capital S marking the proper name of a revered entity. Conjuring Science worked to index the general superiority of a European culture engaged in mastering nature (or Nature), thus justifying the "West's" role as master over those—"not reasonable" and clearly "not practical"—ignorant of nature's implacable laws. Even the most sophisticated relativist claims presume multiple perspectives on this single reality, the nature that only Science knows.

Empirical studies of science have complicated this story in profound ways. Drawing attention to the practices that make facts and stabilize objects of knowledge, such work also shifts its focus from epistemological concerns about the adequacy of representation to ontology, the emergence

or continuity of phenomena.[11] Multiple sciences rather than Science highlight practices that do not describe reals but bring them into being. Neither subjects nor material entities preexist, nor is anything static. Indeed, matter itself "is always already an ongoing historicity," "not a thing, but a doing" (Barad 2003: 821, 822). How do the myriad acts Europeans translated and translate as magic appear from the perspective of this account of science?

Ironically, anthropological studies of magic, by raising disturbing questions about the relativity of truth, helped to bring science studies into being. Innovators such as David Bloor insisted that any sociology of knowledge worth its salt had to be symmetrical, treating claims we judge true by the same methods as those typically judged false—such as magic. Latour (1993) generalized that principle of symmetry well beyond this. Along with a variety of concepts and methods I borrow from science studies, Latour's promotion of a symmetrical anthropology, which dovetails with efforts to provincialize Europe (Chakrabarty 2000) and decolonize anthropology, inspires my interest in unraveling some of the (k)nots through which magic emerged—and my efforts to reinterpret Indonesian practices as making different realities, which such (k)nots partially connect to the reality of the one-world world.

The Making of a Category

It is no accident that the cartoon witch and witch doctor encounter each other in a scientific space, for they originally met through claims about Science. More specifically, they met at the birth of the once aspiring science of anthropology, which made magic a defining feature of the object elaborated as primitive society. Metropolitan ethnologists enlisted magic as one device to bring together observations made by "men on the spot" as sociomaterial worlds came into relation through exploration, conquest, resource extraction, missionization, and colonial rule. It is easy to fall under the spell of those ethnologists. Dazzled by their dexterity in explaining magic and asserting its significance in the history of humanity—including, for British theorists, its role in declaring a massive gap between the spectacularly successful sciences and technologies of their era and the tentative but failed knowledges of those still purportedly mired in the evolutionary past—we fail to notice the work it takes to bring all of these practices together in a single argument. We are encouraged to accept that theorists of magic merely identify a self-evident similarity and that their contribution lies in elaborating some of its most distinctive features: analogy and

contiguity, say, or the notion of force. In short, we assume that the reality preexisted the intellectual work, which merely felicitously represents it.

As noted, I seek to introduce some hesitancy, a conceptual hiccup, to this intellectual habit. The conditions of possibility for the cartoon's visual pun include the labors of a host of actors who produced magic as their common currency. I attend to some of the processes of assembly through which that occurred, treating magic as a sedimented product of global history, movement, and partial connection.

Without paying attention to such matters, the work of translation itself becomes a kind of magic, entailing illicit practices of conjuring—in the dual sense of performing sleight of hand and trafficking with the spirits of intellectual forebears—and a wondrous but inexplicable transformation of existing realities. Anthropology's founders inserted magic into a speculative account of human history, involving the slow but steady advance of reason, culminating in the scientific discovery of laws governing a preexistent nature. In that narrative, magic forms an early stage in the development of human understanding or a cognitive or emotional tendency never fully overcome. But if magic plays a part in humanity's history, it is, I contend, as a product of colonial relations and disciplinary ambitions. Rather than conjectures about human nature or evolution, I advocate exploring the worldly engagements that transported magic across the planet. To trace such movements is to track the making and unmaking of worlds.

What processes, then, turned magic into an all-terrain vehicle, apparently able to go anywhere in the world even if the journey is a bit bumpy? Here I offer some broad statements in anticipation of the specific ones that follow in the body of this book.

First, magic could never have been made into a phenomenon transcending time and space without empire. Colonial agents brought magic to bear on a host of novel situations. In concrete encounters with subject populations, on specific occasions, Europeans called upon magic to mediate unfamiliarity, build divides, and buttress hierarchies.

But these moments would have been transient and fragile without the help of particular nonhumans. New communication and transportation technologies made it possible for official reports, newspaper and magazine articles, and artifacts to travel not only across colonized territories but also back to Europe. They allowed specific actions, comments, or objects in distant places to be brought together, and through the generalizing labor of ethnologists, purveyors of popular culture, and museum curators to circulate

further. Such articulations simultaneously disarticulated. Pulling particular practices into magic's gravitational field, they winked out of view all or part of the collective of other-than-humans, things, technologies, forces, concerns, and people to which they had been connected, making the practices appear even more magical.

Second, the magic that European exploration, conquest, and rule transported around the planet brought with it an accumulated history of prior articulations, particularly relatively recent ones equating magic with illusion and delusion. In an important sense, magic always has been in translation, passing between and transforming semiotic-material formations. As a lexical item, *magic*, for instance, came into English (and, as *magie*, into Dutch) via a chain of transmission from Persian to Greek to Latin to French. Similar travels, involving particular transmutations and associations, saturate other terms in the lexicon of matters magical. Over the long span of this history, magic mutated from a species of wisdom from afar (specifically, from places east of Greece) into a concept enlisted to distribute reality, might, and truth. In its passage across time and space, magic always has promoted some entities and groups and marginalized others.

Parsing activities and ideas as magic, for instance, constituted a front line of advancing Christian theologies, legal systems, and commercial relations as the Church spread out from Rome. It formed one of many tools through which the Church could splice existing and alternative collectives into its fold, offering a way to envelop entities and practices (potent places and rites, and the other-than-human and more-than-human entities these made real) posing theological, moral, and political challenges to its claim to be truly catholic.

Voyages of discovery and mercantile transactions began the process of translating magic to the worlds beyond Europe—and translating those worlds through magic. Magic acquired new valences, molding realities and regimes of truth as it began to journey back and forth on ships and in documents between North Atlantic cities and an expanding web of entrepôts, Inquisitions, courtrooms, and mission fields—and later learned societies, administrative offices, plantations, construction sites, schools, doctors' consulting rooms, and laboratories. Europeans brought with them world-producing frames and practices that found themselves both reinforced and stretched through novel applications.

The development in Europe of a highly skilled performance art of sleight-of-hand entertainment added further strength to positions treating magic as a matter of deft manipulation, on the one hand, and naïve gullibil-

ity, on the other. Theatrical illusionism was in turn tied to two other cultural developments: the rapid proliferation of fiction, a different modality for producing simulated worlds; and movements reviving interest in occult knowledges, while adding novel technologies and fields of expertise, such as psychology.[12] Thus when colonial agents translated magic and affiliated concepts to describe, analyze, deplore, and intervene in situations in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, they engaged in reality politics.

Both colonial rule and magic's accumulated articulations nourished anthropological theorizations of magic as a defining feature of primitive society in the late nineteenth century. But anthropologists also elaborated magic in dialog with developments in popular culture that both amplified and countered dominant positions. A series of new movements rekindled magic's association with esoteric wisdom or dangerous mysterious powers (sometimes both). Some of these—such as spiritualism, theosophy, and parapsychology, all of which counted prominent public figures, including scientists, among their numbers—aimed to establish the reality of entities challenging divisions between living and nonliving or spirit and matter. These movements also forged unruly connections between North Atlantic and colonized worlds. Madame Blavatsky's theosophists, for instance, constructed associations between esoteric wisdom, mysticism, and the East, especially Tibet. In addition, spirit guides mediating contact with the domestic dead in London parlors commonly were Asian or Native American, as if the only paths Europeans could take to the afterlife intersected with roads built through corvée labor to transport tea in conquered territories.

It was British anthropologist Edward Burnet Tylor, however, who brought novel practices such as speaking to the dead at séances into conjunction with the witch and the witch doctor by claiming spiritualism constituted a revival of the magical thinking fundamental to primitive culture (1958 [1871]). Through such associations, anthropologists helped to shunt these movements beyond the purview of Science. In general, distaste for both the occult and popular culture molded the structures of feeling that became characteristic of anthropological accounts of magic.

In short, the possibility that ethnologists could situate a host of highly diverse activities, people, and things under the broad rubric of magic depended on prior translations and formations, even as it lent strength to particular projects of world-making, including those of colonialism and occultism.

Anthropology solidified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a body of concepts, institutionalized practices, and structures of feeling to understand the "primitive." Magic emerged as an object of conceptual

elaboration—as the most titillating and challenging feature of Hildred Geertz's "exotic belief systems"—under specific political conditions. Asad's assertion that "the structure of power certainly affected the theoretical choice and treatment of what social anthropology objectified" is particularly pertinent here (1973: 17).

As the discipline coalesced around the figure of the "primitive" in the late nineteenth century, armchair ethnologists re-*cognized* magic—both naming and rethinking it—in reports streaming back from outposts of empire, penned by travelers, merchants, missionaries, colonial officials, and other men on the spot. Making magic a phenomenon with worldwide distribution, they declared accounts depicted forms of life unchanged from a distant past that only the West had overcome. As anthropologists turned from speculative human history to ethnographic description, with some (Gluckman 1963) even arguing magic might itself alter in response to changing circumstances, treatment became resolutely local, a feature of particular peoples and places.[13] Hence, as anthropology developed, it provided a major conduit for magic's spread. But as I argue in this book, magic emerged through mediations of concrete engagements rather than merely as an object of abstract speculation.

Going Dutch

At first glance, a Dutch colony would appear to be an unlikely place to learn about the making of magic, or about its entanglements with colonialism, anthropology, and popular imaginaries. There are no famous Dutch contributions to the canon of the anthropology of magic; in fact, Dutch ethnologists largely modified concepts developed by British, French, and German theorists rather than developing their own. Moreover, although Indonesia, especially Bali, has a growing reputation as a place of magic, it barely registers in academic work on that topic. If any place is linked to magic in both scholarly literatures (fetishism, witchcraft, and witch doctors) and popular culture (as the "dark continent" in, for example, H. Rider Haggard), it is Africa (Pels 1998). Moreover, in Africa, colonial anti-witchcraft legislation not only played a crucial role in shaping key texts (such as Evans-Pritchard's) but still affects African lives and foments debate.

By contrast, the Dutch appear marginal not only to anthropologies of magic but also to the literature on colonialism. Indeed, in his landmark *Orientalism* Said (1978) ignored the Dutch, even what they wrote about the Middle East, despite the fact that Snouck Hurgronje, one of the fore-

most Orientalists and one of the first Europeans to visit Mecca, was Dutch. While excellent work has appeared on the Dutch in Indonesia, some of the best of it by anthropologists (Keane 2007; Stoler 2002; Stoler and Cooper 1997), such materials have not had the cross-disciplinary impact of studies of former British colonies in Africa and India, or of Latin America.

In a sense, this is unsurprising. Not only did the "sun never set on the British Empire," which extended across oceans and touched every continent, but its replacement by the United States ensured that English remains the dominant language of scholarship. France also had a transcontinental impact; the use of French as a colonizing language and the ascendency of French intellectuals in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century theory make that empire equally relevant across academic fields. And Latin America, united by a shared experience of Iberian imperialism and primarily Spanish-speaking, has generated a host of analyses of the ongoing "coloniality of power" (Quijano 2000). By contrast, by the twentieth century, the geographic reach of Dutch influence had shrunk mainly to the Indies. It formed a marginal empire, colonialism in a minor key.

Language policy cemented that position. Unlike English, French, and Spanish, Dutch never served as the language of command; instead, the Dutch made Malay—one of hundreds of archipelago languages but, in simplified form, long used in interisland trade—their medium of rule, reserving Dutch for communicating among themselves.[14] As a result, anti-colonial nationalists adopted Malay (renaming it Indonesian) as the national language. Only highly educated Indonesians (such as Engineer Sukarno, Indonesia's first president) mastered Dutch. That colonial documents, however, were written in Dutch means that archival and other historical materials are as well, obstructing projects akin to South Asian or Latin American subaltern studies.

Why, then, write a book analyzing magic's invocation in colonial Indonesia?[15]

In part, of course, because fieldwork in Indonesia led me to ruminate on what magic does as a translation. But in working on this book, I discovered myriad reasons why the particularities and peculiarities of colonial Indonesia clarify magic's contradictory effects as an object of expert and popular concern. It turns out there is much to learn from this marginal anthropology and minor colonialism.

I begin with this: the relation between colonialism and anthropology is exceptionally strong and clear in the Netherlands. It is not only much more overt than in other imperial formations (Ellen 1976; Fasseur

1993; Vermeulen 2008); it is parasitic. While much work has brought out the obscured colonial relations shaping Victorian and structural-functional anthropology (Asad 1973; Pels and Salemink 1994), in the Netherlands they are explicit.

Dutch ethnology focused almost exclusively on the Indies. Little distinction existed between the man on the spot in the colonies and the scholar working up raw data in his cozy metropolitan armchair, without enduring distasteful interactions with primitives, a division of labor characterizing Victorian and French theorists of magic (Stocking 1987). Key texts in Dutch ethnology were written by men engaged in routine work in the Indies (such as Kruyt, a missionary, and Van Ossenbruggen, a jurist), mainly in the employ of the colonial state. Many colonial officials not only penned reports to their superiors, but also contributed to learned journals. Almost all of the Netherlands' first chairs in ethnology were former officials or military officers. And mainly they taught men aspiring to enter the Indies civil service, who increasingly took degrees in Indology or ethnology. Hence it is hardly surprising to find congruence between the conceptual apparatus of colonial officials and academic authors. To recall Asad (1973), what scholars found theoretically interesting was shaped not only by a developing discipline, but by Indies experiences. In turn, officials not only drew on categories developed in Dutch ethnology, but on the premises laminated within them.

Certainly its empirical focus on the archipelago rather than on bits and pieces of description from across the globe made Dutch ethnology more provincial. At the same time, it was remarkably cosmopolitan. In Dutch publications, terms from archipelago languages mingle promiscuously with passages in English, French, German, and Italian. Through such work magic took shape across many worlds.

Apart from anthropology, Indies phenomena translated through magic are intimately bound up with Dutch culture. Louis Couperus's 1900 novel *The Hidden Force*, for example, is one of the great works of Dutch literature (see chapter 5). Stories and artifacts that made their way back to the Netherlands continue to spawn new experiences and ignite associations between Indonesia and magic, often in the form of mystery or mysticism. Even people with no direct connection to Indonesia have some familiarity with *keris* (Indonesian daggers, chapter 3), *guna-guna* (Indonesian "black magic," chapter 4), and hidden forces (chapter 5) from ambient culture such as television serials, novels, movies, and museums.

But the Dutch are not only of interest for exploring the nexus of colonialism, anthropology, and popular culture emerging in nineteenth- and

twentieth-century Indonesia. They also played a role in the development of modern institutions, including the supposed ontological transformation that Max Weber famously summed up as the disenchantment (literally *demagification*, as Davies [2012: 46] points out) of reality.

Let's return to the ailing witch in her hospital bed and recall the witches who made pacts with Satan. The moderns crossed out not only God (Latour 1993) but also Satan, demons, and witches, replacing them with the new category of nature. Witches and witch hunts became an embarrassing history, something now *over*. And those who write that history do not themselves treat witches as real, having internalized the commandment "thou shalt not regress!" (Stengers 2018a).

Judicial prosecution of witches ended earlier in the Netherlands than in most of Europe: Dutch magistrates stopped imposing the death penalty for witchcraft by 1608, and the last witch trial in the province of Holland occurred in 1659. Jurists and doctors became increasingly disinclined to attribute illness to the activities of witches, and clerics ignored accusations by parishioners (De Waardt 1991; Gijswijt-Hofstra 1999). In addition to these changes in practice, however, another Dutch development contributed to undermining witchcraft prosecutions elsewhere in Europe: a four-volume treatise entitled *The Bewitched World* (*De betoverde wereld*) that Balthasar Bekker, a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church published in 1691–93.

Some historians credit Bekker with being the first to pose a significant theological and philosophical challenge to the premises of the witch hunt (Levack 1999; Porter 1999; Stronks 1991). Bekker shook up the ontological settlement that undergirded claims that witches made pacts with Satan and trafficked with demons. Drawing on the growing corpus of descriptions of Africa, Asia, and the Americas emerging from commercial ventures and voyages of exploration, his knowledge of scripture and the classics, and Cartesian dualism, he addressed the role that spiritual beings could play in worldly affairs. After surveying societies past and present, and analyzing biblical passages mentioning spirits and their activities, he concluded that from a Christian perspective no noncorporeal beings (other than God) could act in the material world, which had its own regularities.[16] Views to the contrary were the legacy of paganism, as indicated by their ubiquity among existing heathens. Thus, Bekker knotted Cartesian and Calvinist purifications of matter and spirit, divisions between Christian Europe and "heathens," and reason versus mere belief into a new account of the real.

The impact of Bekker's controversial thesis (church leaders accused him of blasphemy) resonated far beyond the Netherlands. Almost immediately,

translations appeared in German, French, and English. But the Dutch contributed more to shaping a new ontological settlement than making witches vanish. That voyage literature played a part in Bekker's inquiry indexes the emergence of a global political economy based on mercantile and finance capitalism. And that, in turn, rested on the beginnings of Dutch involvement in the Indies.

Dutch merchants reached the islands now part of the nation-state of Indonesia at the end of the sixteenth century, following Portuguese predecessors. Of the four ships that headed "east" in 1595, the three that returned two years later had managed to reach Banten in West Java, then the center of the global black pepper trade, and had traveled up Java's north coast. Having cracked the secret of the sea route to the Indies, Dutch merchants quickly outpaced the Portuguese in meeting Europe's insatiable taste for spices, reaching the famous Spice Islands (now Maluku) by 1599 and soon ousting Portuguese competitors from everywhere but the island of Timor.

As with many lucrative ventures, these entailed considerable financial risk. To reduce it, investors banded together to form a cartel: the Dutch East India Company (de Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, literally the United East Indies Company; hereafter the VOC or the Company). The VOC was the world's second multinational corporation; the British East India Company preceded it by a mere two years. In these first corporations a group of investors pooled their capital and sought a government charter. At this time the Netherlands consisted of seven provinces that in 1581 had revolted against Spanish rule and formed a republic; that arrangement lasted until Napoleon's occupation of the Low Countries in 1795. In 1602 the States-General of the Dutch Republic granted the "seventeen gentlemen" who made up the VOC's board a monopoly on all trade east of the Cape of Good Hope; six months later the Company began to issue stock and established the world's first stock exchange in Amsterdam. Unlike multinational corporations now, its charter granted the VOC sovereign powers: the authority to make treaties, form an army and wage war, and administer any territories such activities brought under its purview.

That these events began a process eventuating in the establishment of the Netherlands Indies (and later Indonesia) makes them pertinent to this book. But they were also momentous for the world-shaping processes we sum up with words like modernity. However marginal the Netherlands may now appear, it was once at the forefront of global history.

What is now called the Dutch Golden Age grew out of the spectacular success of the VOC and Dutch sea-based trade.[17] The basis for wealth and

power shifted from inherited land to merchants and financiers in Holland's port cities, especially Amsterdam. Mercantilism spawned a host of industries, from shipbuilding (facilitated by the Dutch invention of the wind-powered sawmill, which made it possible to build ships more quickly and at less cost) to cartography (many key innovators were Dutch, and Amsterdam became the center for the production of maps and atlases). New economic opportunities, along with the Dutch Republic's toleration of dissent (while Calvinism formed the official religion, rejection of Spain's suzerainty led to a distaste for orthodoxy), attracted people to Dutch cities not only from the countryside but from all over Europe, including philosophers such as Locke and Descartes. (It was not by happenstance that Bekker drew on Cartesian ideas; Descartes had a wide following among Dutch intellectuals.) These processes led to the increasing importance of a new class: the bourgeoisie.

Maritime commerce also fueled dazzling innovations in science, technology, and art. Apart from technologies with direct applications to a mercantile economy, the Republic became known for optics and medicine. And, best remembered now, Dutch painters invented new genres of art: still lifes, landscapes (and seascapes), group portraiture, and scenes from everyday life, scenes containing their own traces of the trade enriching this new class.[18]

These developments shed light on magic's modern reality politics in two ways. One has to do with voyage literature; the other, with assessments of Golden Age art.

Dutch merchants on West Africa's coast played a decisive role in the genesis of concepts and attitudes vital to analytics of magic. The central figure was the fetish, though what was said about this hybrid object also helped to position Africa as the heart of magical darkness in European imaginations. Although *fetish* comes from a Portuguese translation, it was Dutch Protestant merchants who elaborated the concept and propelled it across Europe. There it came to the attention of Charles de Brosse, an Enlightenment intellectual who proposed fetishism (*fétichisme*) as a stage in the development of human mentality.

Bekker actually drew on one of these texts, by Pieter de Marees.[19] The latter's report of his visit to Africa's Gold Coast in 1602 transported the word *fetish* into northern European languages. But Willem Bosman (who had read Bekker) had a more lasting impact. His 1703 book, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea*, made the idea of the fetish go viral. That he had spent many years living and trading in Guinea, moving from a mere apprentice to chief merchant for the Dutch West India Company, gave his text an authority it retained for over a century.[20]

Bosman's lively account of his experiences on the Gold Coast laid the groundwork for subsequent discussions of the fetish as both a type of magical object and as a form of thought.[21] I will have more to say about both Bosman and fetishes in the pages to come. Here suffice it to say that both what he said and the way he said it affected not only what Europeans did with the idea of the fetish, but all manner of things, people, and acts translated through the language of magic. Bosman, emboldened by Bekker's rejection of the devil's agency, ridiculed African practices as ignorant and irrational. In particular, they showed a fanciful understanding of causality, not recognizing the operation of nature's impersonal laws.[22] Such claims began to thicken not only the knots judging non-Europeans as irrational, but also those to reshape what could count as real, and consequently as rational. Bosman writes with an assurance that his assessments of value, virtue, and veracity represent common sense.

Bosman's attitude might have been described with a word late colonial Dutchmen in the Indies used to describe themselves, particularly in contrast with Indonesians. They proudly avowed they were *nuchter*: sensible, sober, down to earth, and unimaginative. It implied they were grounded in the really real, resisting flights of fancy (let alone Deleuzian witches' flights). This is strikingly reminiscent of the way art critics and art historians retrospectively talk of Golden Age Dutch painting. In the mid-nineteenth century, a French study branded that art *realistic* (Yeazell 2005). But that label and those paintings, like being nuchter, index an ontological transformation: the dwindling of one world and the coalescence and *real-ing* of a different one.

Plan of the Book

The temporal and spatial specifications of my title—colonial and Indonesia—are both crucial and misleading. Crucial, because translation always is grounded in particular situations. What concerns me is how practices found themselves enrolled in the conceptual field of magic through encounters between Europeans and those they colonized. Misleading, because these constitute a mere fraction of the encounters sedimented in *magic*'s current dense and contradictory uses, including its uptake (a concept I learned from Susan Gal, personal communication) as a domain of anthropological description and theorizing. Hence, this book addresses magic's formation contrapuntally. The chapters focus on specific objects and practices that nineteenth- and twentieth-century Dutch authors diffract through the

category magic. I punctuate these chapters, however, with interludes beyond the Indies. These speak to the formation of familiar anthropological structures of feeling and analytical habits, especially (but by no means exclusively) in Anglophone anthropology.

I organize each chapter around Dutch transformations of an Indonesian practice or Indies experience into a species of magic: witch doctors, fetishes (amulets and heirloom weapons with "magical powers"), black magic, and occult forces or legerdemain.[23] Specific incidents, experiences, and entities become occasions for translational (k)notwork. Although Dutch authors ultimately coordinate all as magic, distinct issues were at stake for each, involving different political and ontological labor.

I start from the perspective of the colonial state and move from there to popular culture, both in the Indies and in the Netherlands. In the first three chapters, Indonesian "magic" is a target of colonial governance—and governmentality, as administrators sought to secure "peace and order" (*rust en orde*) by suppressing rebellions and establishing laws and procedures. Changes in policy at the turn of the twentieth century added to this imperative a resolve to "develop" Indonesians; for some, this included addressing the pernicious effects of superstition. These chapters analyze magic's translation in relation to such priorities through specific responses, policies, and regulations. In each case, authorities drew on pedagogies of disenchantment: performances accompanied by confident claims that a particular colonial response would teach Indonesians the "truth" about what was and was not real, and about the deception of trusted local experts. Resembling what Latour (1987) termed trials of strength, they had odd outcomes, strengthening rather than undermining Indonesian realities.

In these initial chapters magic takes shape as a tool to erect confident distinctions between rational Europeans and irrational natives. Throughout all of the chapters magic appears enmeshed with efforts to secure racial and ontological distinctions, as Dutch skepticism repeatedly was contrasted with Indonesian credulity, and Indonesians were charged with confusing nature and culture, agents and objects. But residing in the Indies could result in experiences that disrupted such divides. If the state saw its task as disciplining or transforming backward populations, more intimate relations led to unexpected conversions in the opposite direction: Europeans (including some officials) who became convinced that Indonesians wielded mysterious powers. Such shifts begin to emerge in chapter 3, but the last two chapters pursue these processes further, tracking magic's crystallization in popular culture through anecdotes, popular books, and journalism.

The book makes several larger arguments, and chapters share a number of analytic strategies. As Haraway notes, "'objects' do not pre-exist as such. Objects are boundary projects" (1991: 201). Magic is such a boundary project. It is the "X" that marks the spot where male, bourgeois, Enlightened reason ends and improper (female, rural, uneducated, Indicized, and definitely *native*) unreason begins.

To call something magic may strengthen or weaken it, while strengthening or weakening those using the label as well. On the one hand, magic allies a practice with lots of other phenomena, as well as with proclamations of universality. (Such proclamations inherently involve sleight of hand; like any phenomenon, magic exists only within networks, such as anthropological texts or neopagan rites.) On the other hand, it not only relegates that practice to a subordinate position in projects of making a single world, but also cuts it off from the capillary practices that nourish it and that it, in turn, nourishes in making plural different worlds.[24] If comparisons are knotting technologies, then we need to ask who and what is strengthened or weakened by the knots magic's translations tie. What makes a comparison "good" is inherently political and ontological. I argue that those that address the making of (partly) different worlds make us more careful than those that reinforce the one-world world.

Magic is a technology of bifurcation. It is used to erect or fortify divisions: between humans, with their culture, beliefs, ideas, and words, and all other beings; between culture or society and nature; between subjects and objects, or mind and matter; between modern and backward and the West and the rest. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour analyzes the interrelation between two Great Divides (1993). He argues persuasively that the distinction between nature—or more precisely a single Nature, the secrets of which are progressively revealed by Science—and society grounds the division between the West and the rest. Despite cultural relativism's pious proclamations of equality among all cultures, each of which has a perspective on the world as it really is (a philosophical bifurcation elaborated by Locke as a distinction between primary and secondary qualities, or by Kant as the gap between the world of phenomena knowable by humans and an unknowable noumenal reality of things-in-themselves), one perspective is actually true: that of the West. I find Latour's Great Divides immensely useful for attending to how magic operates. As my list of divisions indicates, however, there are many more than two at work. Both separately and together, they erect and fortify a Great Wall. Its effects are both ontological—real-ing some entities through an array of practices—and political, deliberately or inad-

vertently destroying or weakening others. But just as China's Great Wall is built of stone at some locations and of wood or earth at others, some of the divides that magic erects are more vulnerable to assault than others. Nonetheless, all require human and nonhuman labor to maintain, and none are impervious.

These chapters deploy several strategies to open magic's "black box" and defamiliarize its uses. The first is genealogical. Genealogy entails following the processes through which a practice or entity came to colonial attention, the controversies that gathered around it, and its induction into the magical pantheon. Several practices and entities initially were firmly attached to vernacular words, marking them as elements of Indonesian worlds—though many such "vernaculars" are themselves products of earlier connections across the Indian Ocean. European use of vernaculars signals a potential site of unfamiliar connection. Vernaculars, and the practices with which they are imbricated, could in theory become the basis for new concepts or acts, as happened for the Polynesian terms *mana* and *tabu*, Tungus *shaman*, and Ojibwe *totem*. With the exception of keris (rendered in English as *kris*), this did not, however, occur. Instead, as practices began to appear troublesome, they found themselves enlisted in the manufacture of generalities, with Dutch descriptors.

Making such new knots entailed some unraveling of existing ones. Inserting a practice or entity into a new assemblage as a species of magic (or magical thought) meant simultaneously wresting it out of its ecological niche in a nexus of practices. As Dutch experts (administrators, ethnologists, doctors, jurists) hammered Indonesian practices into magical phenomena, they bent them into new shapes. They not only isolated them from the ongoing relations and events to which they contributed, but also simplified them, often dematerializing them into specimens of primitive mentality, local culture, or individual pathology. To counter such work, I not only reinsert practices into local collectives (in Latour's [1999: 304] sense of a gathering of humans and other-than-humans) but also emphasize their materiality.

In addition, I propose alternative commensurations to those in magic's conceptual constellation. Practices may be made legible through analogies that avoid familiar shortcuts, shortcuts that include not only magic but *belief* or *the supernatural*, and even culture or idiom. Instead of reinforcing the Great Wall as magic does, methodological austerities such as avoiding the language of magic analytically yield other connections and slighter differences. Some alternatives come from overlooked or underconceptualized North Atlantic artifacts and routines.

Diffracting practices through magic also entails constant efforts to establish sharp borders: between properly disenchanted Europeans and hopelessly naïve or skillfully fraudulent Indonesians; between science and superstition, or knowledge and belief; and between nature and culture. Practices inscribed through magic commonly appear as so many instances of the rift between European reason and Indonesian credulity, and evidence of non-European failures to grasp a universal reality known to European Science. But examining what colonizers did rather than only what they said undermines such confident divisions. Not only did colonial countermagic often reinforce or mimic what it aimed to undo, but Indonesian realities infiltrated colonizer lives—and even psyches. On the whole, through colonial rule certain practices Europeans denigrated gained in strength, becoming elements of partly shared worlds. Another strategy I have found helpful, following such phenomena into the present, shows this.

As the arc of this book indicates, I do not treat magic as a North Atlantic category projected onto the blank slate of a terra incognita. Magic materialized through relations, and translations yielded unanticipated fusions. Inevitably, colonizers sought to turn the unfamiliar into the more familiar. But in the process, the familiar mutated. At the same time, although this book is about colonial Indonesia, it mainly addresses Indonesian claims and practices to point out where networks were cut and to suggest alternate connections.[25] Indonesian practices and lexicons do not map easily onto *magic*.

My familiarity with Bali, the site of my ethnographic research, afforded partial insight into some of the practices I address. I draw several incidents from colonial archives I consulted when researching Bali's past, and came across another in a travel book I picked up because Bali was among the places its author had visited. During fieldwork, I encountered the practices, entities, and experts I discuss as well, and talked about them with Balinese friends. But much of the material on which I draw was forged by colonial experiences on the island of Java, a place far more central to colonial history. With the exception of the Spice Islands, Java—especially West Java or Sunda—had the longest and deepest involvement with the Dutch; when nationalists rejected 350 years of colonialism, they mainly spoke from a Sundanese and Javanese perspective. More Europeans lived on Java than in the rest of the archipelago combined. Much Dutch scholarship, and key colonial and scholarly institutions, developed there as well: administrative routines and relations between European and indigenous authorities, commodity production, learned societies, and museums are just some of these.

I lack the kinds of insight in Sunda and Java that fieldwork yields but have done my best to read carefully and cautiously.

A thorough discussion of magic's manufacture in the Indies would attend to many more times and places than addressed here. For millennia before European ships docked, the congeries of people yoked together as subjects of the Netherlands Indies (and, later, as citizens of Indonesia) had trafficked in words and concepts, cosmologies and gods, plants and animals, genes and goods, architecture and performances—not only with each other but with visitors and settlers from regions now called India, the Middle East, and China. The vernaculars and practices the Dutch found were products of prior translation; I note some of these as I proceed. Magic also knots together more than specific colonial assemblages. It ties Indonesians to other collectives, including British colonies in Africa and European naturecultures. While I gesture toward such connections, their story is by no means exhausted.

I envision this book as a contribution to empirical philosophy, one that brings anthropological and science studies insights to bear on specific relations. It is not in any conventional sense a history, insofar as it does not develop its argument chronologically, moving from distant past to recent past, or from the past to the present. On the contrary: not only does each chapter begin and end in the present or near present before tracing, starting from a particular past incident, the formation of the judgment "magic," but the sequence of incidents making up the book's trajectory in chapter 1 begins almost a hundred years after the incident with which it ends in chapter 5. Nor does it propose, as anthropologists might anticipate, a new theory of magic; I hope that by its end it will be clear why I would find the generality such a theory implies problematic. Instead, my main goal is to interrupt business as usual, by attending to emergences and effects and by proposing alternatives to familiar habits.

FINALLY, A NOTE on grammar and orthography. In Indonesian and Balinese, nouns are not marked for plural (except for emphasis), leaving this to context, and I have followed that convention throughout this book (even in quotes from translated Dutch). In addition, both Dutch and Indonesian/Malay orthography have undergone several changes since the nineteenth century. For simplicity's sake, I have used current spelling for both languages throughout.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

Epigraph: Callon 1986: 19.

1 Images during the witch hunt bore little resemblance to Halloween witches. They often depicted naked women with bare heads and long, flowing hair.

2 The roots of terms translated as *translate* in both Indo-European Dutch (*vertaling* from *taal*) and Austronesian Balinese (*mabasan*, from *basa*) refer to language, not movement.

3 This includes removing a dead body from one place to another. For nineteenth- and twentieth-century European elites, magic arguably was just such a dead body.

4 For a brilliant account of translation as movement, see Montgomery (2002).

5 *Sakti* also has been translated in the *OED*'s first sense, moving to Indonesia from India.

6 Barber's Balinese-English dictionary (1979) defines *sakti* as "strength (esp. spiritual); magic power; supernatural power." Stevens and Schmidgall-Telling's Indonesian-English dictionary (2004) has "1. supernatural power. . . . 2. To have, possess magic power, magic." The dictionary I had in the field defines it as "1. Supernatural, divine power . . . ; 2. having magic or divine power . . . ; 3. sacred" (Echols and Shadily 1992). Of course, bilingual dictionaries are themselves complicated linguistic phenomena, with an implicit metapragmatic ideology that equates language with reference. At least one dictionary, however, does not use any modifiers in equating sakti with power: Zoetmulder's *Old Javanese-English Dictionary*. Old Javanese (or Kawi) is a textual language in certain literary genres as well a register of Balinese in specific performance genres. Kawi is rich in Sanskrit lexical items. Zoetmulder's

dictionary is actually trilingual since it includes Sanskrit terms too. Glossing Sanskrit shakti as "power, ability, strength, might; regal power, energy or active power of a deity personified as his wife," Zoetmulder renders Old Javanese *śakti* as close to this: power, strength; or powerful, mighty (1982). Nothing magical about it.

7 Translation forms an omnipresent feature of contemporary experience in media (subtitles!), international politics, and transnational business (see also Leavitt 2015).

8 Thus Asad (1993) demonstrates how Christian theology informs Ernst Gellner's discussion of Islam among Berbers. In a similar way, David Schneider (1984) insisted that anthropological accounts of kinship were smuggled in Euro-American relations of blood (nature) and law (society).

9 De Saussure complicates this by noting that even in languages in one family signifieds do not map onto each other. Hence English distinguishes animals from meat (sheep versus mutton, hen versus chicken, cow versus beef, pig versus pork), unlike French, where zoology and cuisine overlap (*mouton, poulet, boeuf*, *porc*).

10 I previously used Annemarie Mol's (1999) term "ontological politics," even as I bent it to situations different from those for which she coined it. However, anthropologists use "ontology" in myriad ways, not all of them deriving, as my own interest has, from engagement with science studies work that is in dialogue with Whitehead's speculative metaphysics. "Reality politics" clarifies what is at stake: what does and will count as real, what claims and practices may be subject to mockery, what futures are and are not achievable. It also better captures Latour's assertion that the real is gradients of resistance (1988: 158–59, 188).

11 See, for example, Barad (2007); Haraway (1991, 1997); Latour (1987, 1988); Latour and Woolgar (1986 [1979]); Shapin and Schaffer (1985); Stengers (2000).

12 During (2004). Jones (2017) analyzes illusionism's impact on nineteenth-century anthropology in depth.

13 See the epilogue for some enchantments of so-called moderns.

14 Malay was the language of the Sultanate of Malacca. What the Dutch adopted was Bazaar Malay, a pidgin.

15 One might make a case for playing Philias Fillagap or Lucy Lacuna (Cohn 1987: 21–22), though intellectually this is hardly compelling.

16 Bekker mentions Javanese in passing in chapter 7, but says little about them.

17 Dutch domination of maritime trade went beyond the Indies. By the mid-seventeenth century, for instance, the VOC imposed a monopoly on trade with Japan. The Dutch also controlled most sea-based trade in Europe. For Moore (2010), this European (and Atlantic) trade marks the Dutch role in making a global political economy.

18 See, for example, Brook (2008) and Buck-Morss (2000).

19 Reliance on De Marees is evident in Bekker's account of fetishes in Guinea (Bekker 1695: 38–39; De Marees 1987 [1602]).

20 The Dutch West India Company, chartered in 1621, received a monopoly on the Atlantic trade, covering the Americas and Africa. Its raison d'être was not only commercial but political: due to the ongoing conflict with Spain, the Dutch sought to undermine Iberian interests. Most of the work already cited on Dutch centrality

in forging a global political economy has focused on the West India Company and not the VOC.

21 The fetish maintained a conceptual robustness in Dutch ethnology that it lost in Africa, where a new concern with witches displaced it (Pels 1998).

22 See Pietz (2022).

23 Or so Dutch texts describe these phenomena. Indonesians have their own names for them. A caveat: Europeans translated Indonesian entities, stories, and practices through magic on myriad occasions other than those I address.

24 Magic also can do useful knotwork. Linking practices to a category decreed universal empowers by providing a host of potential allies (see chapter 4).

25 When I began this project, I expected to follow magic into the work of Indonesian intellectuals, but Dutch materials required more thinking than anticipated. One weakness I readily concede is that I do not historicize the Indonesian practices I draw upon to disrupt European categories and claims. But my goal is not to write a history but to track usages.

INTERLUDE 1. WITCH DOCTORS

1 For anti-witchcraft ordinances and the category of the witch, see, for example, Fields (1982), Gray (2005), Luongo (2011), and a special issue of *Africa* (3, no. 4) in 1935 to which Evans-Pritchard contributed; most of the other contributors were colonial officials grappling with the category and legal remedies for a practice they found problematic.

2 Its third meaning is another telling extension: psychiatrist.

3 More interesting is *diviner*, which, like *oracle*, associates Zande practices with the classical world Euro-Americans claim as ancestral.

4 Taussig (2003) is a major exception in noting that a diagnosis of deception may elide a clash in realities. Based on ethnographies of Kwakwaka'wakw shamanism, he suggests the shaman does not act alone but in conjunction with spirits. The shaman's movements compel spirits to mimic him, and thus cure; the bloody down he takes from his mouth indexes the disease the spirits actually remove.

CHAPTER 1. TRICKY SUBJECTS

1 As important figures in Indonesian life, dukun also populate travel literature and novels, and appear as the butt of amused anecdotes in journalism. See chapter 4.

2 Mailrapport 514, in V. 13, April 1922, no. 119, Ministry of Colonies archives, Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague. Damsté had been an administrator for twenty-seven years, and, at forty-nine, was three years away from retirement. Kuys had entered the civil service only three years before.

3 Some balian specialize: in childbirth, finding lost objects, or mediating conversations with the dead. For balian, see Connor, Asch, and Asch (1986); Lovric (1987); and Stuart-Fox (2015). For Javanese dukun, see, for example, Ferzacca (2001); Geertz (1960); and Woodward (2011).