Postcolonial Critical Perspectives on 'the West', Social Hegemony and Political Participation

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Abstract

This thesis explores how postcolonial critics figure the centrality of imperialism to the cultures and socio-politics of those societies at the hegemonic apex of today's geopolitical hierarchy. I begin by addressing the discipline's homogenisation of 'the West', which I attribute to a totalist articulation of the category, whether as a geopolitical agency, a geojuridical bloc, a polity, an identity, or a central ideologeme within colonial discourse and contemporary imperialist ideology. I argue that this totalisation elides variances of consciousness, purpose, and practice that cut across whatever unity obtains within and among the constituent societies of the 'geopolitical West'. I then look to the thought of Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Claude Lefort, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and Jacques Rancière for a way of understanding that unity in light of these internal variances. Moreover, drawing on Rancière's notion of 'dis-identification' and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's of occupying 'a position without identity', I establish how if we are to challenge the hegemonic ascendancy of 'Western' imperialism, then we must acknowledge these variances. I then explore how literary representations of 'Westerners' by Jamaica Kincaid, V.S. Naipaul, Gil Courtemanche, Bret Easton Ellis, and Nadine Gordimer variously question the claim that anyone that benefits from contemporary imperialism cannot ever oppose it with integrity.

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Introduction: On 'the postcolonial' as epochal aspiration

Writing in 1992 on the then-emerging discipline of postcolonial studies, Anne McClintock objected to the term 'postcolonial', whose implicit, 'premature celebration of the pastness of colonialism, runs the risk of obscuring the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power.'[1] I find it debatable whether any postcolonial critic has ever claimed to be living in a thoroughly *post*colonial world, a present in which all vestiges and legacies of European colonialism have been comprehensively dissolved and consigned to the past. As Ella Shohat noted – writing alongside McClintock – the 'post' in 'postcolonial' aligns the term 'with a series of other "posts" – "post-structuralism," "post-modernism," "post-marxism," "post-feminism," "post-deconstructionism" – all sharing the notion of a [...] supercession of outmoded philosophical, aesthetic and political theories'.[2] Shohat, though, echoed McClintock when remarking on how this alignment existed in an 'unarticulated tension', with the unavoidable fact that the prefix 'post' equally 'aligns the "post-colonial" with another genre of "posts" – "post-war," "post-cold war," "post-independence," "post-revolution" – all of which underline a passage into a new period and a closure of a certain historical event or age, officially stamped with dates.'[3] As Shohat acknowledged, the first alignment stresses that the term 'postcolonial' only references 'a movement beyond a specific point in' *intellectual* history, beyond a *paradigmatic* shift. However, for Shohat, this first alignment is unable to entirely eclipse the second, epochal sense of the term 'postcolonial', which implies a movement beyond the social conjuncture of colonialism. As a result, the term 'is imbued, quite apart from its users' intentions, with an ambiguous spatio-temporality', and so 'can easily become a universalizing category which neutralizes

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[1] McClintock, Anne, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'", in *Social Text*, 31/32, 'Third World and Post-Colonial Issues' (1992), p. 88.

[2] Shohat, Ella, 'Notes on the "Post-Colonial", in *Social Text*, 31/32, 'Third World and Post-colonial Issues' (1992), p. 101.

[3] Shohat, p. 101.

geopolitical differences between France and Algeria, Britain and Iraq, or the U.S. and Brazil since they are all living in a "post-colonial epoch.""[4]

Postcolonial studies has never managed to shake off the utopian promise of the term 'postcolonial', a promise that, since George W. Bush's declaration of a 'war against terror', has increasingly provoked debates over how to properly define the role, responsibilities, and practice of the postcolonial critic. Hence Robert Spencer's more recent claim that 'the calling of the postcolonial critic' is 'to help humankind prevail over the manifestly undiminished consequences of imperialism.'[5] Spencer more explicitly echoes Shohat's appraisal of the 'ambiguous spatio-temporality' of the term 'postcolonial', when remarking on how the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq from 2003 'made starkly visible an imperialist project that has not, as our field's moniker suggests, been drawing to a close but has on the contrary been expanding American hegemony, extending corporate power and hijacking international institutions of governance.'[6] Spencer is not alone in responding to this 'war against terror' by returning to the utopian promise of a literally *post*colonial world. A year earlier, the editors of *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (2005) had commented similarly, that '[t]he shadow the 2003 US invasion of Iraq casts on the twenty-first century makes it more absurd than ever to speak of ours as a postcolonial world.'[7] Moreover, Spencer is not alone in finding that much of the 'jittery compunctions about intellectual work'[8] that postcolonial critics do – including their engagements with the limits of representation and 'holistic forms of social explanation',[9] such as 'totality or systemic analysis'[10] – is of doubtful utility

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[4] Shohat, pp. 102-3.

[5] Spencer, Robert, 'Edward Said and the War in Iraq', in *New Formations*, 59 (Autumn 2006), p. 52.

[6] Spencer, 'Edward Said and the War in Iraq', p. 52.

[7] Loomba, Ania, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton and Jed Esty, 'Beyond What? An Introduction' in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, ed. by Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton and Jed Esty (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 1.

[8] Spencer, 'Edward Said and the War in Iraq', p. 52.

[9] Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 248.

or even relevance to the task of 'help[ing] humankind prevail over the manifestly undiminished consequences of imperialism'. Indeed, if anything, these investigations have discouraged postcolonial critics from aspiring to the task of 'system-toppling upheaval'.[11] For in light of 'the downturn in the fortunes of liberation movements in the third world, the degeneration of the second and the rebuffs suffered by the labour movement in the first', postcolonial critics have more or less 'concluded that all world-altering political projects are [...] doomed to coercion, aberrancy and failure.'[12] As a result, although '[e]verybody knows what postcolonial theorists are against', Spencer admits to being uncertain as to what 'they [are] actually for';[13] what it is they aspire to and work towards.

Spencer's notion of 'system-toppling upheaval' suggests that for him, 'the calling of the postcolonial critic' resembles that of revolutionary socialism as defined by Fredric Jameson, insofar as both must aspire towards 'a *total* transformation of society'.[14] For Jameson, the socialist who cannot envisage 'the possibility of transforming a whole social system'[15] must settle instead for 'reforming an eternal capitalist landscape'.[16] Similarly, a world that has not been completely divested of 'the manifestly undiminished consequences of imperialism' cannot be called 'postcolonial', in a strict, epochal sense of the term. Given their apparent aversion to 'holistic forms of social explanation', I would find it unsurprising if postcolonial critics have generally come to use the term 'postcolonial' to refer to a paradigm rather than an epochal aspiration. Moreover, I would also be dissatisfied if this usage had encouraged postcolonial critics to lose

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[10] Lazarus, Neil, 'Introducing postcolonial studies', in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. by Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 4.

[11] Spencer, p. 53.

[12] Spencer, p. 53.

[13] Spencer, *Cosmopolitan Criticism and Postcolonial Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 19.

[14] Jameson, Fredric, 'Cognitive Mapping', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 360.

[15] Jameson, p. 355.

[16] Jameson, p. 355.

sight of that aspiration, or abandon it altogether. Given this dissatisfaction, therefore, this thesis revisits that aspiration, and considers a crucial yet unanswered question pertaining to how we might achieve a *totally* 'postcolonial' world – a truly *global*, comprehensive dissolution of imperialism, along with its continuations, its consequences, and its legacies. This question concerns how we might overcome the hegemonic ascendancy of imperialism among individuals and societies that constitute or belong to 'the West', 'the metropolis', 'the core', or 'Euro-America', to list just some of the terms used by postcolonial critics to refer to the hegemonic apex of today's systematically uneven, global distribution of social, political, economic, and cultural power.[17] If this question remains largely unanswered, it is because the aversion among postcolonial critics towards 'holistic forms of social explanation' has disobliged them of envisioning a quite literally 'total transformation' of that global conjuncture. As such, postcolonial critics are under no pressure to work out how they might effectively challenge the perception of imperialism as either desirable or inevitable, among those who occupy that hegemonic apex of today's global distribution of power.

No vision of a world that is thoroughly divested of imperialism and all its 'undiminished consequences' can possibly avoid answering this particular question. For as it has been demonstrated numerous times, the endurance of imperial power derives not only from its uneven distribution of capital and commodities, or even the violent imposition of that unevenness. For whatever reason, these material aspects of imperialism have depended on the orchestration of popular sentiment, as well as the management of public access to information pertaining to imperial ventures and interests. Thus, John M. Mackenzie has outlined in meticulous detail many of the public institutions that propagated widespread enthusiasm for imperialism among the lower classes of Victorian Great Britain, during the latter half of the nineteenth century.[18] Similarly, Edward W. Said emphasised how popular support for

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[17] I will address the geographical ambiguity of each of these terms in my note on 'the West' below, pp. 34-38.

[18] Mackenzie, John M., *Propaganda and Empire : the Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); the scope of Mackenzie's study is literally vast, covering the print media, music hall, bric-a-brac, youth culture, and public institutions like the Imperial Institute, among other areas of British popular culture. Moreover, Mackenzie attributes much of this enthusiasm to an

imperialism in Victorian Britain was such that, '[w]ith few exceptions, [even] the women's as well as the working-class movement was pro-empire.'[19] Said saw and covesignificant parallels between the largely unchallenged ubiquity of this Victorian 'imperial consensus',[20] and 'the epic scale of United States global power and the corresponding power of the national domestic consensus created by the electronic media', during and after the first Gulf War in 1991.[21] More recently, Paul Gilroy observed that the years following the events of September 11th 2001 saw an escalation in jingoistic and xenophobic nationalism in U.S. and European public cultures, much of which was conducive to the interests of those governments that had become heavily involved in the global 'war against terror'. Indeed, Gilroy strongly suggests that those governments were responsible for encouraging much of this parochialism in order to justify their involvement in the conflict.

As with Said's 'imperial consensus' of Victorian Britain and post-Cold War America, so with Gilroy, support for imperialism continues to encompass not just policymakers, corporatists and public intellectuals, but also the general public, in ways that cut across class and ideological lines. Said's account, though, is ambivalent with respect to the spontaneity of this consensus and – by extension – the prospect of challenging its ascendancy. On one hand, Said found that the U.S. 'national domestic consensus' was carefully, deliberately orchestrated by the combined efforts of U.S. policymakers and major media outlets, who together controlled what information was made available to the U.S. public. In contrast, though, Said maintained that the 'virtual unity of purpose' that encompassed Victorian Britain was entirely spontaneous; that the close alignment of popular sentiment with the imperial affairs of state was 'voluntary (or at least rational and noncoercive)'[22] – that is, not actively encouraged or forcibly imposed by the latter. Indeed, such claims have led many commentators to critique Said for overstating the spontaneous ubiquity of his 'virtual unity of purpose' across all of the societies that

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orchestrated propaganda programme that was intended partly to contain growing class antagonisms and the spread of socialism in Britain itself.

[19] Said, Edward W., *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993). p. 62.

[20] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 62.

[21] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 391-92.

[22] Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 6.

he refers to collectively as 'the West'.[23] Moreover, Neil Lazarus's more recent critique finds Said's subsequent, monolithic account of 'Western' consciousness, experience, intention, and practice to epitomise a 'disposition to homogenisation'[24] that obtains more generally among postcolonial critics. This habit – Lazarus argues – pertains mostly to how postcolonial critics perceive those societies and individuals that occupy the apex of today's globally uneven distribution of power, and entails 'flatten[ing] out history, failing to register the necessary distinctions between qualitatively different moments, epochs and determinate universes of meaning.'[25] Similarly, Lazarus finds that, 'with respect to *geo-politics*, [...] internal differences and divisions – as between one country and another, one policy and another, one ideology and another – are cavalierly disregarded, ignored altogether or treated as of no consequence.'[26]

Let me be clear here. I do not wish to argue against Said's claim that in Victorian Britain, 'there was scarcely any dissent, any departure, any demurral from' the 'virtual unanimity that subject races should be ruled, that they *are* subject races, that one race deserves and has consistently earned the right to be considered the race whose main mission is to expand beyond its own domain.'[27] Similarly, I do not wish to argue against Said's claim that this 'virtual unity of purpose', if not *ubiquitous*, nonetheless managed to cut across class and ideological differences. Unlike Lazarus, I am prepared to accept – albeit to an extent – Said's claim that, despite their 'many and manifest differences', 'the ideas of, say, Marx and Carlyle, Kipling and Multatuli, Lévi-Bruhl and Lévi-Strauss, Hugh Trevor-Roper and Thomas Hodgkin [...] are unified at the deepest levels by structuring assumptions deriving from an episteme centred on 'western-ness''.[28] I find that in his eagerness to distinguish, say,

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[23] I will discuss some of these critiques in Chapter 1 of this thesis, pp. 52, 58.

[24] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', in *Race & Class*, 53.3 (2011), p. 15.

[25] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 15.

[26] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 15.

[27] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 62.

[28] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', pp. 15-16.

Karl Marx's *intentions* from those of Thomas Carlyle,[29] Lazarus emphasises their differences almost to the point of suggesting that they have absolutely nothing in common; that they occupy two separate 'universes of meaning' that do not overlap, interact, or have any genealogical relation with one another, in any way. Frankly, I find this approach to be no less unhistorical than Said's, whose emphasis on the commonalities between Marx and Carlyle – Lazarus argues – is such that he loses sight of their 'many and manifest differences'.

After all, no collective form of human social belonging – whether a community or an ideology – exists in total isolation from others, perhaps unless they are geographically cut off entirely from other groups. Hence Said's insistence on 'how oddly hybrid historical and cultural experiences are, [...] how they partake of many often contradictory experiences and domains, cross national boundaries, defy the *police* action of simple dogma and loud patriotism.'[30] Said's emphasis here is on cultural and national identities, but the same can be said for political, moral, and philosophical identities and ideologies as well, none of which spring to being in total isolation from other such identities, without any interaction with other sensibilities. Having said that, I do agree with Lazarus that emphasising these underlying affinities can become 'too blunt an instrument, too reductive and undiscriminating',[31] albeit only wherever it eclipses the 'many and manifest differences' altogether. After all, losing sight of these *dis*unities prevents us from accounting for how Said's 'imperial consensus' was able to overcome them, as well as why that consensus was necessary to the pursuit of imperial power in the first place. In turn, without such an account, the task of imagining how we might effectively challenge that unity of purpose becomes much more difficult, especially if our inattention to those 'many and manifest differences' prompts us to understand that unity as occurring spontaneously, 'voluntarily', or 'noncoercively', as Said often did. If we are unable to envision any such challenge, then the prospect of a thoroughly postcolonial world becomes doubtful.

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[29] I should note here that Lazarus does not specify which Carlyle he refers to, whether Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) or English Orientalist Joseph Dacre Carlyle (1759-1804), or some other historical figure by the same name.

[30] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 15 (emphasis in original).

[31] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 16.

In short, this prospect depends on us apprehending Said's 'imperial consensus' as something other than the spontaneous expression of some immutable cultural essence or 'civilizational value',[32] underlying the 'many and manifest differences' that otherwise fracture those whom that consensus encompasses. Instead, we must apprehend this 'virtual unity of purpose' as being deliberate, actively orchestrated, and conducive to the interests of whoever orchestrates it. For if we cannot envisage even the possibility of 'Westerners' assuming intentions that diverge from those of imperialism, then we cannot possibly claim to live in a 'postcolonial' epoch, at least as long as 'the West' exists, whether as a geopolitical bloc, a social aggregation, a collective identity, or an episteme. Hence Robert J.C. Young's claim in 1990 that, given the steady 'decentralization and decolonization of European thought'[33] throughout the latter half of the twentieth century – of which postcolonial studies is but a more recent stage – 'we are witnessing the dissolution of 'the West'.'[34] This is clearly a bold claim, especially since the category of 'the West' continues to be widely used in reference to a geopolitical agency and transnational community twenty-five years later. Indeed, we might argue that the boldness of Young's claim here suggests that he grossly overstated the impact of 'the decentralization and decolonization of European thought', whose effects within the constituent societies of the geopolitical 'West' have largely been restricted to an academic context. In this respect, we might critique Young for perceiving imperial power 'as a textual function, [from which] it follows that the proper form of combat for a politically engaged critical practice is to disclose the construction of the signifying system and thereby deprive it of its mandate to rule'.[35] If this is a fair appraisal of Young's apprehension of imperial power, then this 'form of combat' has clearly failed to have as monumental an effect as Young envisaged.

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[32] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', in *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.54.

[33] Young, Robert J.C., *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 18.

[34] Young, p. 20.

[35] Parry, Benita, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 26; Parry's critique here is aimed at Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha, although she strongly intimates that it is equally applicable to a wider, 'textualist' approach in postcolonial studies.

Parry and Lazarus are prominent voices in the so-called 'materialist' critique of postcolonial studies that has steadily gained momentum over the last fifteen years, but which stretches at least as far back as Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory* (1992). Parry sums up a common 'materialist' complaint against prevailing strands of postcolonial studies, when objecting to how postcolonial critics have generally privileged '"discourse" as the model of social practice,' to such an extent as to 'promote an incuriosity about enabling socio-economic and political institutions.'[36] Parry finds that, in turn, the subsequent assumption of a 'theoretical position wholly neglectful of political economy [...] has had the effect of disengaging colonialism from historical capitalism and re-presenting it for study as a cultural event.'[37] As 'the material impulses to colonialism, its appropriation of physical resources, exploitation of human labour and institutional repression'[38] are increasingly ignored, so imperialism becomes increasingly understood as a consequence not of 'calculated compulsions', but rather of some 'air-borne will to power'.[39] Lazarus echoes this appraisal of the '*culturalist* emphasis'[40] of postcolonial studies, objecting to the tendency across the discipline of apprehending imperialism 'in civilisational terms, as an 'encounter' or 'ongoing contest between north and south, metropolis and periphery, white and native', and refer[ring it] to 'the West' rather than to capitalism.'[41] The product of this misattribution is 'a dematerialised (and, for that matter, unhistorical) understanding of the forces powering the world system over the course of the past 500 years'.[42] Lazarus finds that this understanding is epitomised by how postcolonial critics approach Eurocentrism 'not as an ideology or mode of representation but as itself the very basis of domination in the colonial and modern

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[36] Parry, Benita, 'The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies', in Lazarus ed., p. 69.

[37] Parry, 'The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies', p. 74.

[38] Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, p. 3.

[39] Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, p. 4.

[40] Lazarus, 'Introducing postcolonial studies', p. 9.

[41] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 14.

[42] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 14.

imperial contexts.'[43] In short, Eurocentrism is what caused imperialism, not the pursuit of maximised profit.

In turn, this dematerialised understanding of imperialism only further encourages that disregard for 'internal differences and divisions' that gives rise to Lazarus's 'disposition to homogenisation', described above. Increasingly, postcolonial critics assume that '[t]here is only one kind of 'western' thought [...] and that is the dominating kind: Eurocentric, colonising, logocentric, rationalist.'[44] Again, to claim that European, modern, or 'Western' thought is 'constitutively Eurocentric'[45] or imperialist, casts doubt upon the feasibility of a truly, thoroughly *post*colonial world as described above, at least as long as these forms of thought continue to exist. Hence 'the genuinely progressive desire to contribute to the decolonisation of knowledge' that – as Lazarus acknowledges – is not only 'central to postcolonial studies; it is arguably the only project that all scholars active in the field would agree that they hold as a common aspiration.'[46] Lazarus, though, objects to the claim that European, modern, or 'Western' thought is 'constitutively Eurocentric', not only because he finds it 'too reductive and undiscriminating', but also because it threatens to undermine any possibility of an alternative, less ethically compromised mode of knowledge or critical practice. Hence Lazarus's fairly straightforward solution to this impasse, which is to reconceive Eurocentrism as an 'ideology' rather than as an 'episteme'. Rather than as 'an untranscendable horizon governing thought – its forms, contents, modalities, and presuppositions so deeply and insidiously layered and patterned that they cannot be circumvented, only deconstructed',[47] Lazarus proposes that we think of Eurocentrism as

> an *ideological* formation (selective, interested, partial, and partisan) [...] If we understand Eurocentrism as an *ideology* (as I myself do), then it could become subject to critique. One's general methodological assumption would be that it is always possible in

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[43] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 43.

[44] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 15.

[45] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 59.

[46] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 7.

[47] Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 127.

> principle (and indeed in practice) to stand outside a given problematic
> in order to subject its claims to scrutiny. [48]

According to this reformulation, then, '[t]he project of 'unthinking Eurocentrism''[49] entails judging the accuracy of truth-claims, the extent to which they accord with a 'reality' that the postcolonial critic is somehow able to fully access, given the right critical practice. As with Young, though, what effect this practice will have beyond the academy is ultimately very unclear. For one thing, Lazarus does not explain how the postcolonial critic is to verify the accuracy of their own truth-claims. More to the point, though, even if we were somehow able to confirm the accuracy of their knowledge, Lazarus does not consider the possibility that the postcolonial critic's judgements might go unheeded by others whose access to 'truth' and 'reality' is – for whatever reason – not as extensive; or that the authority of these judgements might amount to little compared with the appeal of Said's 'imperial consensus' and its dubious truth-claims. I might be equally sceptical towards the claim that 'Western' consciousness, experience, intention, and practice – including its modes of thought – are all invariably imperialist. Nevertheless, I profoundly disagree with Lazarus's own claim that a 'culturalist' approach – according to which one can be imperialist without being *an* imperialist, given that the former derives from more than one's intentions – has absolutely nothing to offer to the task of adequately understanding 'what imperialism is and how it works'.[50]

Equally, I profoundly disagree with the implication of Lazarus's objection to how postcolonial critics refer imperialism 'to the West *rather than* to capitalism': namely, the implication that we cannot refer imperialism to both simultaneously. According to Lazarus, the category of 'the West' is nothing but a 'fetish' that betrays the inadequacy with which postcolonial critics grasp the true nature of imperialism. For 'the West' 'has no coherent or credible referent'; it 'references neither to a polity nor a state (nor even a confederation of states''[51] still less 'a

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[48] Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 126.

[49] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 7.

[50] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 54.

[51] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

mode of production or a social formation'.[52] Instead, the category references 'a "civilization," something altogether more amorphous and indeterminate', and whose 'sociological actuality' is simply 'impossible to certify'.[53] As a result, Lazarus finds that referring imperialism to 'the West' rather than to capitalism 'mystif[ies]' imperial power, 'rendering its social ground opaque.'[54] No doubt the shifting frontiers of what is regarded as the geographical location of 'the West' – whether as a people, a state, or a state-form – renders the category inadequate to the task of situating the material basis of imperial power. Moreover, referring imperialism to 'the West' alone may well compound that 'effect of disengaging colonialism from historical capitalism and re-presenting it for study as a cultural event' outlined above.

I agree, therefore, with Lazarus than any effort 'to "get *imperialism* right," that is, to understand what imperialism is and how it works',[55] cannot refer it solely to 'the West', at least without obscuring certain of its most crucial aspects. Yet surely because of this obscuring effect, any adequate grasp of 'what imperialism is and how it works' must encompass a discourse that in some way refers it to this category. An approach that refers imperialism to capitalism *rather than* 'the West' may well encompass such a discourse, figuring it as a means of 'enabling' the pursuit of imperial power, and thus blurring Parry's implicit distinction between 'discourse' and 'enabling socio-economic and political institutions' above. I find merit in this approach, insofar as it would apprehend Said's 'imperial consensus' as a calculated effort to legitimate the pursuit of imperial power, by either justifying or obscuring the imposition of a violently unjust, exploitative, and expropriative dispensation upon another people 'against the[ir] informed will'.[56] This approach would apprehend that 'imperial consensus' according to an interplay between a

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[52] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 54.

[53] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

[54] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

[55] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 54.

[56] Goonatilake, Susan, 'Cultural Imperialism: A Short history, future, and a Postscript from the Present', in *Cultural Imperialism: Essays on the Political Economy of Cultural Domination*, ed. by Bernd Hamm and Russell Smandych (Peterborough ON: Broadview Press, 2005), p. 33.

constituency of material interests, some of which benefit more than others from imperialism's uneven distribution of commodities and capital, along with its correspondingly uneven distribution of political power and agency. As such, it would be irrelevant that 'the West' does not reference a persistent, tangible, or 'material' polity, state, confederation of states, mode of production, or social formation. Indeed, to conclude on this basis that 'the West' is irrelevant to analysing imperialism is to claim that this analysis can only proceed in terms of polities, states, confederations of states, social formations, and modes of production, *but not* ideas and discourses that influence how people perceive the interplay between these agencies.

Any such claim is clearly inadequate to the task of explaining how Said's 'imperial consensus' could encompass either material interests that quite visibly benefit much less than others from imperialism, if at all; or political and ideological positions that we might otherwise expect to oppose imperialism. Again, if we figure '[t]he project of 'unthinking Eurocentrism'' in terms of challenging its truth-claims, then we come to a simple explanation: those who support imperialism in spite of their material interests or political principles do so because they are misinformed of what imperialism really entails. This may well be the case, but only to an extent. For Said attributes the longevity of his 'imperial consensus' to more than just misinformation, given his remark that, 'when one belongs to the more powerful side in the imperial and colonial encounter, it is quite possible to overlook, forget, or ignore the unpleasant aspects of what went on 'out there'. The cultural machinery [...] has had an *anaesthetic as well as informative* effect on European audiences.'[57] One can be relatively well-informed of the grim realities of imperialism, and yet still support it, either by ignoring, disavowing, or simply being indifferent to those realities, or finding ways of legitimating them, such as by denying human status to those who suffer them.

Moreover, one does not have to materially benefit from imperialism to support it in spite of what one knows of these realities. For one thing, as we have seen, Said acknowledged how 'the more powerful side in the imperial and colonial encounter' hardly shared that power between them equally, given the extensive class and gender inequalities that divided even them. Nonetheless, even those who

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[57] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 157 (my emphasis).

enjoyed less of this power – if any – were no less likely 'to overlook, forget, or ignore' the grim realities of colonial rule. Similarly, as Gilroy notes, over the past century, there has been a steady 'drip of embarrassing and uncomfortable information about imperial and colonial governance that has [...] challenge[d] [Britain's] instinctive sense that its imperial ambitions were always good and its political methods for realizing them, morally and legally defensible.'[58] However, the resurgence of jingoistic nationalism in post-9/11 Britain can only suggest – Gilroy argues – that 'Britain's brave but confused affiliates prefer an ordered past in which they were exploited and pauperized, but nonetheless knew who they were, to a chronically chaotic present'.[59] Again, insofar as it has been 'engineered politically from above by crown and government',[60] this resurgence corresponds to Lazarus's above definition of ideology as a 'selective, interested, partial, and partisan' perception of the world that is conducive to the interests of those who orchestrate it. I have no objection to approaching this resurgence in this manner, except that it cannot account for why it should equally be 'produced with apparent spontaneity from below' – why those with much less to gain materially from imperialism should 'voluntarily' or 'noncoercively' support it, especially given that 'drip of embarrassing and uncomfortable information' about what really 'went on 'out there'.'

Simply put, this burgeoning alternative to conventional ways of remembering British imperialism – as benign, if not selfless – has not managed to dispel the latter entirely. This failure, therefore, suggests that exposing the dubiousness of Eurocentrism's truth-claims is not enough to significantly challenge its hegemonic ascendency, along with that of Said's 'imperial consensus'. If we are to mount such a challenge, we must acknowledge that choosing to subscribe to that consensus is motivated by more than what one knows of either one's material self-interest, or the grim realities of imperialism. To assume that simply exposing these realities is enough to dissuade one from supporting imperialism is to assume that everyone's political decision-making is rational when adequately informed. This

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[58] Gilroy, Paul, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 101.

[59] Gilroy, p. 120.

[60] Gilroy, p. 97.

latter assumption, though, ignores a whole swathe of other factors that influence one's political priorities and subsequent behaviour, such as 'culture', 'morality', 'identity', 'tradition', and – most perniciously – 'common sense', all of which are often presumed to take immutable forms, but all of which are defined in ways that ceaselessly change over time. If we are to effectively challenge the ascendancy of Said's 'imperial consensus', we must therefore take these 'irrational' influences into account, and find ways of counteracting them.

Equally, though, neither should we mistake the quite clearly considerable influence of these factors as evidence of their immutability. It is arguably this mistake that underlies the claim that 'Westerners' are incapable of perceiving the world in anything other than terms that are conducive to imperialism. Not only do such claims subscribe to an essentialist logic that is patently unhistorical; they are also self-defeating, insofar as they foreclose any recognition in 'Westerners' of any capacity to depart from an imperialist habitus. To repeat: if we cannot 'decolonise' 'Western' consciousness, intention, and practice; if we cannot displace Said's 'imperial consensus', then we cannot envisage the total decolonisation of the world. If we are to sustain this vision, then we must find a way of apprehending Said's 'imperial consensus' in non-essentialist terms, as something that is not *entirely* spontaneous, but which is actively propagated by those with the power to do so, as well as the motivation of a vested interest in doing so. On the other hand though, we must also find a way of explaining why those who visibly benefit less from imperialism nonetheless participate in that consensus actively – that is, spontaneously, 'voluntarily'. In this thesis, I will look towards Antonio Gramsci's notion of *hegemony* as a way of reconceiving this 'virtual unity of purpose' without losing sight of the 'many and manifest differences' and disunities that underlie it. Turning to this concept is hardly a new departure for postcolonial studies, although it has generally been used in the discipline with reference to the imposition of imperial power in a *colonial* setting. In this thesis, I propose that we use the concept as a way of understanding how 'the cultural and epistemological authority of colonialism'[61] is established among 'history's victors'[62] themselves, whether they be Europeans, Americans, 'Westerners', or 'metropolitans'.

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[61] Spencer, 'Cosmopolitan Criticism', in *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium*, ed. by Janet Wilson, Cristina Șandru and Sarah Lawson Welsh (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 37.

To do so, though, we must reconsider what we mean by 'hegemony'. Given their attention primarily to a *colonial* setting – more so than a 'metropolitan' one – postcolonial critics have largely used the concept of hegemony in its *coercive* sense, as describing the imposition of a particular configuration of social power 'against the informed will' of those who are made to occupy it. Even wherever they have attended to the *consensual* dimension of hegemony, postcolonial critics have mostly done so with reference to socio-political scenarios in which official attempts 'to make imperial dominance acceptable, even desirable'[63] to colonised peoples have categorically failed to even temper the latter's implacable opposition to imperial rule. Any such attempts to directly influence and orchestrate an otherwise detracting or even resistant 'will of the people' can only ever be coercive. For even if they entail methods that are exclusively non-violent, these attempts still amount to the imposition of a particular configuration of social power 'against the informed will' of those who must then occupy it. In this respect, postcolonial critics register the porosity of Gramsci's distinction between 'consensus' and 'coercion', the twin modalities of establishing and sustaining hegemonic authority.

This porosity has been observed elsewhere, in such disparate engagements with the notion of popular consent – and the ways in which regimes have historically solicited or 'manufactured' it – as those of Raymond Williams, Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, Jacques Rancière, and Ranajit Guha, not to mention Gramsci himself. Indeed, for most of these critics, the political strategies and techniques that fall under the rubric of 'consensus' have nothing to do with registering and then aligning a regime's agenda with pre-existing popular attitudes, opinions, and sentiments. This alignment is necessary to an extent if authority is to be rendered hegemonic.[64] Yet as Guha notes, the notion of a thoroughly 'uncoercive state' – that is, a 'populist utopia of total consent that is not traversed by a constable's beat' – is nothing more than 'a liberal absurdity' that runs completely against 'the basic drive of Gramsci's own

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[62] Coronil, Fernando, 'Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories', in *Cultural Anthropology*, 11.1 (1996), p. 78.

[63] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 34.

[64] Hence Gramsci's notion of 'organic intellectuals', which I discuss in Chapter 2 of this thesis, pp. 122-24.

work'.[65] In fact, to some exist 'consensus' amounts to a less obvious form of coercion, even wherever the public grant it on the basis of an 'informed will'. For even then consent is successfully solicited by *informing that will* in the first place – influencing it, shaping it, *manufacturing* it. Hence Guha's modification of Gramsci's pairing 'consensus'-'coercion', by replacing the former term with 'Persuasion', thus defining hegemonic ascendancy as 'a condition of Dominance (D), such that, in the organic composition of D, Persuasion (P) outweighs Coercion (C).'[66] This definition suggests that popular consent is by no means a product of simply 'registering already existing interests', but rather something that is actively solicited by 'shaping' popular consciousness itself, including popular perceptions of their 'rational' interests.[67]

However, Guha then establishes that British colonial rule in India was 'nonhegemonic' according to a rather different definition of hegemonic authority, one that ironically leaves open the possibility of a completely 'uncoercive state'. Thus, according to Guha, the Raj was 'nonhegemonic' because it 'did not originate from the activity of Indian society itself',[68] or 'even remotely issue from the will of the [Indian] people'.[69] Guha reinforces this point by contrasting the Raj's subsequently autocratic nature with the apparently democratic nature of the 'metropolitan bourgeois state'[70] in Britain itself. This contrast is often absolute, to the point where Guha finds it incredible that

> the metropolitan bourgeoisie who professed and practiced democracy at home […] were quite happy to conduct the government of their Indian empire as an autocracy. Champions of the right of the European nations to self-determination, they denied the same right to their Indian subjects […] Their antagonism to feudal values and

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[65] Guha, p. 22.

[66] Guha, p. 23; this modification was already implicit in Gramsci's description of his 'organic intellectuals' as 'permanent *persuaders*' (Gramsci, Antonio, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p. 10).

[67] Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2014), p. xvii.

[68] Guha, p. 64.

[69] Guha, p. 66.

[70] Guha, p. xii.

> institutions in their own society made little difference […] to their vast tolerance of pre-capitalist values and institutions in Indian society.[71]

As we see here, Guha often celebrates 'the heroism of the European bourgeoisie in its period of ascendancy',[72] as if the 'metropolitan bourgeois state' was hegemonic because – in almost direct antithesis[73] to the 'nonhegemonic' nature of Britain's 'South Asian colonial state' – it directly 'originate[d] from the activity of [European or British] society itself', from 'the will of the [British or European] people'. Guha leaves it unclear, though, what role – if any – 'Persuasion' had to play in establishing the hegemonic authority of these 'metropolitan bourgeois states'. Certainly, given his primary concern with colonial India, it is unsurprising that Guha does not disclose in detail the conditions that allowed the 'metropolitan bourgeois state' to render their authority hegemonic, still less how it exploited these conditions. Nevertheless, his near-absolute distinction between democratic Britain and autocratic British India encourages the impression that the former did not have to rely on any kind of 'persuasive strategy' in order to claim hegemonic authority via popular consent. Guha certainly gives us no reason to assume that his scorn towards the notion of a completely 'uncoercive state' does not equally apply to the 'metropolitan bourgeois' state-forms of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe. Thus, if the hegemonic authority of these states was indeed established via modes of 'Persuasion' as outlined above, Guha leaves it unclear why official strategies of persuasion were more successful in the 'metropole' than they were in colonial India.

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[71] Guha, p. 4.

[72] Guha, p. 4.

[73] This binarism is comparable with the 'Manichaean' constructions that Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper observe in studies of European colonialism, wherever 'Europe and its colonies, the colonizer and the colonized, are taken to be discrete entities occupying separate frames of reference' (David Scott, 'The Social Construction of Postcolonial Studies', in Loomba, Kaul, Bunzl, Burton and Esty eds., p. 394). For Stoler and Cooper, these constructions often detract from how '[c]olonial regimes were neither monolithic nor omnipotent', and how '[c]loser investigation reveals competing agendas for using power, competing strategies for maintaining control, and doubts about the legitimacy of the venture' (Stoler, Ann Laura and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. by Frederick Cooper and Laura Stoler (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997), p. 6).

I might appear to be collapsing Guha's distinction between 'metropole' and colony completely when arguing that, even in the 'metropole', state authority was, and continues to be sustained by active, *coercive* state intervention in 'the life and consciousness of the people'.[74] Although inaccurate, this impression is surely to be expected, considering how postcolonial critics mostly address the state apparatuses that coercively sustain imperial power in a *colonial* setting. Given this emphasis, we could initially conclude from these analyses that the distinction between 'consensus' and 'coercion' is only porous in that setting; that state power is only coercive wherever it is exerted '*against* the informed will' of those who are subjected to it. The implication, of course, is that wherever state authority enjoys popular consent – wherever state and popular will are aligned – no state apparatuses exist that are designed to ensure such consent by actively intervening in, and shaping 'the will of the people'. Indeed, there is the further implication that such apparatuses are unnecessary in this scenario; that the 'metropolitan bourgeois' state-form simply 'issue[d] from the will of the [metropolitan] people', and that this popular will simply emerged *spontaneously*, independently of any state intervention. Both implications clearly subscribe to that 'idea of an uncoercive state' that Guha dismisses above. Thus, in order to acknowledge the existence of such apparatuses in the 'metropole', without collapsing the distinction between 'metropole' and 'colony' entirely, we should avoid assuming that power is coercive only wherever it is exerted 'against the informed will' of those who are subjected to it.

Indeed, we should consider the possibility that one might experience this shaping of one's consciousness, intentions, and practices not as coercion, but rather as a deferral to what one believes is one's autonomous, 'informed will'. Williams describes a similar effect when describing how the concept of hegemony

> sees the relations of domination and subordination, in their forms as practical consciousness, as in effect a saturation of the whole process of living – not only of political and economic activity, nor only of manifest social activity, but of the whole substance of *lived identities* and relationships, to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense. It is a whole body of practices and

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[74] Guha, p. xii.

> expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, *our shaping perceptions of ourselves* and our world.[75]

According to Williams, 'hegemony' apprehends not just 'the articulate formal system which can be and ordinarily is abstracted as 'ideology'',[76] but also the way in which this system conditions individual consciousness – including the way one perceives *oneself* – albeit in a manner that avoids conflating the two. For this conflation would suggest that no distinction exists between ideology and individual consciousness or experience. Any affinity between the two, then, would be spontaneous, rather than a product of the former's active intervention in the latter's formulation. Nothing in the latter would resist, exceed, or simply differ from the terms of ideology's 'formal system'. This distinction, therefore, registers a dissonance between ideology and individual consciousness; between a systematised, regulated 'official consciousness' and 'practical consciousness',[77] the inchoate sum of one's encounters with that unsystematic, inconsistent, *overdetermined* world that is one's physical and social environment.[78] Subsequently, to perceive 'the pressures

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[75] Williams, Raymond: *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 110 (my emphases).

[76] Williams, p. 109.

[77] Williams, p. 130.

[78] For Williams, this term means much the same thing as it did in Louis Althusser's original formulation. 'Overdetermination' captured Althusser's claim that the form, content, and structure of any social conjuncture is determined by more than its underlying economic 'base' or 'infrastructure' – 'the forces of production and the relations of production' (Althusser, Louis, *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Allen Lane, 1969), p. 99). Althusser was arguing against 'the radical reduction of the dialectic of history to the dialectic generating the successive *modes of production*, that is, in the last analysis, the different production techniques', a formulation that was commonly known as 'economism' (Althusser, p. 108; emphases in original). Althusser himself maintained that social structure was determined 'in the last instance by the (economic) mode of production', yet in proposing 'overdetermination', he acknowledged 'the relative autonomy of the superstructures and their specific effectivity' (Althusser, p. 111). Williams would define the term relatively simply, as having the 'intended meaning [of] determination by multiple factors' (Williams, p. 83). A decade later, Laclau and Mouffe would incorporate discourse and the symbolic into the range of determining elements. In the process, they would define 'overdetermination' as entailing all the different ways in which every single element in a society is inscribed. Indeed, all of these inscriptions themselves would become 'elements', as would be all the different ways in which a society's elements are related to other elements according to how they are inscribed. As a result, for Laclau and Mouffe, 'overdetermination' goes beyond mere 'determination by multiple factors', becoming instead the watchword for a theory of the irreducibly infinite complexity of a society, given the irreducibly infinite number of ways it is inscribed by an infinitude of discourses and value-

and limits of [...] a specific economic, political, and cultural system' as 'the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense', is to perceive no distinction between 'official consciousness' and 'practical consciousness'. In this scenario, the latter has been refashioned in the terms of the former, in a process that Williams maintains is by no means spontaneous or 'uncoercive'. Instead, this process is orchestrated – however indirectly – by the hegemonic agency within a given social conjuncture, or what Williams calls the 'ruling class'.[79]

Once again, this process of hegemonic incorporation seems to be invariably coercive, given how it entails imposing the regulated structure of 'official consciousness' upon the unruly, amorphous content of 'practical consciousness'. It may therefore seem all the more pointless to retain Guha's distinction between 'Persuasion' and 'Coercion', given that both terms refer to practices that are both coercive. Nevertheless, what this distinction usefully isolates is what Williams describes as the act of '*liv*[*ing* a] system of meanings and values'; assuming an active role in the process of being submitted to the regularity of ideology, by *regulating one's own consciousness* accordingly. This is what Williams means when claiming that '[t]he true condition of hegemony is effective *self-identification* with the hegemonic forms: a specific and internalized 'socialization' which is expected to be positive but which, if that is not possible, will rest on a (resigned) recognition of the inevitable and the necessary.'[80] Again, we might argue that only this latter, reluctant stance blurs the distinction between 'Persuasion' and 'Coercion', given how it amounts to the imposition of a given ideology upon a will that does not entirely conform. However, if we consider 'positive' identification as readily or eagerly seeking to embody the relatively rigid terms of 'official consciousness', then there is little to distinguish this 'positive' or affirmative, willing subscription to ideology from that 'resigned' capitulation to what appears to be the innocuous, unassailable 'pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense.' For both responses equally entail submission to those 'pressures and limits'. As a result,

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systems. In short, with 'overdetermination', Laclau and Mouffe claim that 'society' is never 'the zero-sum game intrinsic to all economistic and reductionist conceptions' (Laclau and Mouffe, p. 7). I will explore how a comparable claim arises in the work of Claude Lefort, Jacques Ranciere, and Spivak throughout Chapter 2 of this thesis.

[79] Williams, p. 93.

[80] Williams, p. 118 (emphasis in original).

in order to understand how this affirmative subscription is achieved, we must establish what compels one to enthusiastically assume an active role in one's submission to the prescriptions of a systematic ideology, whether it be desires, anxieties, prejudices, beliefs, principles, traditions, or theories. Simultaneously, we must establish how ideology manages to inscribe 'practical consciousness' without either compromising its own regularity, or drawing attention to the discrepancies between 'official consciousness' and 'practical consciousness'.

Equally, though, we must not lose sight of that discrepancy, that 'gap' or 'interval'[81] which would indicate that something exists in the latter that the former cannot fully incorporate. For as I will demonstrate in the latter half of this thesis, this 'unassimilable excess'[82] – to use Young's phrase – is what makes it possible for us to challenge the hegemonic ascendancy of Said's 'imperial consensus', which in turn opens up the possibility of dissolving imperialism entirely. Again, this ubiquitous, inevitable excess is central to how Williams defines hegemony, as evidence of the contingency of any hegemonic formation, which in turn makes possible the coalescence of alternative formations that might challenge its ascendancy.[83] If Lazarus is correct regarding the 'disposition to homogenisation' among postcolonial critics – as outlined above – then current understandings of the spontaneity of both 'Western' unity and Said's 'imperial consensus' foreclose that possibility, by imputing that both are not contingent. This thesis will establish their contingency by apprehending both these collectives in terms of 'hegemony', as outlined by Williams, and Laclau and Mouffe. In the process, I hope to contribute towards the resurrection of that epochal aspiration of a truly, thoroughly *post*colonial world that Spencer has recently turned back to.

This thesis will fall into four chapters. In Chapter 1, I will consider whether we might attribute Lazarus's 'disposition to homogenisation' to the homonymy of terms like 'the West' and 'Europe'. Focusing on how three prominent postcolonial critics use the first of these terms, I will demonstrate how using it as if its meaning were self-evident – that is, without explicitly outlining what one means by 'the

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[81] Rancière, Jacques, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', in *October*, 61 (Summer 1992), p. 62.

[82] Young, p. 136.

[83] Williams, p. 125.

West' – does little to discourage the assumption that one is referring equally to an entire polity as much as a state or 'confederation of states'.[84] I will explore how Edward Said, Paul Gilroy and Robert Young sustain a totalist articulation of 'the West', even as they encounter evidence of the disunity within and among the constituent societies of the 'geopolitical West'. Indeed, I will consider whether these critics use the term 'the West' to refer to anything that exists beyond discourse whatsoever. For each of these critics uses the term in similar fashion to how Dipesh Chakrabarty uses the term 'Europe' – that is, not in reference to 'the region of the world we call "Europe"',[85] so much as to an 'imaginary figure'[86] that mostly remains confined to discourse, and whose 'sociological actuality' is open to debate. As such, just as Chakrabarty debunks his 'hyperreal Europe'[87] as nothing more than 'a piece of fiction told to the colonized by the colonizer in the very process of fabricating colonial domination',[88] so 'the West' emerges in Said, Gilroy and Young's work as a contested signifier, whose ambivalence reflects a dispute over the circumstances that led to today's geopolitical hierarchy.

In short, for Said, Gilroy and Young, 'the West' is an immutable will to power that has driven European imperialism, U.S. exceptionalism and the enforced globalisation or 'neoliberalisation' associated with the Bretton Woods institutions, most notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In this capacity, 'the West' resituates today's geopolitical hierarchy – marked as it is by the ascendancy of nation-states that are conventionally regarded as belonging to 'the West' – as a product of the pursuit of power, rather than a natural consequence of the inherent superiority of 'Western society' or 'Western civilisation'. This counter-narrative of 'Western' ascendancy is crucial to the pursuit of social justice. We should not lose sight, though, of how this counter-marrative gives rise to a counter-

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[84] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

[85] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 3.

[86] Chakrabarty, p. 4.

[87] Chakrabarty, p. 36.

[88] Chakrabarty, p. 34.

articulation of 'the West' – what I call the 'other West'[89] – that in many respects is no less 'hyperreal' than Chakrabarty's 'imaginary' 'Europe'. After all, insofar as Said, Gilroy and Young articulate 'the West' as a will to power, they reduce it to a singular, unitary intention. As such, wherever they use the term to reference a social aggregation as well, then all three critics posit that aggregation as being discrete, cohesive, coherent and internally undifferentiated – in short, a *totality*. As Young documents, whether any social aggregation could spontaneously exist in this form is highly debatable. Moreover, to claim that 'the West' is undifferentiated is to evince Lazarus's 'disposition to homogenisation'. Considering how Said, Gilroy and Young do not distinguish between the multiple senses in which they use the term 'the West', I will therefore suggest that avoiding this 'disposition to homogenisation' must begin with explicitly acknowledging the homonymy of terms like 'the West', and explicitly delineating what one means whenever one uses such terms. Otherwise, using these terms as if their meaning were self-evident can encourage a slippage between their various meanings, which in the case of 'the West' can lead to the assumption that 'Western society', 'Western civilisation', even 'Western consciousness' is immutably, *congenitally* imperialist, an assumption that – as I have emphasised throughout this Introduction – risks foreclosing the possibility of overcoming imperialism entirely.

Having demonstrated how critical articulations of 'the West' in postcolonial studies are often informed by a totalist logic, in Chapter 2 I will explore how we might reconceive Said's 'virtual unity of purpose' without assuming that it is entirely spontaneous. For this assumption can only return us to a totalist or even an essentialist logic, as if the spontaneity of this 'virtual unity of purpose' reflected an underlying, inherent unity across all of 'Western society'. I will suggest that we understand this 'imperial consensus' according to Williams's notion of a disjuncture between 'official consciousness' and 'practical consciousness'. I will demonstrate how a similar disjuncture informs the thinking of two principal influences on Said: Foucault and Gramsci. Indeed, in the process, I will argue that Said's well-known critiques of Foucault's 'theoretical overtotalisation'[90] of power profoundly

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[89] For a fuller definition, see 'A note on 'the West'' below, pp. 34-38.

[90] Said, 'Foucault and the Imagination of Power', in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. by David Couzens Hoy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 152.

misinterpreted Foucault's claim that '[p]ower is everywhere'.[91] In short, Said overlooked Foucault's accompanying claim that '[w]here there is power there is resistance', although I will explain this oversight by suggesting that by 'resistance' Foucault meant something very different to what Said might have thought. For as I will demonstrate with reference to *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, Said understood 'resistance' as if it were synonymous with 'opposition'. In contrast, I will suggest that by 'resistance' Foucault meant a friction that arises from a disjuncture between power's institution of society in a stable, coherent form, and the irreducibly infinite complexity of the 'positive' content of society, including individual consciousness, experience, intention, and practice. Simply put, the latter always exceeds the terms of the former, and yet the former is necessary if 'society' is to exist as a stable environment. Thus, for Foucault – as for Gramsci – social unity is never spontaneous or guaranteed; instead, it must be actively maintained via the exertion of power.

I will suggest, therefore, that we approach Said's 'virtual unity of purpose' as a non-spontaneous unity – indeed, a *precarious* unity that persists only as long as some agency intervenes in the consciousness and intentions of those who subscribe to it, disciplining, coercing, or 'educating' them in ways that are conducive to the task of sustaining that unity. In the process, I will suggest that the individual consciousness and experience – in some cases, perhaps also the intentions and actions – of those who subscribe to this 'imperial consensus' always exceed it, even if these individuals willingly, eagerly subscribe to that consensus. For as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued, subscribing to any form of collective existence – whether it be a group identity or a 'partition of the sensible'[92] – entails 'self-metonymization',[93] the act of identifying the whole of oneself according to only that part of oneself that 'agrees' with the terms of the collective in question. As such, even willingly subscribing to a collective demands that one disavow aspects of oneself that do not 'agree' with those terms, which suggests that the terms of any

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[91] Foucault, Michel, *History of Sexuality, Volume I: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. by Robert Hurley (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1998), p. 93.

[92] Rancière, Jacques, 'Ten Theses on Politics', in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. by Steven Corcoran (London, New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 36.

[93] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', in *Postcolonial Studies*, 8.4 (2005), p. 480.

given collective are always exceeded by their constituent elements. Hence Foucault's contention that both 'power' and 'resistance' are everywhere, in the form of 'odd term[s] in relations of power' that 'are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite'.[94]

Subsequently, if Said finds no evidence of 'odd terms' disrupting the consistency of his 'virtual unity of purpose' – insofar as there is 'scarcely any dissent, any departure, any demurral' from his 'imperial consensus' among 'Westerners' – then I wonder whether this paucity of evidence indicates not the absence of 'odd terms' themselves, but rather limitations in Said's interpretive framework that prevent him from seeing them. I will therefore explore how we might observe these 'odd terms' that potentially elude Said, by considering how Spivak's notion of occupying 'a position without identity' pertains to something that affects not only her 'subalterns' – that is, only the most disenfranchised and impoverished demographics – but to anyone, anywhere. For Spivak, subalternity pertains to forms of consciousness and practice that exceed existing interpretive frameworks.[95] Yet in claiming that belonging to a collective – including a group identity – as always entailing 'self-metonymisation', Spivak suggests that we all evince incommensurable forms of consciousness and practice. Clearly, though, not everyone is a 'subaltern' in the sense of being 'removed from all lines of social mobility'.[96] I will avoid any such assumption, therefore, by decoupling the notion of occupying 'a position without identity' from this definition of the term 'subaltern'. In the process, I will consider whether Spivak's notion of 'read[ing] against the grain' by seeking out 'misfits in the text'[97] provides a way of challenging Said's totalisation of 'Western consciousness' – not just theoretically, but also 'empirically'.

In Chapter 3, I will outline how assuming that any given collective exhaustively articulates the consciousness, experience, intentions, or practices of

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[94] Foucault, p. 96.

[95] I will address how Gramsci uses the term 'subaltern' in much the same way in Chapter 3 of this thesis, pp. 130-34.

[96] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 475-76.

[97] Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 21.

those who subscribe to it has political as well as methodological consequences. I will continue to explore the extent to which Spivak's notion of occupying 'a position without identity' applies more generally than Spivak herself allows, given how in Spivak's thinking this notion remains tied up with how she defines subalternity above. I will argue that we see 'a position without identity' being claimed by Spivak's 'bourgeois white male' students who, according to Spivak, often claim to be unable to 'speak', or participate competently in classroom debates. To claim that 'I am only a bourgeois white male, I can't speak' is clearly nonsensical, most obviously because – unlike Spivak's subaltern – 'bourgeois white males' can quite clearly 'speak' in most contexts. The statement, though, is nonsensical in at least two other ways. Firstly, precisely because 'bourgeois white males' can 'speak', the statement indicates a desire to 'speak' as something other than a 'bourgeois white male', which renders the statement nonsensical in a second way. For this desire suggests that the students are actually *not just* 'bourgeois white males' – that their consciousness and intentions exceed the terms of the category of 'bourgeois white male'. Thus, to claim to be '*only* a bourgeois white male' who is nonetheless unable to 'speak' is to claim 'a position without identity', since although the claimant is *more* than just a 'bourgeois white male', their insistence to the contrary suggests that they can think of no other, more appropriate way of identifying themselves.

I will argue that this absence of alternative ways of identifying oneself is only compounded wherever we assume that anyone's consciousness, experience, or intentions do not exceed the terms of whatever collective they subscribe to. As such, if we do not affirm this excess by presenting alternative ways of identifying oneself, then we risk sustaining a situation that would appear to corroborate that assumption. In so doing, we risk inducing a cyclical, self-corroborating logic in which our original understandings appear to adequately apprehend a situation that we subsequently do not intervene in. If an individual who identifies themselves in the terms of a collective identity undergoes 'self-metonymisation', then to address them as if their consciousness, experience, intentions, or practices did not exceed those terms is to address them synecdochally. Rather than encourage 'dis-identification', this synecdochal address will simply compound that individual's identification with the collective, which in turn will corroborate our synecdochal address, and so on *ad infinitum*. Thus, in order to avoid this tautology, the task of encouraging 'dis-

identification' must assume that all individual consciousness, experience, intention, and behaviour exceeds the terms of all such collectives.

In the latter half of Chapter 3, I will explore how this argument is borne out in several literary explorations of the subjective experience of social privilege. First, I will consider how in *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid looks beyond her reductive, caricatural portrait of North American and European tourists visiting Antigua, ignorant of or indifferent towards how their patronisation of the island's tourist industry implicates them in how that industry mires the country in poverty, political corruption, and economic dependency on Europe and North America. As Lindsay Pentolf Aegerter and Rhonda Frederick have recounted, *A Small Place* is notorious for provoking hostile responses from 'mainstream' readers, by addressing them in the second person as 'incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed'[98] tourists. Yet as Frederick and Lesley Larkin have demonstrated, Kincaid very subtly addresses her reader as if they were not just tourists, a manoeuvre that opens up the possibility of discouraging them from wishing to become tourists ever again. I will compare this affirmation that tourists are never just 'tourists' with how George Orwell – in his essay 'Shooting an Elephant' – describes his experience of being addressed by the Burmese people as an imperialist. Given that Orwell was a police officer in colonial Burma, this mode of address was apt, and yet it refused to allow for the possibility that he was more than just a functionary of British imperial power. Orwell claims that by the time of the incident he describes in the essay, he had already concluded that imperialism was indefensible. Thus, by addressing him as an imperialist oppressor, the Burmese refused to acknowledge the possibility that functionaries like Orwell could be subject to variances of consciousness, experience, intention, and on occasion practice, some of which might not have been conducive to imperialism.

As a result, Orwell claims to have found himself in a state of confusion and uncertainty that prevented him from more closely aligning his practices with his intentions. What Orwell describes here is a similar predicament as the 'tormented dance' of Albert Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses'.[99] As I will demonstrate, the

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[98] Kincaid, Jamaica, *A Small Place* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1988), p. 13.

[99] Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. by Howard Greenfeld (London: Earthscan, 2003), p. 89.

latter's paralysis derives from Memmi's inability to imagine them ever aligning their practices with their intentions, given how contradictory their subject-position was, having declared their opposition to a colonial order that they otherwise benefitted from directly. A comparable pessimism is what underlies V.S. Naipaul's damning appraisal – in his novel *Guerrillas* – of the intentions and subsequent actions of white radicals travelling to the Third World, hoping to contribute to local efforts in pursuing social justice. Famous for his nihilistic fatalism, I suggest nonetheless that throughout this novel, Naipaul acknowledges how this pessimism might well be a form of political complacency. For although he is highly critical of complacent, irresponsible white radicals, in many respects Naipaul resembles how he portrays them in *Guerrillas*. As an educated expatriate, Naipaul is just as able to avoid having to endure the daily hardships of life in a Third World country, as are his white radicals. In critiquing these privileged, mobile radicals, then, Naipaul subtly acknowledges how this critique can be directed at himself. Subsequently, Naipaul's discouraging appraisal of the prospects of white radicals aligning their actions with their attested intentions, is troubled by a worrying sense that he is too deterministic; that he too readily forecloses the possibility of any such alignment; and that – moreover – he can *afford* to do so, given his relatively privileged position within our global distribution of power.

A similar foreclosure discourages Bernard Valcourt – protagonist of *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*, Gil Courtemanche's fictional memoir of the Rwandan genocide – from doing more to intervene in the events that lead to the genocide. Valcourt is all too aware of how he is no less responsible for these events than the rest of Rwanda's European and North American expatriate community, most of whom would rather take a swim in the hotel pool than pressure the country's Hutu Power government to stop fomenting the violence. Yet Valcourt initially refuses to acknowledge how even this awareness distinguishes him from his fellow expats. As a result, much like Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses', Valcourt mostly agonises over his complicity in the forces that gave rise to the situation in Rwanda that led to the genocide. Yet Valcourt is no less tormented by his awareness that such agonising does little to resolve the crisis, and that just like Naipaul, he can afford to agonise over his own integrity, because as a white Canadian, he can escape the crisis, either by remaining in Kigali's Hôtel des Milles-Collines or leaving Rwanda altogether. As with Orwell and Naipaul, so with Courtemanche, we achieve little by refusing to

acknowledge even the possibility of a variance of consciousness, intention, or practice among the beneficiaries of an unequal, unjust, and oppressive social conjuncture. Indeed, such refusals can be counterproductive, as they discourage anyone from even trying to encourage such variances among these beneficiaries.

Chapter 3 will conclude by illustrating how such a refusal can overlook evidence that such variances exist. I will do so by demonstrating how critical approaches to Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* have generally apprehended its narrator-protagonist Patrick Bateman synecdochally. Patrick is a racist, classist, misogynist Wall Street yuppie whom critics have largely received as an embodiment of the intellectual, emotional and moral bankruptcy of either 1980s U.S. consumer culture in general, or his yuppie peer group in particular. As the epitome of a social type, critics like Elizabeth Young and David Eldridge find that Patrick's consciousness does not exceed the terms of that wider collective identity, and that he is therefore 'Everyyuppie'.[100] My reading of *American Psycho*, though, will demonstrate how Patrick's elaborate, albeit dubious claims to being a serial killer indicate both a consciousness that does in fact exceed those terms, and which is also self-conscious of that fact. Indeed, I will argue that this alter ego is an attempt to give form to that excess, although it is also an attempt to reconcile that excess with Patrick's persistent desire to achieve the impossibly idealised image of yuppie perfection, as dictated by the rigid social and personal etiquette that his peers fervently subscribe to. Patrick's pursuit of this impossible reconciliation, this endeavour to somehow fully inhabit the yuppie etiquette despite being an 'unassimilable excess' to it, reflects an absence of other ways of articulating his experience of having exceeded the terms of the yuppie social type.

Patrick certainly gives us very little reason to believe that he is anything other than a racist, a misogynist and a classist. Nonetheless, even if his prejudices are typical of the yuppie mentality, it remains that Patrick's consciousness and experience exceed the yuppie stereotype as characterised by critics like Young and Eldridge. Thus, whenever they claim that Patrick amounts to nothing more than 'Everyyuppie', an exemplum of a collective identity, these critics address him

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[100] Young, Elizabeth, 'The beast in the jungle, the figure in the carpet: Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*', in Elizabeth Young and George Caveney, *Shopping in Space: Essays on American "Blank-Generation" Fiction* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1992), p. 103.

synecdochally. Indeed, if Patrick's alter ego is an implicit acknowledgement of his inability to achieve yuppie perfection – that is, of 'the impossibility to perfectly conform to the [yuppie] etiquette'[101] – then this synecdochal address is ironic in its apparent affirmation of Patrick's exemplarity as a yuppie. For if Patrick gains his peers' acceptance by presenting them with a carefully-regulated public persona – what David Roche calls Patrick's 'false, social and performing self'[102] – then he does so by metonymising himself in the manner described above by Spivak. Thus, to apprehend Patrick synecdochally as 'Everyyuppie' is to corroborate his own 'self-metonymisation', which in turn corroborates this original synecdochal address, and so on. And yet Patrick's claims to being a serial killer – whether or not they are reliable – indicate that Patrick is more than 'Everyyuppie', even though he aspires to being nothing more than a yuppie. Patrick is by no means a misunderstood champion of the rights of the 'margins', or indeed a socially marginal figure himself. I will argue instead, then, that *American Psycho* presents us with a social stereotype, only to question the extent to which any such stereoype is ever a 'sociological actuality'. In the process, the novel conveys more than a dispiriting appraisal of 1980s U.S. consumer culture or yuppie greed, insofar as Ellis also warns us against comfortable assumptions regarding the consciousness of those who not only benefit from systemic injustice, but who also revel in their subsequent, undue privilege.

Of course, though, we cannot dissolve imperialism by simply maintaining the possibility that variances of consciousness, experience, intention, and practice obtain among its beneficiaries. Neither can we challenge the hegemonic ascendancy of imperialism solely by exploiting such variances in order to encourage those who subscribe to Said's 'imperial consensus' to 'dis-identify' from it instead. For it is entirely possible to 'dis-identify' – or at least claim to do so – without actively pursuing the dissolution of whatever one 'dis-identifies' from. Thus, in Chapter 4, I will consider how we might redress this inactive 'dis-identification', with reference to a historical case example: white South Africans who under Apartheid espoused liberalism in supposed defiance of the regime, but who were able to avoid active politics without having their ethical and political integrity seriously questioned. This

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[101] Roche, David, 'Reading the Body in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991): Confusing Signs and Signifiers', in *GRAAT On-Line*, 5.1 (2009), p. 125.

[102] Roche, p. 136.

case example is useful as a way of exploring how we might effectively address inactive 'dis-identification'. In 1968, a group of radical non-white students broke away from the white-dominated, liberal-oriented National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), precisely because of the latter's perceived complacency, their reluctance to undertake more active, more risky ways of campaigning against Apartheid. The new organisation – the South African Student Organisation, or SASO – articulated this complacency as deliberate, calculated collusion with Apartheid on the part of white students looking after their own privileges at the expense of the aspirations of their non-white compatriots. This self-interest was all the worse given NUSAS's claims to oppose Apartheid, and to represent the interests of the country's non-white majority. SASO, therefore, publicly denounced liberal whites – and eventually, dissident whites in general – as covert white-supremacists who were unlikely to, or even incapable of actively pursuing a more just, egalitarian alternative to Apartheid.

This conflation of 'liberals' with 'racists' provoked a response among liberal whites that largely compounded SASO's scepticism towards the integrity of dissident whites. Not all whites responded in the same way, and SASO managed to encourage radicalisation among certain white-led organisations, including NUSAS. However, it appears a majority of whites refused to consider the cogency of SASO's accusations against them of complacency, and so continued to espouse a liberal agenda that entailed doing very little to combat Apartheid. Indeed, many liberals responded with their own counter-accusations, especially concerning SASO's non-whites-only membership policy, which many liberals thought of as a capitulation to Apartheid sensibilities. Undoubtedly, many of these responses were guilty of the very complacency that SASO observed among *all* whites. Nonetheless, in Chapter 4, I will consider whether this insistence on identifying all whites as white-supremacists – this conflation of complacency with *conspiracy* – might have contributed to the general lack of radicalisation among liberal whites during and after the 1970s. For this conflation refused to recognise any variance of intention among whites, let alone among dissident whites. Subsequently, we might attribute the stubbornness of many liberal whites to the fact that liberalism appeared to be the only 'sensible order' at the time that did recognise a variance of purpose between dissident whites and Afrikaner nationalists.

SASO's refusal to recognise this variance, therefore, did little to redress the lack of another 'sensible order' that might both denounce liberal complacency, and acknowledge the possibility that whites could oppose Apartheid with integrity. I wonder, therefore, whether this lack hampered the prospect of encouraging more active, more radical opposition among whites during this period. For what this prospect demanded was an alternative way of being a dissident white – that is, an alternative to the liberal alternative to white-supremacism, a second-order alternative that both affirmed the integrity of white opposition to Apartheid, and called upon dissident whites to take greater risks, to make a more meaningful contribution to the resistance. In Chapter 4, I will consider those responses from among dissident whites that added a third term – such as Richard Turner's identity of the white *radical* – to SASO's binary analysis of white socio-politics, according to which one was either a 'liberal' or a 'racist', although ultimately the two amounted to the same thing. Moreover, I will consider how Nadine Gordimer's responses to SASO and Black Consciousness highlighted this lack of second-order alternatives, along with the potential consequences of failing to redress this lack. I will compare the conclusions of three of Gordimer's novels published after SASO's most active period – *Burger's Daughter* (1979), *July's People* (1981) and *A Sport of Nature* (1987) – in order to establish how Gordimer's search for a more radical praxis for whites in response to SASO, was counter-balanced by a sense that SASO's refusal to acknowledge variances of intention among whites was hampering that search.

Gordimer was very receptive to SASO's critiques of liberal white complacency, yet she was also mindful of the limits of the organisation's strategy of addressing dissident whites as white supremacists, in order to provoke them into radicalising themselves. Throughout her engagements with these limits – I argue – Gordimer suggests that the inactive 'dis-identification' among liberal whites could only be redressed by compelling them to 'dis-identify' from their liberal 'sensible order' *as well as* that of Afrikaner nationalism. In short, for Gordimer, what was needed was a second-order 'dis-identification'. In turn, radicals – white and non-white – had to avoid assuming that the consciousness, experience, and intentions of even the most complacent liberal white could never exceed the terms of the 'sensible order' of South African liberalism. Thus, redressing inactive 'dis-identification' is only possible under the same conditions that gave rise to it in the first place. By refusing to recognise a variance of purpose among them, SASO hampered the task

of encouraging second-order 'dis-identification' among dissident whites by suggesting that their consciousness, experience, and intentions did not exceed those of Afrikaner nationalism. I will therefore explore how Gordimer sought to affirm this excess in her fiction, even as she acknowledged the cogency of SASO's accusations against liberal whites of complacency towards their inevitable implication in white supremacy.

A note on 'the West'

This thesis begins with 'the West', moves through colonial Burma, the postcolonial Caribbean, 1980s Manhattan, and Rwanda, before ending in South Africa in the decade following the Soweto uprisings of 1976-77. This trajectory, therefore, begs the question of what a 'Western' country or a 'Westerner' actually is. Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen have illustrated how the frontiers of the 'geopolitical West' shift considerably according to disparate criteria for defining what 'the West' is, as well as what it has been.[103] Indeed, as if to demonstrate the *irreducible* infinitude of these criteria, Alastair Bonnett notes that Lewis and Wigen's 'seven versions of the West' – seven maps that trace how these frontiers have shifted as the meaning of the term 'the West' has changed over time – comprise only 'a partial portrait and one, moreover, drawn largely from the perspective of the West' itself.'[104] Thus, Bonnett demonstrates how '*non*-Western' definitions of 'the West' are no less innumerable. In short, 'the West' is a *homonym*: it is used in a multitude of different ways, to refer to innumerable different things, not all of which are mutually compatible. Such is the amorphousness of this term that – as we have seen – Lazarus finds it 'impossible to certify even the sociological actuality, still less the unity or transhistorical integrity'[105] of whatever it is meant to reference. Moreover, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 1, the term's homonymy contributes much to the 'disposition to homogenisation' that Lazarus observes in postcolonial studies,

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[103] Lewis, Martin W. and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997), p. 50.

[104] Bonnett, Alastair, *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), p. 8.

[105] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

largely because this homonymy goes unacknowledged, and the term is used as if its meaning were self-evident. This homogenisation, therefore, can be redressed – albeit only to an extent – by simply delineating explicitly what one means when referring to 'the West'. I will therefore briefly outline here what I mean by 'the West', as well as some of the different ways in which I will be using the term in this thesis.

Although I will be referring to the 'geopolitical West', I am interested in the term primarily as an indicator of an underlying, paradigmatic issue in postcolonial studies, regarding the intersections between social privilege, political power, and individual intention. Other indicators are the terms 'Europe', 'Euro-America', 'modernity', 'the centre', the 'core', the 'metropole', the 'First World', the 'global north', and the 'core capitalist nation-states'.[106] I wish to reconceive Said's 'virtual unity of purpose' and Lazarus's 'structuring assumptions' in a manner that avoids presuming that we can automatically deduce individual intention according to the extent of one's social privilege and political power. As such, my attention to 'the West' gradually subsides as I engage more directly with the intersections between these three notions. I address how postcolonial critics use the category of 'the West' in a totalist sense, primarily as a starting point for exploring how this usage implies a certain correlation between privilege, power and intention. I do not wish to challenge the claim that a correlation exists between privilege – including forms of cultural privilege that do not always manifest as material advantage – and power. Instead, I wish to question whether we can wholly deduce one's individual intentions according to the extent of one's social privilege and political power. Thus, I begin by demonstrating how postcolonial critics articulate 'the West' as a totality, in order to illustrate how such articulations influence a more general understanding of this relationship between privilege, power and intentionality. I am not concerned, therefore, with establishing what 'the West' is – still less with whether the category pertains to something that exists beyond discourse – either for postcolonial critics or for anyone else. Neither am I concerned with tracing the category's intellectual

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[106] Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 31 these categories are hardly coterminous, of course. And yet, as Lazarus notes, many of them 'are routinely conflated in the postcolonial discussion, such that, for example, the US is presented as a more or less organic outgrowth of 'Europe' merely with a broader geostrategic base' (Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 16).

history, which by all accounts is overwhelmingly complex.[107] I am interested in 'the West' solely as a symptom of more general assumptions underlying postcolonial studies.

Nonetheless, throughout this thesis, I will present the case for more adequately distinguishing between the various senses in which postcolonial critics use the term 'the West', preferably via a properly diversified terminology. In Chapter 1, I use a limited number of 'subcategories' in order to more clearly distinguish between these various senses of the term. For the sake of clarity, I will now briefly define each of these 'subcategories' for the reader's reference. Thus, throughout this thesis, 'the West' will always refer only to the category of 'the West', in all its possible senses, without meaning to suggest that it pertains to something that exists independently of the category itself. The 'geopolitical West' will refer to the societies or polities that are currently regarded as belonging to 'the West', although I will not identify individual countries in order to avoid imposing one specific definition of what distinguishes a 'Western' from a 'non-Western' country. Similarly, I will avoid defining 'Western society', 'Western civilisation' and 'Western consciousness', except insofar as they postulate a unitary, internally coherent collective consciousness, experience, will or intention, one that is susceptible to a malicious will to power that drives 'Westerners' to pursue the domination of other peoples. I find these formulations essentialist, and therefore insufficient as ways of explaining Said's 'virtual unity of purpose' or Lazarus's 'structuring assumptions'. Subsequently, I will use these terms to refer to attitudes rather than actualities, and I do not wish to suggest that anything like a unified 'Western consciousness' actually exists, at least as a spontaneous union that occurs independently of discourse or the active, coercive disciplining of individual consciousness.

My argument in Chapter 1 turns upon my distinction between the 'Hegelian West', the 'other West', and the 'Other West'. Admittedly, the first term is something of a misnomer, insofar as 'Hegel had scant interest in developing an

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[107] Again, see Lewis and Wigen's *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*; and Bonnett's *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics and History*. See also Stuart Hall's 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power', in *Formations of Modernity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben, (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with the Open University, 1992), pp. 275-320.

explicity or overarching sense of Western identity. The ease with which he dispenses with the West is indicative of its continuing marginality as an idea' in nineteenth-century European thought.[108] The 'Hegelian West', therefore, refers more to Hegel's claim that European society or civilisation embodies 'the end of History' in its movement 'from East to West'. Chakrabarty notes a very similar claim that continues to inform historicist approaches that posit 'Europe' as a standard against which to appraise non-European societies, especially with respect to the extent of their modernisation. According to Chakrabarty, this claim – along with its articulation of 'Europe' as 'the end of History' – 'was of course nothing but a piece of fiction told to the colonized by the colonizer in the very process of fabricating colonial domination.'[109] By presenting modern European society as a product of the unfolding of autonomous, teleological social processes that existed within all societies, this 'fiction' recast the global hegemony of imperial Europe as a natural, inevitable consequence of the pre-eminently advanced nature of European society. In the process, this 'fiction' disavowed the violence and injustices through which imperial Europe achieved its global hegemony.

Thus, by the 'Hegelian West', I mean a conception of 'the West' that has a similar effect as this 'hyperreal Europe' – that is, a watchword for a particular way of explaining the contemporary geopolitical and global economic hierarchy, especially with respect to the ascendancy of Lazarus's 'core capitalist nation states', a geopolitical bloc that others would refer to as 'the West'. In short, this 'official' explanation posits that hierarchy as a natural or inevitable consequence of the inherent superiority of 'Western civilisation', U.S. exceptionalism and neoliberal globalisation. Postcolonial studies contests this 'official' narrative with a counter-narrative that catalogues those injustices. In the process, the discipline recasts 'the West' as the orchestrator and principal beneficiary of today's unjust global hierarchy. Rather than the enlightened embodiment of the 'end of History', what emerges from this counter-narrative is what I refer to as the 'other West' – the orchestrating agent of a history of violent, exploitative injustice that is all too often conveniently overlooked or disavowed, with regrettable consequences for billions of people around the world.

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[108] Bonnett, 24.

[109] Chakrabarty, 34.

Finally, the 'Other West' emerges from efforts to establish a 'new type of knowledge', one that 'can analyse plural objects as such rather than […] simply comprehend[ing] them within totalizing schemas'.[110] According to Young, the pursuit of this 'new type of knowledge' was prompted by the revelations of the injustices wreaked under European imperialism. On the basis that European knowledge itself was as compromised by these revelations, this 'new type of knowledge' was to be the product of 'the decentralization and decolonization of European thought – insofar as it is 'incapable of respecting the Being and meaning of the other', and to the extent that its philosophical tradition makes 'common cause with oppression and with the totalitarianism of the same'.'[111] I will address the potential shortcomings of this claim that European thought is inherently, invariably, *congenitally* imperialist in Chapter 1. By the 'Other West' I mean the antithesis to this 'new type of knowledge'; the 'constitutive outside'[112] by which the latter is defined as a means of producing knowledge that does respect 'the Being and meaning of the other', and which does not make 'common cause with oppression and with the totalitarianism of the same'. Insofar as postcolonial critics are united by a 'genuinely progressive desire to contribute to the decolonisation of knowledge',[113] the 'Other West' references usages of the term 'the West' as referring to an intention that is antithetical to that of 'the postcolonial'. Thus, of all the 'Wests' that I refer to in this thesis, this 'Other West' – 'the West' as Other to the non-imperialist Self that is 'the postcolonial' – is the most removed from a sociological sense, insofar as it references a *paradigm*, rather than a polity, state, or confederation of states.

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[110] Young, p. 11.

[111] Young, p. 18.

[112] Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London, New York: Verso, 1993), p. 2; Marchart, Oliver, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 41; borrowing this notion from Jacques Derrida, Mouffe deploys it as a way of understanding how group and political identities define themselves in terms of what they are not – that is, as against someone else. Although I use the phrase with respect to the process of defining a scholarly *methodology* or sensibility, rather than a political identity, in a way I find that the identity of the postcolonial critic combines the two, insofar as their methodology is informed by an overtly political consciousness and intention.

[113] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 7.

A note on literature

In Chapters 3 and 4, I turn to literary texts to illustrate my claim that we should be wary of assuming that we can exhaustively apprehend the consciousness, experience, will, intentions, and practices of anyone, anywhere, at any time. I look to these texts not as reliable accounts of a 'sociological actuality' – that is, empirical evidence that somehow 'proves' this claim – but rather as speculative explorations of the intervals between individual consciousness, experience, and intention, and the terms of a wider collective identity or will. I explore how Kincaid, Orwell, Naipaul, Courtemanche, Ellis, and Gordimer all engage with the notion that individual intention can be deduced entirely from the extent of one's social privilege and political power. In Gordimer's case, this engagement is prompted by the provocations of Black Consciousness, which deduced a common purpose among all white South Africans from the fact that they all benefited in some way from Apartheid. In Ellis's case, *American Psycho* initially appears to offer us a portrait of a social type that is comfortingly familiar, and which confirms much of our assumptions regarding the intellectual, emotional and moral bankruptcy of either consumer culture in general, or yuppies in particular. Hence the curious tendency among the novel's critics of acknowledging Patrick's fictionality – which Ellis foregrounds via the novel's narrative inconsistencies and ambiguities, especially with respect to whether Patrick really is a serial killer – while also using *American Psycho* to pass judgement on the social and cultural conjuncture in the U.S.A. at the end of the 1980s. For *American Psycho* is often approached as if it were a reliable basis for a sociological analysis of that conjuncture, even though it is a fictional text – one, moreover, that draws attention to its fictionality.

Again, I wish to avoid this tendency, with respect to all of the literary figures discussed in this thesis. I look towards the work of these writers, therefore, as presenting a counterpoint to conventional understandings of the consciousness and intentions of certain, relatively privileged social groups – European and North American tourists; European colonial functionaries; white radicals interfering in Third World social movements; white expatriates indifferent towards the suffering that surrounds them; selfish, materialist Wall Street yuppies; and complacent middle-class, Anglophone white South Africans. As I will demonstrate, we observe these conventional understandings informing how critics have read the work of Ellis

and Gordimer, in particular. Thus, I am interested in how these works exceed the terms in which critics read them, how their portraits of individuals who initially appear to typify a particular social group or identity ultimately do not conform entirely to that identity. I attend to how these works render critical approaches to them inadequate to the task of exhaustively apprehending them, and how these approaches yield interpretations that are at best synecdochal, either by reducing the sum total of the works to one specific aspect, or by ignoring aspects that exceed the terms of the analysis altogether. I focus primarily on the more ambiguous aspects of these works, moments of uncertainty that point to something that exceeds either our expectations or our comprehension, and which cannot be reduced to the terms of existing interpretive frameworks or 'partitions of the sensible', including those within the works themselves. In this respect, I use these novels in similar fashion to how Chakrabarty uses his 'subaltern pasts' – as an excess that cannot simply be incorporated into existing interpretive frameworks, and which therefore gives us a 'glimpse' of their finitude 'finitude', 'a glimpse of what might constitute an outside to' them.[114] As I will insist throughout this thesis, I do not mean to suggest that any of these privileged beneficiaries are somehow subalterns, at least as Spivak defines the term. Nonetheless, in Chapter 3 I will outline how Spivak's method of exposing subaltern 'inarticulacy' suggests ways in which we might nuance our understanding of the intersections and correlations between social privilege, political power and individual intention.

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[114] Chakrabarty, p. 93.

Chapter 1
The 'Other West' in postcolonial studies

For Neil Lazarus, the category of 'the West' is of little value to the task of adequately understanding 'what imperialism is and how it works'.[1] Because it 'references neither a polity nor a state (nor even a confederation of states), but a "civilisation", something altogether more amorphous and indeterminate',[2] the term lacks 'a coherent or credible referent'.[3] Referring imperial power to 'the West', therefore, can only 'mystify this power, rendering its social ground opaque', and hindering efforts to produce 'a plausible account of the structurality of the modern world order'.[4] Lazarus is right to claim that 'it is impossible to certify even the sociological actuality, still less the unity or transhistorical integrity'[5] of any one of the polities, states, or confederations of states that the category of 'the West' is used to refer to. No doubt, then, that we cannot properly understand 'the structurality of the modern world order' by referring imperialism solely to 'the West'.[6] However, I find that in dismissing the category's relevance to this task altogether, Lazarus the shortcomings of his own envisioned, 'materialist' alternative to a 'culturalist' approach to this task.

For even if 'the West' does not reference any single, persistent polity, state, or confederation of states, it remains that contemporary geopolitical and socio-political imaginations continue to be influenced by an intellectual discourse and popular tradition according to which there exists a social formation and political agent that is widely recognised as being 'the West'. As Alastair Bonnett observes,

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[1] Lazarus, Neil, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', in *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 54.

[2] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

[3] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

[4] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

[5] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

[6] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', in *Race & Class*, 53.1 (2011), p. 10.

even if we cannot locate 'the West' as a persistent phenomenon – whether in a geopolitical, 'sociological', cultural, or demographic sense, or indeed as anything that is material or tangible – we cannot ignore the fact that

> [p]eople use 'the West' to articulate and structure their thoughts. It is a category, an intellectual resource, that helps map out the big picture; that gives coherence and statue to what, otherwise, can appear eclectic and tendentious opinion. The fact that contradictory things are said about the West does not imply its redundancy but its extraordinary intellectual and political *utility*.[7]

For Bonnett, rather than a singular, identifiable polity, institution, structure, formation, or agency, 'the West' may be just an idea, whose content or significance – moreover – ceaselessly shifts according to different perspectives, criteria and agendas. Nevertheless, 'the West' is an idea that profoundly influences how policymakers, corporatists, interest groups, the general public and, of course, academics understand contemporary culture, geopolitics, socio-politics, and socio-economics, as well as how they subsequently act politically. Bonnett, therefore, may well agree with Lazarus that the category does not reference one specific, peristent polity, state, or confederation of states. Nevertheless, all such categories remain socio-politically significant as long as they influence individual, institutional and collective political consciousness and – by extension – political behaviour, not to mention economic behaviour.

As a result, I find that we cannot simply dismiss 'the West' as being irrelevant to the task of understanding either 'the structurality of the modern world order', or 'what imperialism is and how it works', simply because it 'references neither a polity nor a state (nor even a confederation of states)'. For the category is not restricted to this particular function; moreover, I doubt we can adequately understand 'the structurality of the modern world order' if we analyse it solely in terms of polities, states, and confederations of states. Nonetheless, insofar as it lacks 'a coherent or credible referent', I agree with Lazarus that 'the West' is unreliable as a way of locating the 'social ground' of imperial power. Thus, if we are to avoid 'mystifying' this 'social ground', then we must refrain from using 'the West' to refer to a polity, state, or confederation of states. In particular, this caution is necessary given that the category is very often articulated as a *totality* – that is, a collective

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[7] Bonnett, Alastair, *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics and History* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2004), p. 6.

whose constituent elements, no matter how infinitely differentiated from one another, are nonetheless united by some all-defining element, such as a common, substantive characteristic that distinguishes all these elements from those belonging to another, separate collective.[8] This emphasis on commonalities between constituent elements of a given social aggregation often detracts from their differences, to such an extent that the aggregation in question is apprehended solely in terms of that all-defining element, or 'datum'.[9]

We might observe a similar emphasis on this all-determining 'datum' in how postcolonial critics articulate 'the West', especially wherever they use the term to reference a social aggregation that exists beyond discourse. It is this emphasis that Lazarus critiques when objecting to the assumption among postcolonial critics that '[t]here is only one kind of 'western' thought [...] and that is the dominating kind: Eurocentric, colonising, logocentric, rationalist.'[10] Moreover, it is this emphasis that gives rise to the 'disposition to homogenisation'[11] that Lazarus observes across the discipline, with regard to European, U.S., 'Western', or 'metropolitan' socio-politics, socio-economics, culture, and ideology – not to mention the consciousness, experience, will, intentions, and practices of individuals belonging to any of these

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[8] According to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, a social or 'hegemonic formation' is discrete only 'insofar as a systematic ensemble of differences can be cut out as *totality* with regard to something *beyond* them, and it is only through this cutting out that the totality constitutes itself as formation' (*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2014), pp. 129-30 (emphases in original)). A 'hegemonic formation' is discrete only insofar as its internal differences are overridden by a common difference to whatever lies beyond that formation, including constituent elements of another 'hegemonic formation'.

[9] Again, I take this term from Laclau and Mouffe, who use it to refer to that single aspect of society which in a totalist logic is held to determine the character of every other aspect, and which therefore gives rise to the forces that lead to social change, as well as revolution. As a way of explaining working-class political unity – and by extension any form of social or collective unity – Laclau and Mouffe outline their notion of 'hegemonic articulation' in opposition to that of 'datum'. The former explains collective unity as occurring through active intervention in the consciousness and will of individuals, such as through political campaigning, education, and propaganda. In contrast, the latter explains this unity as a given, as the expression of some underlying, infrastructural 'law' of 'the social' that unfolds regardless of human activity or will (Laclau and Mouffe, pp. 73-74). Thus, social form could be explained solely by identifying the 'datum', which for orthodox Marxism would have been the modes of production.

[10] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 15.

[11] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 15.

collectives. Thus, even if it were an existing social aggregation, locating the 'social ground' of imperial power in this totalised 'West' inadequately specifies *where*, or rather *among whom* this power lies *within* what might otherwise be a deeply divided and uneven social bloc. The question remains, though, whether postcolonial critics even use the category of 'the West' to refer to a particular polity, state, or confederation of states, as a way of locating the 'social ground' of imperial power. In this chapter, I will explore to what extent postcolonial critics use the category in this way. Through close readings of key texts by three prominent figures within postcolonial studies – Edward W. Said, Paul Gilroy, and Robert J.C. Young – I will demonstrate how 'the West' functions less as a geopolitical category, than as a watchword for an account of the legacies of European imperialism, U.S. exceptionalism, and neoliberal globalisation. This account challenges official explanations of how the geopolitical 'West' achieved its current global ascendancy, which it reinscribes as something other than a natural consequence of 'the West's' inherent superiority over the 'non-West'; as instead a product of the former's violent, unjust, and expropriative domination of the latter.

This alternative account, therefore, disputes the 'sociological actuality' of the 'Hegelian West', by which I mean something similar to Dipesh Chakrabarty's telic or 'hyperreal Europe'.[12] According to Chakrabarty, this 'hyperreal Europe' first emerged as an 'imaginary figure', 'a piece of fiction told to the colonized by the colonizer in the very process of fabricating colonial domination.'[13] Specifically, Chakrabarty's 'hyperreal Europe' is the sovereign subject of nineteenth-century historicism, a way of conceiving world history as a holistic, teleological process in which social change culminates in the form envisaged by European bourgeois liberalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For historicism, Europe is 'the site of the first occurrence of capitalism, modernity, or Enlightenment', the implication being that these institutions will subsequently occur elsewhere, spontaneously, according to this '"first in Europe and then elsewhere" structure of time.'[14] Chakrabarty notes that generally these accounts are 'completely internalist

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[12] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 36.

[13] Chakrabarty, p. 34.

[14] Chakrabarty, p. 7.

histories of Europe' that explain the emergence of these institutions 'mainly with respect to "events" within the geographical confines of Europe'.[15] Chakrabarty, therefore, finds it significant that these 'internalist' histories have relatively little to say about 'the repression and violence that are instrumental in the victory of the modern'.[16] Thus, Chakrabarty's efforts to 'provincialise' this 'hyperreal Europe' entails 'writ[ing] into the history of modernity the ambivalences, contradictions, the use of force, and the tragedies and ironies that attend it.'[17]

In this chapter, I explore how Said, Gilroy, and Young variously contribute to a similar counter-history, writing into the history of 'Western' geopolitical ascendancy the violent, exploitative legacies of European imperialism, U.S. exceptionalism, and neoliberal globalisation that gave rise to, and in some cases sustain today's geopolitical hierarchy. I will also demonstrate, though, how all three critics use the term 'the West' without delineating what it means, as if its meaning were self-evident. Thus, by not acknowledging how the term is in fact profoundly homonymous, Said, Gilroy, and Young leave it unclear whether or not they use it to refer to a polity, state, or confederation of states, as much as to something else. If they do, then we might observe in each of these critics' articulations of 'the West' that 'disposition to homogenisation' that Lazarus notes more generally among postcolonial critics. For all three critics may well present a counter-articulation of 'the West' that is more historically accurate than the 'Hegelian West', insofar as it better reflects the considerable historical evidence of imperialism's injustices. Nonetheless, in many respects, this 'other West' is no less 'hyperreal'. For one thing, this counter-articulation equally posits the existence of a singular, unitary political agency or intention beyond discourse. Thus, as long as Said, Gilroy and Young do not acknowledge the homonymy of the term 'the West', they encourage the assumption that they use it to refer to a correspondingly discrete, cohesive, coherent, internally undifferentiated social bloc – in short, a *totality*. As such, in itself, this totalist 'other West' need not be problematic or unreliable, so long as we

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[15] Chakrabarty, p. 7.

[16] Chakrabarty, p. 44.

[17] Chakrabarty, p. 43.

remain aware of the limits of its own 'sociological actuality', and take care to avoid overstating its correspondence to anything that exists independently of discourse.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate the importance of avoiding such overstatements, by exploring how Said, Gilroy, and Young all manage to sustain a totalist articulation of 'the West' even as their own analyses put pressure upon its reliability. As such, a tension arises between this articulation of 'the West' and these critics' acknowledgement – however implicit, in some cases – of how a totalist logic elides the complexity of the societies that they address as belonging to the 'geopolitical West'. This tension is especially apparent in Said and Gilroy's analyses, insofar as they more directly address societies that are conventionally thought of as belonging to the 'geopolitical West'. Indeed, since the scope of Young's analysis is primarily epistemological, comparing Young with Said and Gilroy will corroborate my contention that a totalist articulation of 'the West' need not be problematic, just as long as we do not overestimate the correspondence between this articulation and anything that exists beyond discourse. Nevertheless, all three cases will equally demonstrate the necessity of both *explicitly* delineating what one means by 'the West' – or indeed any such homonymous topographical categories, including 'Europe' – *and* distinguishing more clearly between the disparate yet highly interrelated senses of the term, preferably via a diversified terminology.

In Young's case, the need for a clearer distinction between these various senses becomes especially urgent. Given the epistemological scope of his analysis, Young's 'West' arguably functions *even less* in a constative manner, as having a 'coherent or credible referent' beyond discourse. For in Young's case, 'the West' comes to reference an imperialist will to power as it manifests in 'European thought', a significance that is quintessentially totalist. Indeed, considered as a strictly epistemological category – rather than as also referencing a social aggregation – Young's 'West' serves as a paradigmatic antithesis to a nascent 'new type of knowledge', one that 'can analyse plural objects as such rather than […] simply comprehend[ing] them within totalizing schemas'.[18] Young traces the emergence of this 'new type of knowledge' in the debates concerning orthodox

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[18] Young, Robert J.C., *White Mythologes: Writing History and the West* (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 11.

Marxist social thought, as well as those provoked by Said's *Orientalism* (1978) concerning the role of 'Western' knowledge in enabling European colonial expansion. Thus, I will suggest that this sense of 'the West' – which we might refer to as 'the *Other* West' – serves as an antithesis or 'constitutive outside'[19] to the notion of 'the postcolonial' itself, at least wherever the latter denotes the pursuit of a non-totalising, non-imperialist 'new type of knowledge'. However, it remains that using the term 'the West' to refer to this imperialist will to power without explicitly delineating its meaning, imputes a totalist logic that – as I will demonstrate in my next chapter – is profoundly misleading. Thus, although I will explain some of the ways in which the term currently works in postcolonial studies, I maintain that it needs to be refunctioned in a manner that will not frustrate attempts to adequately understand the political economics of imperialism.

1.1 Manufacturing 'the West' in Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*

As simply a counter-articulation of the 'Hegelian West', the 'other West' is ironically no less of a totality, and its own 'sociological actuality' is therefore no less limited. Said's own, significant contributions towards the counter-history of a rapacious 'Western' imperialism – as described above – make apparent this limited actually. In particular, this counter-articulation of 'the West' becomes increasingly problematic in Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), especially in the book's fourth and final chapter, 'Freedom from Domination in the Future'. Up until this point, Said has extended a central argument in his earlier book *Orientalism*, concerning the distinction between 'pure' and 'political knowledge': namely, that such a distinction too often 'obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced.'[20] In *Culture and*

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[19] Mouffe uses this term to refer to how commonality is established among constituent elements of a collective, according to a common difference to what lies beyond the collective (see note 8 above). Thus, for Mouffe, if 'we accept that every identity is relational', then 'the condition of existence of every identity is the affirmation of a difference, the determination of an 'other' that is going to play the role of a 'constitutive outside'' (Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London, New York: Verso, 1993), p. 2). 'The West', therefore, serves as a 'constitutive outside' for postcolonial critics insofar as it denotes an imperialist intentionality that the latter seek to avoid in their own critical practice.

[20] Said, Edward W., *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 10.

Imperialism, Said extends this notion in order to interrogate a similar assumption, according to which 'culture' itself is ahistorical and apolitical. Said is sceptical towards the belief that 'culture' is 'somehow divorced from, because transcending, the everyday world', a belief that wrongly perceives 'culture' as 'a protective enclosure: check your politics at the door before you enter it.'[21] In the first three chapters, Said challenges this belief, by tracing how the historical context of European colonialism influenced intellectual trends and cultural identities within nineteenth-century Europe itself, along with how anti-colonial resistance very often took the form of cultural and intellectual as well as armed resistance. Throughout these chapters, Said attends to cultural-intellectual dynamics that largely correspond to the second of two definitions of the term 'culture' that he outlines in his Introduction: that is,

> culture as a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Matthew Arnold put it in the 1860s. Arnold believed that culture palliates, if it does not altogether neutralize, the ravages of a modern, aggressive, mercantile, and brutalizing urban existence.[22]

These first three chapters of *Culture and Imperialism* cast doubt upon the extent to which these forms of culture are divorced from the histories of European colonial ascendancy, questioning in the process their supposedly universal or historically transcendent quality.

In Chapter 4, the scope of Said's discussion shifts to engage with how the contemporary mass media help to enable the pursuit of an imperialist political-economic agenda by U.S. policymakers and corporatists, by promoting consent among the country's general public. In the process, Said describes a much more direct causal relationship between government interests and corporate policy among major news outlets in the U.S.A. during and immediately after the Cold War. Furthermore, the shift entails exploring how both the intelligentsia and the general public sustain the ascendancy of an imperialist political-economic agenda, by participating in imperialist ideology. Perhaps inevitably, Said finds that this shift raises questions concerning the general public's influence over the national agenda, as well as the conditions that enable what Said earlier claimed was the near-

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[21] Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. xiv.

[22] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xiii.

ubiquitous 'imperial consensus'[23] throughout 'Western society'. Subsequently, these questions reinforce the sense – expressed already in many critiques of *Orientalism* – that Said overstates the unity of 'the West' with regard to the ubiquity of imperialist consent among 'Westerners'.[24]

For Said, contemporary U.S. imperialism is distinguished from its European predecessors by the unprecedentedly 'epic scale of United States global power and the corresponding power of the national domestic consensus'[25] that supports consolidating that power, regardless of – or even oblivious towards – the human cost. As a result, Said concedes that '[n]ever has there been a consensus so difficult to oppose nor so easy and logical to capitulate to unconsciously.'[26] Said, though, maintains that such opposition is necessary, given that '[c]itizens and intellectuals of the United States have a particular responsibility for what goes on between the United States and the rest of the world'.[27] However, for Said it appears unlikely that anyone could ever challenge imperialism's ascendancy in the U.S.A., given the sheer enormity of the power of those who wield it in order to sustain that ascendancy. Here, Said risks recapitulating to a strain of argument in *Orientalism* that – according to Young – drew several critiques for precluding the possibility of surmounting Orientalist discourse with alternative, less imperialistic modes of knowledge, by portraying Orientalism itself as being all-encompassing.[28] According to Said, though, *Culture and Imperialism* aspires towards a more nuanced, less smoothly unilateral account of British, French and later U.S. imperialism than that

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[23] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 62.

[24] The current discussion of *Culture and Imperialism* will address this objection as it has been variously raised by Dennis Porter, James Clifford, Robert Young, and Aijaz Ahmad. A similar objection underlies Lazarus's claim that Said evinces the 'disposition to homogenisation' that he observes among postcolonial critics in general: see my Introduction to this thesis, pp. 6-7.

[25] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 391.

[26] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 392.

[27] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 64.

[28] Young, p. 127.

which he had presented in *Orientalism*, and which has been critiqued by many for imputing that 'power and discourse is possessed entirely by the coloniser'.[29]

Subsequently, in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said 'expand[s] the arguments of the earlier book to describe a more general pattern of relationships between the modern metropolitan West and its overseas territories',[30] so as to to acknowledge how it was never 'the case that the imperial encounter pitted an active Western intruder against a supine or inert non-Western native; there was *always* some form of active resistance and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out.'[31] Said claims that as a result of this historic challenge, '[f]or the first time Westerners have been required to confront themselves not simply as the Raj but as representatives of a culture and even of races accused of crimes – crimes of violence, crimes of suppression, crimes of conscience.'[32] This challenge has entailed the interruption of 'official' histories of European imperialism by alternative, less palatable accounts that convey what 'the more powerful side in the imperial and colonial encounter' have historically been able to 'overlook, forget, or ignore[:] the unpleasant aspects of what went on 'out there'.'[33] To some extent, this selective memoralisation continues even after 'Westerners' encounter these alternative narratives, insofar as they react to this narrative intervention by

> rethinking the whole process of decolonization. Was it not true, ran their new evaluation, that 'we' had given 'them' progress and modernization? Hadn't we provided them with order and a kind of stability that they haven't been able since to provide for themselves? […] Shouldn't we have held on to the colonies, kept the subject or inferior races in check, remained true to our civilizational responsibilities?[34]

As such, Said is ambivalent regarding the capacity of these alternative narratives to radically alter prevailing perspectives – or what Said refers to as 'structures of

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[29] Parry, Benita, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 23.

[30] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xi.

[31] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xii.

[32] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 235.

[33] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 157.

[34] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 23.

attitude and reference'[35] – among 'Westerners' regarding the legacies of European and U.S. imperialism. Indeed, although critiques of imperialism in contemporary popular culture are often indebted to Joseph Conrad's doubt-ridden 'anti-imperialist irony',[36] Said finds that all too often these critiques are unwilling 'to take seriously the alternatives to imperialism, among them the existence of other cultures and societies'.[37] Indeed, these critiques too often continue to deride the latter as being 'unutterably corrupt, degenerate, irredeemable',[38] in much the same way as the imperialist order they supposedly critique. So, 'contemporary novelists and film-makers who have learned [Conrad's] ironies so well' might well 'have done their work *after* decolonization, after the massive intellectual, moral, and imaginative overhaul and deconstruction of Western representation of the non-Western world'.[39] Yet Said finds that 'Conrad has passed along his residual imperialist propensities, although his heirs scarcely have an excuse to justify the often subtle and unreflecting bias of their work.'[40]

For Said, this attitude is a specific yet exemplary instance of a much more general tendency among 'Westerners' to recapitulate to an 'Occidocentric' worldview, even wherever they espouse a less self-congratulatory account of the legacies of European and U.S. imperialism. Said therefore finds it unsurprising that

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[35] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 61; this phrase invokes Raymond Williams's notion of 'structures of feeling', which for Williams referenced 'meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt', as opposed to the kind of 'selected and interpreted beliefs and acted and justified experiences' that could be encapsulated within 'more formal concepts of 'world-view' or 'ideology'' (Williams, Raymond, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 132). By 'structures of attitude and reference', Said refers to 'the way in which structures of location and geographical reference appear in the cultural languages of literature, history, or ethnography, sometimes allusively and sometimes carefully plotted, across several individual works that are not otherwise connected to one another or to an official ideology of 'empire'' (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 61). Said's phrase intends to capture the mass discursive production of imperial space, including the differential positions of 'centre' and 'periphery' within that space.

[36] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxi.

[37] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxii.

[38] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxi.

[39] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxi-xxii.

[40] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxi-xxii.

imperialism has persisted even after formal decolonisation, both as a culture and a political-economic agenda whose pursuit the culture somehow enables. Subsequently, in order to better understand how imperialism has persisted even after these narrative interruptions, Said finds it necessary to explore '*how* the national British, French, [and later] American cultures maintained hegemony over their peripheries. *How within them was consent gained and continuously consolidated for the distant rule of native peoples and territories*'.[41] According to Said, this persistent hegemony has partly been sustained precisely by the widespread exertion within 'the West' of '[t]he power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging',[42] including other, discordant narratives concerning the benignity of European colonialism, U.S. military belligerence, and neoliberal globalisation. As he explores the role of the U.S. mass media in exerting this power, Said directly confronts the implications of his earlier doubts over the possibility of challenging U.S. power, prompting him to wonder whether ''the people' have direct access to power? Or are the presentations of that power so organized and culturally processed as to require a different analysis?'[43] Said's initial response is bleak, remarking that 'in the main we have rarely been so fragmented, so sharply reduced, and so completely diminished in our sense of what our true (as opposed to asserted) cultural identity is.'[44] Indeed, throughout this final chapter, Said tacitly addresses the uncertain questions regarding power and individual agency that initially arose in his earlier account of the 'imperial consensus'[45] that supposedly encompasses all of 'Western society'.

As I have already mentioned, several commentators have critiqued Said for glossing over discordant voices within 'Western society' itself, whether anti-imperialist or otherwise. For example, commenting on *Orientalism* in 1983, Dennis Porter remarked that 'one important reason why Said apparently cannot suggest the form alternatives to Orientalism might take in the present is that his use of discourse

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[41] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 59 (my emphases).

[42] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xiii.

[43] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 387.

[44] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 387.

[45] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 62.

theory prevents him from seeing any evidence of such alternatives in the past.'[46]
Subsequently, Porter found that, 'although Said claims that what interests him as a scholar is the detail and that he intends to be attentive to individual voices, virtually no counter-hegemonic voices are heard', in which case 'Said does not seem to envisage that more directly counter-hegemonic writings or an alternative canon may exist within the Western tradition.'[47] Said appears to corroborate Porter's critique here when attesting to the ubiquity of the 'imperial consensus' throughout 'Western society' in *Culture and Imperialism*. Nevertheless, as he discusses the role of the mass media in enabling U.S. imperialism, Said becomes increasingly aware that the subsequent 'unity of purpose' that he describes may not always be completely spontaneous, derived – that is – from eager, uncoercive consent.

Hence the increasingly despotic tone in which Said describes this 'unity of purpose' in the final chapter of *Culture and Imperialism*, such as when remarking that the mass media's

> goal is to mobilize consent, to eradicate dissent, to promote an almost literally blind patriotism. By such means the governability of large numbers of people is assured, numbers whose potentially disruptive ambitions for democracy and expression are held down (or narcotized) in mass societies, including, of course, Western ones.[48]

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[46] Porter, Dennis, '*Orientalism* and its Problems', in *The Politics of Theory*, ed. by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iverson and Diana Loxley (Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1983), p. 181.

[47] Porter, p. 181.

[48] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 375; what Said describes here is comparable with the so-called 'democratic paradox', according to which escalations in demands for recognition and rights can eventually threaten the unity and stability of a society. Jacques Rancière neatly summarises this argument as one that claims that 'democratic government is threatened by nothing other than democratic life', insofar as 'democratic life' is overly idealistic (Rancière, Jacques, 'Does Democracy Mean Something?', in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Corcoran (London, New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 47). Thus, '[o]n the one hand, democratic life calls to implement the idealistic view of government by the people for the people. It entails an excess of political activity that encroaches on the principles and procedures of good policy, authority, scientific expertise and pragmatic experience. In this instance, good democracy seems to require a reduction of this political excess. Yet a reduction of political action leads to an increase in the aspirations and demands that work to undermine political authority and civic behaviour. As a result, 'good democracy' refers to a form of government able to tame the double excess of political commitment and egotistical behaviour inherent to the essence of democratic life' (Rancière, 'Does Democracy Mean Something?', p. 47). The 'democratic paradox', then, entails an irresolvable tension between demands for increasing liberties, and reconciling those demands – which are not all compatible with one another – in ways that sustain social

The connection Said traces here between the promotion of imperialist consent and the pursuit of social harmony and political unity is highly reminiscent of Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky's analysis of the relationship between U.S. policymakers and major stakeholders in the country's mass media. Writing in 1988, Herman and Chomsky noted that information publicly disseminated by the U.S. media industries was being increasingly vetted via two key pressures. On one hand, ownership of these industries was ever more concentrated among conglomerates, and so they had 'lost some of their limited autonomy to bankers, institutional investors, and large individual investors'.[49] The mass media, therefore, became increasingly controlled by 'groups [who] obviously have a special stake in the status quo by virtue of their wealth and their strategic position in one of the great institutions of society [and who] exercise the power of this strategic position, if only by establishing the general aims of the company and choosing its top management.'[50] On the other hand, these industries relied upon policymakers themselves, both as a major information source and 'for more general policy support. All business firms are interested in business taxes, interest rates, labor policies, and enforcement and nonenforcement of the antitrust laws', as well as 'diplomatic support for their rights to penetrate foreign cultures with U.S. commercial and value messages and interpretations of current affairs.'[51] Ultimately, Herman and Chomsky contend that the pressures of these various, interconnecting vested interests – the government, the corporate elite, and the media themselves – allow 'the powerful […] to fix the premises of discourse, to decide what the general populace is allowed to see, hear, and think about, and to "manage" public opinion by regular *propaganda* campaigns'.[52] Herman and Chomsky refer to the subsequent management of information made publicly available as a process of 'manufacturing consent', a phrase that Said briefly acknowledges only once in *Culture and*

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stability and civic order. For a fuller discussion of Rancière's own engagement with this 'democratic paradox', see Chapter 2 of this thesis, pp. 138-44.

[49] Herman Edward S. and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), p. 8.

[50] Herman and Chomsky, p. 8.

[51] Herman and Chomsky, p. 13.

[52] Herman and Chomsky, p. lix (my emphasis).

Imperialism.[53] However, the similarities between Said's account of the mass media's role in promoting a belligerent foreign policy and that of Herman and Chomsky are striking. For one thing, the latter also equivocate over the democratic nature of U.S. public culture, given how '[t]he public is not sovereign over the media – the owners and managers, seeking ads, decide what is to be offered, and the public must choose among these. People watch and read in good part on the basis of what is readily available and intensively promoted.'[54]

Compared with Said, Herman and Chomsky are unforthcoming regarding how the ideologies that influence content disseminated by the mass media resonate with prevailing public sentiment. To some extent, Herman and Chomsky register a slight disconnect between the two, given that

> [p]olls regularly show that the public would like more news, documentaries, and other information […] There is little reason to believe that they would not like to understand why they are working harder with stagnant or declining incomes, have inadequate medical care at high costs, and what is being done in their name all over the world. If they are not getting much information on these topics, the propaganda model can explain why: the sovereigns who control the media choose not to offer such material.[55]

For Herman and Chomsky, information disseminated by the mass media is hardly an exact index of popular sentiment: indeed, the disjuncture between the two compounds their sense that the mass media compromise what is otherwise claimed to be the democratic sovereignty of the American people. In contrast, Said finds no significant difference between the ideologies propagated by the mass media and those that prevail among the general public. Said, therefore, tones down the despotic terms of his analysis by clarifying that

> [i]n speaking of control and consensus […] [i]t is not a question of a *directly imposed* regime of conformity in the correspondence between contemporary United States cultural discourse and U.S. policy in the subordinate, non-Western world. Rather, it is a system of pressures and constraints by which the whole cultural corpus retains its essentially imperial identity and its direction. This is why it is accurate

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[53] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 346.

[54] Herman and Chomsky, p. xix.

[55] Herman and Chomsky, p. xix.

to say that a mainstream culture has a certain regularity, integrity, or predictability over time.[56]

Said allows for a slight reciprocity between spontaneous popular sentiment and government policy, albeit a reciprocity that the latter actively sustains by closing off the possibility of alternative or dissenting narratives emerging. Again, Said's analysis resonates here with Herman and Chomsky's, who note that the process of 'manufacturing consent' equally involves 'marginaliz[ing] dissent'.[57] Said, however, goes one step further, by equating this marginalisation to *criminalisation*, both of marginality and alternativeness.[58] Said refers this claim to a contention that runs throughout *Culture and Imperialism* concerning the constructed, contingent nature of any monolithic cultural identity.[59] Here, though, Said explicitly approaches the construction of these identities as equally being *imposition*, as a form of social and ideological coercion, albeit by rigidly, narrowly defining an 'us' that is absolutely distinct from 'them'. As a result, when discussing the use of the pronoun 'we' by U.S. public figures when debating the case for pursuing war, Said remarks that 'this pronoun, almost more than any other word, fortifies the somewhat illusory sense that all Americans, as co-owners of the public space, participate in the decisions to

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[56] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 392 (my emphasis).

[57] Herman and Chomsky, p. 2.

[58] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 392.

[59] Said opens *Culture and Imperialism* with an extended critique of monolithic cultural identities, claiming instead that, '[p]artly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic' (*Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxix); and that 'the time has come in cultural analysis to reconnect their analysis with their actuality' (*Culture and Imperialism*, p. 15). Said's 'contrapuntal' historiography seeks to re-establish this connection, insofar as it entails 'a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts' (*Culture and Imperialism*, p. 59). This approach strongly resembles Chakrabarty's distinction between 'History 1' and 'History 2s'; between a universalist historiography that consigns everything to a single, all-encompassing and 'homogeneous' narrative – typically of capitalist modernity's global proliferation – and narratives consisting of elements and experiences that cannot be accommodated within the abstract, totalising categories of 'History 1'. For Chakrabarty, this distinction emphasises the fact that human experience, as well as the infinite variety of human social organisation, cannot be reduced to the terms of a single mode of analysis. Said's 'contrapuntal' awareness is comparable to Chakrabarty's distinction, insofar as it seeks to affirm that all 'cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure' (*Culture and Imperialism*, p. 15).

commit America to its far-flung interventions'.[60] Having initially been a potential cause of embarrassment for today's 'vanguards in the social contests of our time', Said gradually comes to approach the ubiquitous 'imperial consensus' in 'Western society' as conveying a tendency among contemporary 'Western' governments toward authoritarianism.

As we have already seen, for Lazarus, Said's apparent disinclination towards acknowledging any evidence of 'counter-hegemonic writings' from within 'the West' itself, encourages the impression that – according to Said – not only is 'the West' itself an ontological reality, but so is its congenital, immutable imperiality. According to Lazarus, not only is this implication ahistorical; it also conflicts with Said's own contention that, 'as both geographical and cultural entities – to say nothing of historical entities – such locales, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made.'[61] For this contention – along with Said's analysis throughout *Orientalism* – posits 'the West' as being 'as much an effect of imperialist practice and theory as was "the East"'.[62] As a result, Said 'situate[s] the concept of "the West" precisely *within* Orientalist discourse, and […] render[s] it unusable by any putatively post-Orientalist criticism – at least until it ha[s] been refunctioned or deconstructed.'[63] However, Lazarus finds that no such 'refunctioning of the concepts of "Europe" or "the West" is attempted in *Orientalism*. On the contrary, despite having compellingly demonstrated the ideological character of these concepts, Said proceeds to use them relatively unselfconsciously throughout his study.'[64] To an extent, this 'refunctioning' does not take place in *Culture and Imperialism* either, insofar as, even in this later work, Said's analysis does not lead him to reconsider the extent to which his singular, unitary articulation of 'the West' reflects any 'sociological actuality' existing independently of discourse. Only in this later book's final chapter does Said very tentatively consider the possibility that 'Western' unity might not be as self-evident

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[60] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 354.

[61] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 4.

[62] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 55.

[63] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 55.

[64] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 54.

as it might have previously seemed to him. Thus, Said reformulates the semblance of unity within 'Western society' as most likely reflecting a profoundly uneven distribution of socio-political power *within* it, rather than an ontological predisposition shared among all 'Westerners'.

According to Aijaz Ahmad, Said's 'remarkable' tendency to essentialise 'the West'[65] reflects his ironic attachment to a humanist tradition which was historically implicated in colonial discourse – including Orientalism – and, by extension, European imperial expansion. For as Ahmad remarks, it is quintessentially humanist to attest – as Said often does – that

> (a) there *is* a unified European/Western identity which is at the *Origin* of history and has *shaped* this history through its *thought* and its *texts*; (b) this seamless and unified history of European identity and thought runs from Ancient Greece up to the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, through a specific set of beliefs and values which remain essentially the same, only becoming more dense; and (c) that this history is immanent in – and therefore available for reconstruction through – the canon of its *great books*.[66]

Indeed, Ahmad finds that Said's suggestion that 'modern Orientalism [was] presumably already there in Dante and Euripides'[67] resonates tellingly with Eric Auerbach's efforts – in *Mimesis* (1946) – to trace an unbroken civilizational continuity from Ancient Greece to the modern, post-war 'West'.[68] As such, Said's generally unitary articulation of 'the West' may simply be a by-product of his famously staunch commitment to humanism. This articulation, therefore, only begins to unravel when Said's attention shifts from exploring how 'great books' contribute towards a discourse claiming the existence of a unitary, telic 'West', to considering *how* such a discourse might give rise to patterns of social organisation

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[65] Ahmad, Aijaz, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London, New York: Verso, 1992), p. 183.

[66] Ahmad, p. 167 (emphases in original).

[67] Ahmad, p. 182.

[68] Ahmad, p. 163; indeed, given Ahmad's claim that *Orientalism* repeats several aspects of Auerbach's work – including 'its emphasis on the canonical text, its privileging of literature and philology in the constitution of 'Orientalist' knowledge and indeed the human sciences generally, its will to portray a 'West' which has been the same from the dawn of history up to the present, and its will to traverse all the main languages of Europe' (Ahmad, p. 163) – only further suggests that Said's subsequent articulations of 'Europe' and 'the West' are no less totalist than Auerbach's.

that appear to corroborate that claim. In short, Said shifts from approaching this discourse as being *constative* to considering the extent to which it has a *performative* capacity instead. Thus, by the end of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said has addressed how the fraught epistemological crisis that he raised in *Orientalism* equally applies to 'the West' itself, or rather to the question of to what extent its singular articulation corresponds to a unitary, consistent social formation that exists independently of discourse.

However, this development only further necessitates the 'refunctioning' of all such concepts as 'Europe', 'Occident', and 'West'. As such, Lazarus's critique of Said for failing to provide this 'refunctioning' in *Orientalism* can be extended – in my opinion – to the Said of *Culture and Imperialism*. For Said's analysis in Chapter 4 of the latter book does not culminate in a decisive reassessment of whether 'the West' exists independently of discourse, and so the questions concerning individual agency within 'Western society' raised in this chapter are never fully answered or even expanded upon. We might explain this apparent hesitancy by approaching *Culture and Imperialism* as merely developing on *Orientalism*'s oppositional response to the Auerbach of *Mimesis*, whom Ahmad describes as 'the master of European knowledge against which the counter-knowledge of *Orientalism* is assembled.'[69] Approaching *Culture and Imperialism* as a 'counter-classic',[70] as Ahmad describes *Orientalism*, emphasises the manner in which it contributes towards the development of the 'other West' described above. Subsequently, the shift in scope in Chapter 4 of the later book demonstrates the need to remain aware of the potentially limited 'sociological actuality' of this 'other West', no matter how much more historically-grounded it may be compared with the 'colonial fictions' – that is, Chakrabarty's 'hyperreal Europe'; my 'Hegelian West' – that it may seek to contest.

1.2 Locating 'the West' in Paul Gilroy's *After Empire*

Of course, Said's despotic portrait of how popular imperialism within 'the West' itself is promoted may reflect an ironic reversion to the fatalist thinking that critics

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[69] Ahmad, p. 163.

[70] Ahmad, p. 163.

such as Young, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have all observed in *Orientalism*. According to Bart Moore-Gilbert, the latter two critics noted this fatalist tendency with respect to how Said afforded only a negligible degree of agency to colonised peoples.[71] In *Culture and Imperialism*, this lack of agency appears to extend to the colonisers as well. For if there has never 'been a consensus so difficult to oppose nor so easy and logical to capitulate to unconsciously'[72] as today's 'Western' 'imperial consensus', then the prospect of challenging it seems grim. Indeed, Said here may well be accused of providing an alibi – however inadvertently – for those who subscribe to this 'imperial consensus'. Subsequently, if *Orientalism* imputes that, within the colonial space, 'power and discourse is possessed entirely by the coloniser', so *Culture and Imperialism* suggests that, within the metropolitan space, 'power and discourse is possessed entirely by the *policymaker*'. If this is the case, then the possibility of surmounting the legacies of 'Euro-American' imperialism is only further reduced. For no matter how many Europeans or Americans might actively pursue that possibility, the near-insurmountable extent of today's 'imperial consensus' reflects a similarly overwhelming imbalance of political power. Thus, Said's pessimism in *Orientalism* may well have derived from an essentialist argument concerning the congenital imperiality of all 'Western' culture. Yet in *Culture and Imperialism*, this argument becomes comparatively *historical*, given how the insurmountable ascendancy of a government-orchestrated imperialist agenda reflects instead a profoundly, *systematically* uneven distribution of socio-political power within 'Western society' itself. Just like the colonised – at least as imputed in *Orientalism* – so too the coloniser is seemingly unable to resist or even think beyond imperialism. Either way, Said continues to articulate 'the West' as an immutable totality.

Furthermore, as with *Orientalism*, we might attribute Said's fatalism in *Culture and Imperialism* as much to his usage of discourse analysis, as to the cogency of his account concerning this insuperable imperial edifice. Hence Porter's

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[71] Moore-Gilbert, Bart, 'Spivak and Bhabha' in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray (Oxford, Malden MA: Blackwell, 2000), p. 452; Young observes Said's fatalism with regard to his apparent scepticism towards the prospect of 'Westerners' ever thinking beyond the terms of Orientalism. I will discuss Young's perspective on this aspect of *Orientalism* later on in this chapter.

[72] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 392.

claim that Said's inattention to 'counter-hegemonic voices' in *Orientalism* is due to his use of discourse theory, a mode of analysis which James Clifford – also in response to *Orientalism* – has argued 'is always in a sense unfair to authors. It is not interested in what they have to say or feel as subjects but is concerned merely with statements as related to other statements in a field.'[73] Paul Gilroy's *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (2004) similarly engages with what often appears to be an all-pervasive 'imperial consensus', albeit in post-9/11 Great Britain. Nevertheless, whereas Said cannot envisage any possibility of challenging this 'imperial consensus' as it prevails across the public culture of the post-Cold War U.S.A., for Gilroy this possibility resolutely remains. Indeed, Gilroy finds that even in the aftermath of 9/11, this challenge has become more than a mere possibility, given the advent of 'convivial cultures' that have emerged out of 'the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life in Britain's urban areas'.[74] Thus, for Gilroy, this emergent phenomenon not only affirms this possibility of challenging Britain's 'imperial consensus', but also suggests that this challenge is already under way, with respect to to both the collective memoralisation of past empires and the continued pursuit of an imperialist agenda. In short, if Said generally disregards 'counter-hegemonic voices', Gilroy does not. In the process, Gilroy avoids Said's fatalism along with his apparent essentialism, which would otherwise risk foreclosing the possibility that British national identity might someday shed its deep-seated imperialist aspirations, a moment whose apparent imminence Gilroy passionately heralds throughout *After Empire*.

Nevertheless, as much as he avoids totalising British socio-politics, Gilroy articulates 'the West' in similar fashion to Said, as a singular, unitary will that suffers from no internal 'counter-hegemonic voices'. In the process, Gilroy risks reaffirming the congenital imperialism of 'the West', even as he casts it into doubt by hailing the advent of counter-hegemonic 'convivial cultures' within a supposedly

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[73] Clifford, James, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 270.

[74] Gilroy, Paul, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), p. xi.

'Western' country.[75] Having said that, Gilroy articulates 'the West' rather vaguely, and so it is ultimately unclear what exactly constitutes a 'Western' country, or even whether the category references a social formation whose existence extends at all beyond discourse. Indeed, despite their similarities, Gilroy's articulation of 'the West' seems far less problematic than Said's, albeit only because 'the West' remains marginal to Gilroy's close attention to British socio-politics. As a result, unlike Said, Gilroy never has to find a way of explaining how 'the West' can be gripped by a 'virtual unity of purpose', despite all its disparate social disunities. In fact, Gilroy hardly ever mentions 'the West' in *After Empire*, and other 'Western' polities – such as Europe and the U.S.A. – have a similarly slight, marginal presence, serving largely to situate the post-9/11 resurgence of British nationalism within a geopolitical context that has been marked indelibly by the global 'war on terror'. Because of this marginality, Gilroy can sustain a comparatively singular, undifferentiated, *totalist* articulation of 'the West' that appears to reaffirm both its political and ideological unity, *and* its congenital imperiality. Just like in Said's *Orientalism*, therefore – at least according to Lazarus – 'the West' in *After Empire* merely 'comes to stand in for imperialist power'.[76]

To an extent, this usage allows Gilroy to avoid approaching Britain's resurgent nationalism as evidence of the country's supposedly inherent, invariable imperiality, in favour of attributing it to wider geopolitical pressures, including a more general, worldwide rise in '[s]tate-sponsored patriotism and ethnic-absolutism' in response to 'new social and geopolitical circumstances in which the larger West and our own local part of it are again under siege'.[77] Nevertheless, since 'the West' only ever serves to reference its own 'reborn imperial power'[78] in *After Empire*, Gilroy risks reaffirming 'the West's' own, immutable imperiality, as if this anti-

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[75] For Gilroy, these 'convivial cultures' are counter-hegemonic insofar as '[t]here is no governmental interest in the forms of conviviality and intermixture that appear to have evolved spontaneously and organically from the interventions of anti-racists and the ordinary multiculture of the postcolonial metropolis' (*After Empire*, p. 136). Thus, in attempting to promote a narrow, impoverished national identity, Britain's New Labour governments have 'confirmed their detachment from the world the rest of us inhabit' (*After Empire*, p. 144).

[76] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 54.

[77] Gilroy, p. 27.

[78] Gilroy, p. 65.

essentialist approach does not extend to 'the West' in general, or even beyond Britain itself. In this respect, Gilroy's usage of the term corroborates Lazarus's claim that, 'since what is thus named is pre-eminently a civilizational value rather than a mode of production or a social formation, this alibi of "the West" serves to dematerialize what it tacitly references.'[79] However, this consequence in itself need not render problematic either Gilroy's own, rather specific articulation of 'the West', or his analysis of British socio-politics. For Gilroy does not present *After Empire* as an account of how our global conjuncture is politically and economically imperialist. The material impetus of global-scale imperialism is as marginal to Gilroy's priorities as 'the West' is. As such, we might argue that *After Empire* contributes little towards ascertaining either the utility or relevance of the category to comprehending this conjuncture in specifically political-economic terms. Indeed, insofar as he consistently 'refer[s]' imperial power 'to 'the West' rather than to capitalism', Gilroy may be critiqued for frustrating this analysis by effectively 'mystify[ing] this power, rendering its social ground opaque.'[80] Certainly, Gilroy prioritises engaging with imperialism 'as a *political* dispensation' rather than as ultimately a mode of production, which might explain why he is able to consistently refer imperial power to 'the West' rather than to some other entity or agency, and with minimal reference to the material basis of this power.

Nevertheless, I maintain that this omission of the economic in itself does not establish the category's irrelevance to comprehending imperialism specifically as a mode of production. For as with Said, Gilroy suggests that 'the West' is relevant to the task of understanding that process of 'manufacturing' an 'imperial consensus', a task that is no less important to understanding imperialism itself than that of apprehending its underlying modes of production. Thus, from the start, Gilroy reconciles the apparent unity of 'the West' with the social disunity of 'Western' countries like Great Britain in similar fashion to Said: by articulating 'the West' in terms of government efforts to mobilise public support for their pursuit of an imperialist agenda, as well as a way of minimising opportunities for subsequent public dissent. Indeed, in the process, Gilroy uses despotic language that is

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[79] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 54.

[80] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

reminiscent of Said's. For example, Gilroy comments upon how the post-9/11 geopolitical climate has provoked a

> militarization of social life [that] promotes an automatic solidarity in which soldier-citizens who carry or practice the defining culture of their national state become indistinguishable to the point of being interchangeable [...] The info-war is already underway. It erases any possibility that dissent might have a positive value and declares that seeking any distance from the national culture's center of gravity is a form of low-grade treachery. By addressing conflicts *between* groups of associated national states rather than *within* them, civilizationist common sense scorns the idea that public dissidence could ever be a measure of the buoyancy and health of a democracy.[81]

As with Said, so for Gilroy, whatever unity may obtain in 'Western society' is by no means entirely spontaneous, and is as much a product of the exertion of '[t]he power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging'. At no point, therefore, does Gilroy explicitly preclude the possibility that his complex portrait of British socio-politics equally applies to the socio-politics obtaining elsewhere in the 'geopolitical West'. Indeed, it is perhaps from an implicit belief in the existence of such wider complexities that Gilroy affirms his belief that the advent of Britain's 'convivial cultures' 'might one day teach the rest of Europe something about what will have to be done in order to live peacefully with difference'.[82] In short, Gilroy here suggests that his anti-essentialist approach to imperialist elements in contemporary British national consciousness is equally applicable across a much wider geopolitical scale.

Just how far this wider applicability extends, though, is ultimately unclear, not least because it is just as unclear how far beyond Britain, Europe, and the U.S.A. Gilroy's 'West' extends geographically. This ambiguity in itself is hardly extraordinary, considering how considerably the geographical boundaries of 'the West' have varied over time, and according to disparate criteria. However, it is especially unclear whether this applicability extends to 'the West' at all, given how the category does not appear to reference any form of social collective existing – to whatever extent – beyond discourse. Gilroy is unforthcoming about what, who, or even where his 'West' is, owing largely to its vagueness, given its marginality to his analysis of British socio-politics. In this respect, Gilroy's articulation of 'the West'

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[81] Gilroy, pp. 26-27 (emphases in original).

[82] Gilroy, p. 166.

corroborates Lazarus's assertion that the category largely references 'neither a polity nor a state (nor even a confederation of states)'. To an extent, Gilroy's 'West' does reference a 'civilisation', albeit as a transnational sense of community based on an ill-defined sense of cultural commonality. Indeed, Gilroy is quick to associate this communitarian spirit with the governmental authoritarianism that he observes among the constituent nations of the 'geopolitical West'. Thus, for Gilroy, 'Western civilisation' is at most a notion that helps sustain an 'imperial consensus', insofar as the threat of its impending dissolution is also – ironically – its founding axiom: 'it is telling that even when armed to the teeth, [the West's] fortified wholeness is imperilled, subject to anxiety about the prospect of its durability and tormented by the knowledge of its inevitable decline.'[83] Given his emphasis on this notion's expediency to population control, Gilroy does not appear to presuppose that 'Western civilisation' exists independently of discourse.

Nevertheless, insofar as he does not *explicitly* outline what he means by 'the West', Gilroy's usage of the term risks being construed as if he does in fact subscribe to this presupposition. Generally, Gilroy's 'West' jars with his efforts to avoid homogenising British socio-politics or cultural identity. For Gilroy, British national identity has become a site not only of cultural, but also of political and ideological contestation. As a result, there are effectively multiple 'Britains' in Gilroy's analysis, all of which vie for primacy even within that analysis itself, but none of which can co-exist with any other.[84] For Gilroy, though, it seems that there

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[83] Gilroy, p. 21.

[84] This particular antagonism, though, may be due to the manner in which Gilroy approaches British socio-politics according to a Jacobin logic that pits the state against the rest of society in general, and which homogenises both in the process. This logic becomes most apparent – and problematic – wherever Gilroy notes a complementarity between the xenophobic, nationalist attitudes of government and those among the general public. In these moments, the prescription of an ethnocentric, monological national identity no longer indicates merely an official erosion of democratic freedoms, but also a democratic expression of public will. Thus, this prescription simultaneously legitimises the erosion of democratic freedoms, and seeks to redress 'what has become a perennial crisis of national identity' among contemporary Britons, precipitated by 'successive political and economic crises […] the gradual breakup of the United Kingdom […] the arrival of substantial numbers of postcolonial citizen-migrants, and […] the shock and anxiety that followed from a loss of any sense that the national collective was bound by a coherent and distinctive culture' (*After Empire*, pp. 97-98). Thus, Gilroy seemingly vacillates between approaching this state-orchestrated nationalist resurgence as reflecting either the state's complete disconnection with public opinion, or precisely with its attentiveness to a desperate, widespread popular desire for 'even a partial restoration of the country's long-vanished homogeneity'

is only one 'West' – that which is nothing more than the sum of its 'reborn imperial power', in which case it is only logical that this 'West' should protect that power at whatever cost, including its hard-won democracy, since its very existence depends upon sustaining that power. In this respect, it appears that what makes a country 'Western' is their having made an imperial investment, whether cultural, political-economic, or both. Subsequently, if these nations were indeed to shed this investment, then it becomes unclear whether they should continue to be regarded as being 'Western' at all. Thus, ironically, this mass imperial disinvestment that *After Empire* looks forward to would spell the 'inevitable decline'[85] of 'the West', a nightmarish prospect that is almost as old as 'Western' identity itself,[86] and which continues to be used – according to Gilroy – to justify the pursuit of an imperialist agenda, along with an accompanying 'militarization of social life' and curtailment of democracy itself, among the constituent nations of the 'geopolitical West'.

In using 'the West' to contextualise Britain's resurgent nationalism, Gilroy might successfully avoid discussing today's resurgent British nationalism as if it were simply the expression of some immutable imperiality or xenophobia that marked all Britons. This approach, though, eventually returns Gilroy to a totalising logic, insofar as British nationalism becomes an instance of a wider cultural logic that is fundamentally, invariably imperialist. Thus, Gilroy's account of Britain's contested national identity amounts to what Laclau and Mouffe – again, following Gramsci – call an 'organic crisis', a scenario in which the inner multiplicity and

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(*After Empire*, p. 95). By homogenising the general public as distinguished from the state, Gilroy is unable to acknowledge a multiplicity of disparate, often conflicting ideologies among the public themselves. Gilroy might depend upon a fractured portrait of British society, in order to affirm the radical potential of the country's 'convivial cultures' to dismantle its continuing imperial investments. However, the extent of these fractures appears to exceed the terms of Gilroy's analysis.

[85] Gilroy, p. 21.

[86] Bonnett remarks that, '[f]rom its first, recognisably contemporary deployment in the West, [the idea of] the West has been claimed to be in decline. It has been gasping its last breath from *The Doom of Western Civilization* (Little, 1907) to *The Death of the West* (Buchanan, 2003)' (Bonnett, p. 6). Bonnett, however, also notes that '[o]ver roughly the same period and with equal conviction the West has been hailed as triumphant. From Benjamin Kidd's *Principles of Western Civilisation*, published 1902, to Victor Hanson's *Why the West has Won*, published 2001, the West has been seen as, not merely healthy, but unstoppable. So, for the past one hundred years, the West has been in decline and on the ascendant, it has been dying but also being born' (Bonnett, p. 6).

disunity inhering in all social formations, nevertheless becomes self-evident in ways that cannot be ignored.[87] In contrast, Gilroy's 'West' appears to suffer from no such disunity whatsoever, and indeed appears to function as the underlying totality of which British nationalism becomes an expression. This is the manner in which Gilroy is ultimately returned to a totalising logic. We might attribute the unity of Gilroy's 'West' to the possibility that it is not suffering from an 'organic crisis'. Moreover, Gilroy does not explicitly preclude the possibility that there are as many 'Wests' as there are 'Britains'. Thus, Gilroy's categorical association of 'the West' with imperialism would merely denote the hegemonic status of one specific form of 'Western' identity – one that enables or indeed depends upon the pursuit of an imperialist agenda – without precluding the possibility of alternative, non-imperialist identities. Gilroy should not exactly be *critiqued* for never making this possibility explicit in *After Empire*, considering that interrogating the 'sociological actuality' of 'Western' social unity is not his primary concern. Nevertheless, neither should Gilroy's articulation of 'the West' be considered to be reliable on account of being sufficiently historical. Indeed, its vagueness only reinforces my claim that it is necessary to distinguish between the multiple senses of the term, in order to specify just how it ought to be used when analysing the political economics of global imperialism.

1.3 Decolonising 'the West' in Robert Young's *White Mythologies*

Gilroy's 'West' reinforces the importance of remembering that the 'other West' – as articulated in counter-histories of European imperialism and 'Western' geopolitical ascendancy – is ultimately no less of a totality than is the 'Hegelian West', even though it may well be more of a 'sociological actuality'. Indeed, its marginality within his analysis only further emphasises the overall *ahistoricity* of Gilroy's 'West', compared with his relatively complex account of British socio-politics. In contrast, because it remains central throughout Said's analysis, the apparent totality that is 'Western society' inevitably begins to dissolve as soon as he directly addresses the tension between its supposedly self-evident unity, and what appears to be mounting evidence of socio-political unevenness and disunity within societies that are allegedly 'Western'. Whereas it is ultimately unclear whether Gilroy's

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[87] Laclau and Mouffe, pp. 136, 189.

'West' extends at all beyond discourse, there is no doubt that Said's does, even though it becomes increasingly unclear in what form. It is unsurprising, therefore, that in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (1990), the unity of Robert Young's 'West' seems just as untroubled as that of Gilroy's. For the scope of Young's analysis is almost exclusively epistemological, as he endeavours to demonstrate how G.W.F. Hegel 'articulates a philosophical structure of the appropriation of the other as a form of knowledge which uncannily simulates the project of nineteenth-century imperialism'.[88] Thus, compared with *After Empire*, the extent to which the singularity of the 'Hegelian West' reflects a comparably unitary social reality seems even less important to Young's concerns in *White Mythologies*. Nevertheless, in contending that Hegel's 'philosophical structure' resonates with, indeed 'mimics at a conceptual level the geographical and economic absorption of the non-European world by the West',[89] Young clearly presupposes the existence – in whatever form – of such a reality. Young's 'West', therefore, remains a homonym, whose disparate, albeit interrelated referents Young never explicitly distinguishes from one another. As a result, Young only ever uses the term in a totalist manner.

Again, this totalist articulation of 'the West' is not in itself problematic, albeit only as long as Young's concerns in *White Mythologies* remain strictly epistemological. Of the three critics discussed in this chapter, Young's 'West' is closest to Chakrabarty's 'Europe', in the sense of referencing 'imaginary figure[s]' rather than 'region[s] of the world', even if we cannot adequately grasp the former's history without reference to the latter's. Chakrabarty, though, is quick to clarify that 'I was aware that there were and still are many Europes, real, historical, and fantasized',[90] and subsequently that '*Provincializing Europe* is not a book about the *region* of the world we call "Europe".'[91] Instead, Chakrabarty engages with a 'hyperreal' Europe 'whose geographical referents remain somewhat

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[88] Young, p. 3.

[89] Young, p. 3.

[90] Chakrabarty, p. xiv.

[91] My emphasis.

indeterminate',[92] and which in fact amounted to 'a piece of fiction told to the colonized by the colonizer in the very process of fabricating colonial domination.'[93] Chakrabarty makes it clear that he is concerned with a 'Europe' that exists almost entirely within discourse, albeit as a discursive construct that has had palpable social and material consequences for colonised peoples worldwide. In contrast, Young provides no such clarification, despite the fact that, like Chakrabarty, his concern in *White Mythologies* is precisely with discrediting the notion of totality as – among other things – an unreliable way of accounting for social unity and coherence.

Indeed, Young's principal argument in *White Mythologies* is that the notion of totality amounts to an 'ontological imperialism',[94] a mode of knowledge that cannot comprehend or tolerate the notion of a radical incommensurability that would successfully resist its apprehension-through-comprehension. Towards this endeavour, Young chronicles the debate concerning the Hegelian foundations of orthodox Marxism's totalist, teleological social thinking, a debate which informed Laclau and Mouffe's own, comprehensive critique of 'totalities' as a reliable understanding of the 'mechanics' underlying social unity and change. According to Young, this debate was initiated after the ascendancy of Fascism and Stalinism, both of which appeared to invalidate the teleological claims of an orthodox Marxist 'science'. Young describes how prior to the rise of Fascism, orthodox Marxists contended that social change expressed the underlying totality of History – an irrefutable, irreversible and seemingly natural law, according to which human society as a whole progressed through particular stages of social organisation towards a common telos: socialism. According to Laclau and Mouffe, these claims were already subject to considerable debate following the so-called 'crisis of Marxism' in 1890s Germany, where after twenty years of economic depression and a correspondingly high level of working-class political unity, 'a wave of successful trade union economic struggles' rendered increasingly obsolete the unifying efforts of the trade unions' political leadership. As working-class unity fragmented, there occurred a gradual '*autonomization of spheres* […] which implied that any type of

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[92] Chakrabarty, p. 27.

[93] Chakrabarty, p. 34.

[94] Young, p. 13.

unity could only be attained through unstable and complex forms of [political] rearticulation.'[95] Working-class unity during the depression had seemingly corroborated the claims of orthodox Marxist 'science', that complex modern societies simplified over time into a confrontation between two homogeneous 'classes' – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.[96]

Orthodox Marxists such as Karl Kautsky, therefore, were unable to account for this gradual fragmentation of a working-class unity that they had so far taken for granted. Indeed, according to Laclau and Mouffe, Kautsky continued to insist upon the inevitable simplification of society and immanence of socialist revolution, to such an extent that he advocated simply preserving a unitary working-class identity

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[95] Laclau and Mouffe, p. 12.

[96] Althusser describes how the Russian revolution of October 1917 presented a further challenge to this teleological, orthodox Marxist 'science'. Previously, Marxist intellectuals had generally regarded Russia as 'the '*most backward*' country in Europe'', having not even experienced a 'bourgeois revolution' like those of England in 1649, and France in 1793 (Althusser, Louis, *For Marx* (London: Allen Lane, 1969), p. 95, 97 (emphasis in original)). Given their conviction that a proletarian revolution could not precede a 'bourgeois revolution', Marxists were at a loss to explain how this grand confrontation between bourgeoisie and proletariat had occurred in Russia; how the contradiction between 'Capital and Labour' could have become purest there, rather than in Wilhelmine Germany, where it had seemed most likely. For Althusser, it was precisely this apparent anachronism that could explain how it was that 'in the revolutionary situation facing the whole of humanity Russia was *the weakest link in the chain of imperialist states*' (Althusser, p. 97 (emphasis in original)). '[O]verdue with its bourgeois revolution on the eve of its proletarian revolution', Russian society had been riven by innumerable contradictions that coalesced into one 'gigantic contradiction which [the country's] divided ruling classes could neither avoid nor solve' (Althusser, pp. 97, 99). Althusser, though, claimed that this confrontation did not amount to the telic confrontation of 'Capital and Labour' anticipated by Marxist 'science'. For in Russia this confrontation derived from an infinitude of minor confrontations, including between the constituent elements of 'Capital' and 'Labour' themselves. Given how much of the country's economy was 'backward', the Russian revolution could not have occurred between these two super-agents, and so the situation giving rise to it could not have been 'determin[ed] in the last instance by the (economic) mode of production' (Althusser, p. 111). Moreover, Althusser finds that this situation was hardly an exception to a rule, and that contrary to Marxist orthodoxy, 'the economic dialectic is never active *in the pure state*', and that 'the idea of a 'pure and simple' non-overdetermined contradiction' is therefore 'meaningless, abstract, senseless' (Althusser, p. 113). Under no circumstances does social structure simplify into two opposing camps, reflecting the contradiction in economic relations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Instead, the apparent simplicity of a revolutionary situation belies its *overdetermined* nature, the fact that it has arisen from a multitude of smaller contradictions, and that it is therefore a product of much more than 'the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production, essentially embodied in the contradiction between two antagonistic classes' (Althusser, p. 99).

and waiting passively for the revolution to occur by itself.[97] As Young notes, though, no such conservatism could adequately respond to the challenge of Fascism's ascendancy to the authority of orthodox Marxist 'science', a development that 'seemed to have stopped in its tracks the long march of the progress of reason, and its liberating enlightenment ideals, of which Marxism was the fullest political development.'[98] In its long march to socialism, History appeared to have 'deviated' or 'gone wrong', and the working classes had forsaken their historical 'mission' to establish global socialism.[99] Yet it was ultimately Stalinism – an 'irrevocable split between theory and practice' – that appears to have stripped this conception of 'History' of all credibility, 'the conundrum being that if Marxism is true, as it claims that it is, how did the first Marxist state end up as Stalinist?'[100] According to Young, the subsequent task of 'explain[ing] Marxism's 'detour' from itself'[101] was initiated with Jean-Paul Sartre's first *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), after which a gradual critique of Marxist 'science' – in particular its Hegelian foundations – unfolded through the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, among others.[102] It is this critique that *White Mythologies* chronicles, from Sartre to Spivak.

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[97] Laclau and Mouffe, p. 16.

[98] Young, p. 7.

[99] Young, p. 7.

[100] Young, p. 26.

[101] Young, p. 26.

[102] In tracing this debate back to the 1890s 'crisis of Marxism', Laclau and Mouffe also include Rosa Luxemburg, Georges Sorel, Antonio Gramsci, Claude Lefort, Paul Hindess and Barry Hirst as major contributors to a subsequent, increasing awareness of society's thoroughgoing contingency. Elsewhere, Oliver Marchart has traced this debate to Martin Heidegger's critique of ontology in *Being and Time*; Marchart subsequently refers to this debate as 'Left Heideggerianism', as well as 'post-foundationalism', and identifies Hannah Arendt, Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Alain Badiou, Marcel Gauchet, Jacques Rancière, Julien Freund, Cornelius Castoriadis and Zygmunt Bauman, as well as Laclau and Mouffe, as all having contributed to this movement. Marchart also identifies Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt as a particular influence upon post-foundationalism, and Mouffe often draws upon Schmitt's infamous, adversarial definition of 'politics' in outlining her notion of 'antagonism'. I will explore the relevance of post-foundational political thought to both 'the West' and 'the postcolonial' in more detail in Chapter 2.

In particular, Young attends to how this task increasingly entailed arguing for the irreducible complexity and variety of human social organisation, whose forms would always escape both the analyst's comprehensive understanding and their attempts at rationalisation. This critique of Marxist 'historicism', therefore, also entailed asserting that the object of historical analysis – in this case, a given social formation – is equally a product of that analysis. For insofar as they must render it coherent and meaningful, this object is to some extent a product of the analyst's highly selective and purposeful choice of material from the overwhelming infinitude of historical data.[103] This inquiry into the analyst's relation to their object – Young argues – led to the deconstruction not just of the truth-claims of Marxist historicism, but also of their 'Hegelian' foundations, which they shared with 'European thought' in general. Subsequently, for Young, the critique of Marxist historicism entails an indictment of the entire 'European' philosophical tradition, in which,

> when knowledge or theory comprehends the other, then the alterity of the latter vanishes as it becomes part of the same [...] In all cases the other is neutralized as a means of encompassing it: ontology amounts to a philosophy of power, an egotism in which the relation with the other is accomplished through its assimilation into the self.[104]

For Young, it is no mere coincidence that this 'ontological imperialism' or 'imperialism of theory' developed in the context of Europe's colonial expansion during the nineteenth century. Thus, insofar as orthodox Marxism lays claim to an exhaustive knowledge of human social organisation, its subsequent, 'universalizing narrative of the unfolding of a rational system of world history is simply a negative

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[103] The irreducible infinitude of history was asserted by Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his critique of Sartre's attempts to reconceive history in a totalist sense, as 'a totalization of totalizations'. In this manner, Sartre sought to retain a totalist yet simultaneously heterogeneous understanding of history, according to which 'the dialectic of history is not a metaphysical law, 'some powerful unitary force revealing itself behind History like the will of God'', but rather a 'law of totalization which creates *several* collectivities, *several* societies, and *one* history – realities, that is, which impose themselves on individuals; but at the same time it must be woven out of millions of individual actions' (Young, p. 32). Lévi-Strauss – according to Young – responded by asking '[h]ow total […] can the totalization be? Can it include every historical fact? History names the process of constituting historical facts, and, particularly, of their selection. A history that included everything would amount to chaos' (Young, p. 45).

[104] Young, p. 13.

form of the history of European imperialism.'[105] The critique of totalities therefore prompted the pursuit of a 'new type of knowledge [...] that can analyse plural objects as such rather than offering forms of integrated understandings that simply comprehend them within totalizing schemas.'[106]

For Young, this latter endeavour has amounted to 'the decentralization and decolonization of European thought – insofar as it is 'incapable of respecting the Being and meaning of the other', and to the extent that its philosophical tradition makes 'common cause with oppression and with the totalitarianism of the same'.'[107] In turn, this deconstruction of 'the sovereign self of Europe'[108] has also led to the deconstruction 'of the concept, the authority, and assumed primacy of the category of, 'the West'.'[109] The categories of 'Europe' and 'the West' here are clearly used to refer to 'hyperreal' or 'imaginary figures', whose 'sociological actuality' has been contested by the interruption of imperialism's triumphal, self-flattering narratives by counter-histories that attest to a very different, unpalatable and largely repressed imperial legacy. As for Said, so for Young, as 'geographical and cultural entities – to say nothing of historical entities – such locales, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" [along with 'Europe' and 'the West', of course] are man-made.'[110] Thus, it is specifically 'the West' as 'colonial fiction' – that triumphal, flattering yet heavily sanitised self-image of European modernity as the telos of human social evolution – whose 'assumed primacy' and subsequent 'authority' deconstruction deconstructs, according to Young.

However, as itself a contribution towards these counter-histories, *White Mythologies* also exemplifies how these counter-histories give rise to that counter-articulation – the 'other West' – that recasts the 'assumed primacy' of the 'Hegelian West' as an effect of Europe's violent imperial legacies. Young's 'West', therefore, is already homonymous, functioning in a manner that both remains strictly within

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[105] Young, p. 2.

[106] Young, p. 11.

[107] Young, p. 18.

[108] Young, p. 17.

[109] Young, p. 19.

[110] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 4-5.

and exceeds the discursive. Thus, when Young remarks that Hegel's 'philosophical structure [...] mimics at a conceptual level the *geographical* and *economic* absorption of the non-European world by the West'[111], the category here refers to something more than a mere discursive figure. Nevertheless, what form this extra-discursive referent may take is just as unclear as it is in Gilroy's *After Empire*, for precisely the same reason. For Young does just as little to *explicitly* distinguish this 'other West' from the 'Hegelian West'. Of course, this lack of distinction might be intentional, insofar as it conveys the fact that we simply cannot address the 'Hegelian West' without reference to the imperial legacy that it helped enable, and vice versa. Nevertheless, it remains that ambiguities arise from this lack of distinction, especially considering the totalist nature of Young's articulation of 'the West'. So, for example, when Young hails deconstruction as the imminent 'dissolution of 'the West''[112], the fact that he does not explicitly delineate what he means by 'the West' makes it unclear whether this dissolution applies as much to the 'geopolitical West' as it does to the 'Hegelian West'.

I have argued above that Gilroy's potentially reductive, essentialist articulation of 'the West' is offset by his comparatively non-essentialist approach to the post-9/11 resurgence of British nationalism. This approach creates a tension regarding the supposedly inherent imperiality of 'the West' implicit in his articulation of the term, a tension that Gilroy does not appear to resolve or even directly address. For if 'the West' is *inherently* imperialist, then it becomes unclear to what extent Britain is a 'Western' country, considering how its complex socio-politics have given rise to a spontaneous, cosmopolitan multiculture that is radically at odds with the British establishment's imperialist aspirations. Gilroy might not be *entirely* unaware of this ambiguity, given his concession that *After Empire* is riven by a 'tension between cosmos and polis, global and local, worldly and parochial angles of vision.'[113] Thus, Gilroy's close engagement with socio-politics at a local level yields complexities that challenge – albeit implicitly – the apparent ideological

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[111] My emphases.

[112] Young, p. 20.

[113] Gilroy, p. xi.

unanimity of a wider social aggregation.[114] In contrast, no such challenge occurs in *White Mythologies*, precisely because no such juxtaposition occurs either, between the general consistency of Young's 'West' and evidence of underlying social complexities. Again, this juxtaposition is unlikely as long as Young's concerns remain strictly epistemological, and do not involve engaging with socio-politics. Nevertheless, given how Young posits Hegel's 'philosophical structure' as an intellectual by-product of European imperialism, terms like 'Europe' and 'the West' clearly exceed their epistemological senses. Indeed, in *White Mythologies*, these categories function precisely as Lazarus describes, as place names used 'metonymically to designate social and political agencies.'[115]

Furthermore, we might contend that Young's usage of these categories 'serves in addition to mystify' these agencies, in the manner describes by Lazarus with respect to how postcolonial critics use that of 'the West'. I have suggested above that Gilroy's articulation of 'the West' does not convey a sense that 'Western civilisation' exists independently of discourse. Even if his articulation of the term touches upon its civilisational sense, Gilroy consistently, explicitly associates this sense with the widespread imposition of a government-orchestrated cultural inflexibility, and degradation of civil liberties in 'Western' countries. Thus, for Gilroy, as with Said, 'Western civilisation' is at most a discourse that enables these repressive political agendas, rather than a mere social fact. In contrast, it remains unclear whether or not Young articulates 'the West' – or even 'Europe', for that fact – as a 'civilisation'. The singularity of Young's 'West' is unproblematic as long as his discussion maintains a strictly epistemological scope – as long as the category references an 'imaginary figure' rather than a 'region of the world'. In this case, we simply cannot approach any indication that 'Western civilisation' exists beyond discourse – such as in patterns of socio-political or socio-economic activity – as evidence that it exists *independently* of discourse. Thus, as with Said, the manner in

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[114] As with Said's 'contrapuntal' awareness, we can compare this tension between 'global and local' in *After Empire* with Chakrabarty's distinction between History 1 and History 2s, insofar as the latter 'always modify and interrupt the totalizing thrusts of History 1' (Chakrabarty, p. 254). Thus, we might argue that the 'local' in *After Empire* – namely, British socio-politics – functions to 'modify and interrupt the totalizing thrusts' of Gilroy's monolithic, undifferentiated articulation of 'the West', preventing us from simply assuming that Gilroy ultimately subscribes to a totalising logic.

[115] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

which Young relates this epistemological concern to a geopolitical context means that such terms as 'Europe' and 'the West' become homonymous, which Young never explicitly acknowledges. It is this lack of acknowledgement that is at the root of these categories' ambiguous, totalist articulations in *White Mythologies*, along with the corresponding lack of differentiation between the terms' disparate, albeit interrelated senses.

As with Gilroy, it may well be that Young is implicitly aware of how he articulates these terms as totalities, given that it goes against his own critique of totality as a reliable way of understanding social composition. Thus, considering its minimalism, Young's 'West' may be deliberately unrepresentative of any complex social reality obtaining in the 'geopolitical West'. Indeed, Young specifies that 'European thought' is being 'decentraliz[ed] and decoloniz[ed]' […] *insofar as* it is 'incapable of respecting the Being and meaning of the other', and *to the extent that* its philosophical tradition makes 'common cause with oppression and with the totalitarianism of the same'.'[116] Careful to avoid imputing that Europe's 'philosophical tradition' is thoroughly complicit in oppression and totalitarianism, Young specifies that the process of its 'decentralization and decolonization' addresses specifically those aspects of its paradigms that render it 'incapable of respecting the Being and meaning of the other'. Nevertheless, Young proceeds to use the term 'Europe' to refer to this potentially rather particular aspect of European culture, and so the specificity of his concerns remains somewhat unobvious. Hence the necessity of a diversified terminology, one that distinguishes between the various senses in which the scope of analyses like Young's use such terms as 'Europe' and 'the West'.

For without this diversified terminology, Young's articulation of 'the West' might well be construed as exemplifying what Lazarus – following Jürgen Habermas – claims is

> an "anarchist strain in contemporary thought which does not critique the pseudo-universalism of the conventionally received theory of modernity […] but instead performs a strange double disavowal. First, it asserts that the conventional theory is the only one to have been elaborated in the modern West – that all modern Western thought has in fact been modern*ist*, Eurocentric, and rational*ist*. Then it moves, on the basis of this false inference, to disavow modernity,

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116 My emphases.

Europe, rationality – and behind these, of course, universalism – themselves, as all inherently imperialistic and totalitarian.[117]

As we have already seen in my Introduction to this thesis,[118] Lazarus finds that this kind of conclusion, which 'draws no distinction between the ideas of, say, Marx and Carlyle, Kipling and Multatuli, Lévi-Bruhl and Lévi-Strauss' to be 'too blunt an instrument, too reductive and undiscriminating.'[119] Nonetheless, Lazarus observes this 'double disavowal' throughout postcolonial studies, with the first 'disavowal' manifesting as

> the desire to "provincialize Europe" – that is, to dismantle Eurocentrism by demonstrating that the enabling concepts upon which it has been founded are not (or at least are not all, or are not always) "obvious" or "transparent" or "universal" or positively "true", as is invariably supposed within the Eurocentric imaginary, but are instead situated, contingent, the products of specific projects, and contexts.[120]

What Lazarus describes here approximates the effort to recast the 'Hegelian West' as the 'other West', the product of those postcolonial counter-histories that have challenged the validity of the triumphal official narratives of European imperialism, U.S. exceptionalism and 'Western' geopolitical ascendancy. However, the second disavowal – according to Lazarus – manifests in a more radical gesture, which

> consists in the argument that, within the problematic of "modernity," there is no space or act or utterance which is not Eurocentric. The argument is that it is necessary to break with all the traditions of modern thought in order to break with their Eurocentrism, for modern thought is constitutively Eurocentric.[121]

It is unclear to what extent Young subscribes to this second, seemingly fundamentalist gesture in *White Mythologies*. On one hand, to contend that European thought is constitutively, hence thoroughly, irreversibly imperialist is to foreclose the very possibility of its 'decolonisation', a possibility that for Young deconstruction embodies. On the other hand, though, Young suggests that 'the West' is practically unthinkable in anything other than a position of 'primacy', insofar as

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[117] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 58.

[118] See pages 6-7 above.

[119] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 16.

[120] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 59.

[121] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 59.

today's deconstruction of the category's 'authority' and 'assumed primacy' entails its imminent 'dissolution' altogether. As with Gilroy, so for Young, if 'the West' were 'decoloniz[ed]', then it would no longer be 'Western', since what makes it 'Western' in the first place is its imperiality.

It seems unlikely that Young would subscribe to this second gesture, given his scepticism towards the analytical utility of the category of totality in *White Mythologies*. For if he did, then the book's critique of Said's *Orientalism* becomes rather ironic, insofar as Young observes that Said's own totalist account of Orientalist thought forecloses his own ability to resist its misconstructions of Middle Eastern peoples. Thus, Young observes that in *Orientalism*,

> Said wants to hang on to the individual as agent and instigator while retaining a certain notion of system and of historical determination. He must do the latter in order to argue for the existence of such a thing as 'Orientalism' at all, but on the other hand he must retain a notion of individual agency in order to retain the possibility of his own ability to criticize and change it.[122]

For Young, Said is never able to fully resolve this tension, or adequately explain how, 'if Orientalism as a discursive structure is so determining on this long history of writers about the East, how […] he [can] escape himself'.[123] If we consider Young as subscribing to Lazarus's second gesture, then a similar ambiguity arises concerning how Young himself is able to critique an otherwise thoroughly imperialist intellectual tradition *from within that tradition itself*. We must assume, therefore, that in order to avoid this foreclosure, Young does not subscribe to this second gesture, an assumption that re-opens the possibility that his articulation of 'the West' is *intentionally minimalist*; that it does not purport to encapsulate *all* senses of the term; and subsequently that it does not totalise 'Western society'.

Young's 'West', therefore, appears to be strictly epistemological, and only becomes problematic if we consider it to reference something that extends beyond discourse. In short, Young's 'West' comes to stand in for *epistemic imperiality*, a will to power that underlies the 'will to comprehend' that drives all 'European thought'. Clearly, referring to this will to power as 'the West' denotes an attempt to historicise it, to trace its advent to a specific cultural and political context. It

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[122] Young, p. 134.

[123] Young, p. 138.

remains, though, that this approach effectively renders 'the West' into an expressive totality, whose all-determining essence is a congenital, irrepressible will to power. Of course, Young's 'West' hardly deserves this critique if all it amounts to is an epistemological marker, a figure that is only ever meant to be as 'hyperreal' as Chakrabarty's 'Europe'. Indeed, we might argue that Lazarus's second 'gesture' posits an equally 'hyperreal' account of 'modernity', 'Europe', and 'the West', albeit a 'hyperreality' that largely goes unacknowledged. For if postcolonial critics like Young claim that 'the West' is thoroughly, invariably imperialist, then it becomes unclear how they themselves can avoid succumbing to the 'ontological imperialism' that underpins the entire 'Western' intellectual tradition.

Hence Saeed Ur-Rehman's critique of postcolonial studies, which in many respects resembles Young's critique of the 'Hegelian' foundations of 'Western' knowledge. According to Ur-Rehman,

> One may argue that post-colonial theory re-appropriates the theoretical terminology of the West but, still, it is impossible to deny that it also constructs a prescriptive model for post-colonial literary and cultural productions as well as for their exegesis [...] In this way, post-colonial theory creates its own exclusions that exist in ex-colonized societies.[124]

In particular, Ur-Rehman laments the manner in which the discipline often assumes 'that the major concern of the literatures from erstwhile colonized societies is the resistance to the absent colonizer', an assumption that 'also produces its own others.'[125] Such excluded, marginalised or othered subjectivities include those that reflect the fact – according to Ur-Rehman – that 'the West is not the only source of repression and [that] there are other pre-colonial and post-colonial social realities that may have nothing to do with Western hegemony.'[126] As long as they continue to claim that 'the West [is] always oppressing and the East [is] always oppressed by the West, always struggling against the hegemony of the West and free from indigenous oppressive technologies',[127] postcolonial critics will ironically reinscribe 'the West'

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[124] Ur-Rehman, Saeed, 'Decolonizing Post-colonial Theory', in *Kunapipi*, 10.2 (1998), p. 31.

[125] Ur-Rehman, p. 32.

[126] Ur-Rehman, p. 32.

[127] Ur-Rehman, p. 32.

as the subject of history. As such, a ''true' post-colonial perspective on literature' will never be 'achieved because the Western episteme remains the dominant episteme.'[128] Subsequently, Ur-Rehman concludes that '[p]ost-colonial theory, because of its fixation with the centre and the periphery, does not have the flexibility to speak for all the cultural realities that exist in ex-colonized societies. When post-colonial theory does not always lead to the colonial/post-colonial centre, the post-colonial project will be decolonized.'[129]

Whether postcolonial criticism remains fixated with 'the centre and the periphery' is debatable. Indeed, we could argue that the discipline's diversity today is a product of efforts to avoid reducing the complexity of postcolonial cultures and societies to this rigid model. Many of the various, recent calls for 'reconstructing', 'reconceptualising', or 'rerouting' the category of 'the postcolonial' are driven by a desire to 'move beyond narrow definitions of postcolonial studies and, frankly, beyond the usual suspects',[130] to resist a 'tendency towards sedimentation of concerns',[131] or even to redress a perceived 'lack [of] accountability to the realities of the contemporary world-system'.[132] Either way, Ur-Rehman's assertion of the need to 'decolonize' postcolonial theory is reminiscent of Young's account of deconstruction as 'the decolonization of European thought', as well as Lazarus's observation that postcolonial critics in general share a 'genuinely progressive desire to contribute to the decolonisation of knowledge'.[133] In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I will explore in detail how postcolonial critics have responded to critiques such as Ur-Rehman's – how they have pursued that 'new type of knowledge' that Said calls

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[128] Ur-Rehman, p. 33.

[129] Ur-Rehman, pp. 38-39.

[130] Loomba, Ania, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton and Jed Esty, 'Beyond What? An Introduction', in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, ed. by Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton and Jed Esty (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 1-2.

[131] Wilson, Janet, Cristina Şandru and Sarah Lawson Welsh, 'General Introduction', in *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium*, ed. by ed. by Janet Wilson, Cristina Şandru and Sarah Lawson Welsh (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 11.

[132] Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 1.

[133] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 7.

for, through which one might 'analyse plural objects as such rather than […] simply comprehend[ing] them within totalizing schemas.' However, in the course of pursuing this 'decolonization of European thought' or the 'Western' intellectual tradition, studies such as *White Mythologies* give rise to an articulation of 'the West' that is arguably even further removed from the social complexities that might obtain within the 'geopolitical West', than is the 'other West'.

For insofar as it stands in for epistemic imperiality, 'the West' serves as a paradigmatic antithesis to 'the postcolonial', if we understand the latter as a disciplinary aegis uniting a variety of critical initiatives that collectively pursue the 'decolonization of knowledge', albeit in a multitude of different ways. Lazarus shares this understanding of the term 'the postcolonial', given his remark that '[t]he project of 'unthinking Eurocentrism' is […] arguably the only project that all scholars active in the field would agree that they hold as a common aspiration.'[134] Hence the discipline's current heterogeneity, with respect to both its objects of study and its chosen interpretive frameworks. Bhabha has contended that '[t]he postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation';[135] we may only add that this endeavour has led to a correspondingly heterogeneous methodological profile. Indeed, Bhabha's claim to defining '*[t]he postcolonial perspective*' is in itself contentious, since the discipline's heterogeneity arguably cannot be reduced to a single perspective, or rather one that is not contingent at best. However, if critics like Young are able to reduce 'the West' to a singular, imperialist intention, then the category clearly serves as an antithetical paradigm – the 'Other West', as it were – to that of 'the postcolonial', a 'constitutive outside'[136] by which to define the latter term as a 'new type of knowledge', the product and the vehicle of the 'decolonization of European thought'. However, in this capacity, it remains important to acknowledge the disparities between this 'Other West' and 'Western society' or the 'geopolitical West'. For reducing the latter two to a singular intention goes against the emphasis in postcolonial studies – at least according to Bhabha – on avoiding 'holistic forms of social explanation'.

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[134] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 7.

[135] Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 248.

[136] Mouffe, p. 2.

Thus, as anything other than an 'imaginary figure', a totalised 'West' is anomalous within the pluralist logic of 'the postcolonial'. Indeed, in my next chapter, I will look towards Spivak's own efforts to 'analyse plural objects as such' for a way of challenging a totalised, singular, monolithic account of 'Western' society, culture, and – most importantly – consciousness, experience, and intention.

Conclusion

As we draw attention to how today's geopolitical hierarchy emerged from a history of violence, suffering, and injustice, we should avoid assuming that the 'virtual unity of purpose' among those who have benefitted along the way has only ever occurred spontaneously. In this chapter, I have demonstrated how a totalising logic persists in singular, unitary articulations of 'the West' by three critics who otherwise eschew this logic, in the face of historical or sociological evidence of disunities within 'the West' itself. I have traced how this totalist articulation of 'the West' is least problematic wherever the term references something as 'imaginary' as Chakrabarty's 'hyperreal Europe' – something whose existence is largely restricted to discourse. However, as I have demonstrated in the cases of Said and Gilroy, the category's singularity becomes problematic as soon as it references something that exists beyond discourse, especially if that 'something' is a social aggregation or 'polity'. For wherever a totalist articulation of 'the West' encompasses a polity, that polity is articulated as a self-contained, homogeneous collective. As Young establishes, the critique of totality as a reliable paradigm for understanding the semblance of unity, stability, and coherent of a given social aggregation, has cast considerable doubt on whether such a self-contained, homogeneous social bloc could ever occur spontaneously, or rather *uncoercively*.

In my next chapter, I will consider how we might invoke this critique of totality in order to further question the 'sociological actuality' of a singular, homogeneous articulation of 'Western society', as well as the spontaneity of Said's 'imperial consensus'. In this chapter, I have demonstrated how we might attribute this homogenisation to a slippage between 'the West' as a social bloc and 'the West' as the intention that gives rise to European imperialism, U.S. exceptionalism, and neoliberal globalisation. I have suggested that we can begin to redress this slippage by more explicitly outlining what we mean when we use the term 'the West', such as by distinguishing between the various senses of the term by using subcategories,

as I have done throughout this chapter. As I will demonstrate in my next chapter, we cannot attribute Lazarus's' 'disposition to homogenisation' solely to this lack of a diversified terminology, and so we cannot entirely redress it simply by distinguishing more explicitly between the multiple senses of terms like 'the West'. As such, a diversified terminology is only a starting-point towards a more nuanced understanding of the conditions, institutions, and strategies that give rise to the 'virtual unity of purpose' that Said claims underpins 'Western' imperial power, past and present.

Chapter 2
'Power', 'resistance', and 'opposition'

A self-contained, coherent, internally-undifferentiated social bloc – that is, a *totality* – cannot occur spontaneously, or rather uncoercively. In my previous chapter, I argued against using the term 'the West' as if its meaning were self-evident, without delineating what one means whenever one uses it. I demonstrated how such usages encourage the assumption that whatever unity obtains in 'Western society' is both absolute and spontaneous, as if 'the West' were indeed a totality. In this chapter, I explore how we might redress this assumption, by pursuing a way of reconceiving Edward W. Said's notion that 'Western society' is gripped by a 'virtual unity of purpose'[1] in support of 'Western' imperialism, without suggesting that that unity of purpose is spontaneous. For redressing this assumption cannot simply entail registering the 'many and manifest differences'[2] between and within the constituent societies of the 'geopolitical West', or between individual 'Westerners'. For Said himself acknowledged how 'one must always be at great pains to show that different imaginations, sensibilities, ideas, and philosophies'[3] obtain across these societies. And yet as we have seen, Said has been accused of 'cavalierly disregard[ing]' these differences, evincing in the process a 'disposition to homogenisation'[4] that – in my opinion – obscures how it is possible for this 'virtual unity of purpose' to overcome these differences. Thus, simply ignoring these disunities risks recapitulating to a totalist or essentialist logic, 'mystify[ing]' both the 'social ground'[5] of imperial power and the ways in which Said's 'imperial consensus' contributes towards sustaining that power. Conversely, though, simply emphasising these 'many and

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[1] Said, Edward W., *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 62.

[2] Lazarus, Neil, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', in *Race & Class*, 53.1 (2011), p. 15.

[3] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 62.

[4] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 15.

[5] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', in *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 44.

manifest differences' risks overlooking all that ways in which this 'virtual unity of purpose' does obtain across 'Western society', even if it obtains at the level of 'structuring assumptions' informing how 'Westerners' perceive the world and themselves.

This notion of 'structuring assumptions' resonates with Raymond Williams's definition of 'hegemony', as something that entails reinscribing 'the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system' as 'the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense.'[6] Central to this definition is a correlation between 'official consciousness' and 'practical consciousness', in which the unruly, infinitely complex content of one's individual experiences of the world seem to corroborate the systematic, regulated terms of ideology. As I noted, though, Williams's distinction between 'official' and 'practical consciousness' suggests that the two never fully co-align, that the latter always exceeds the former on account of its irreducibly, infinitely complex form and content. In this chapter, I explore how this disjuncture between 'official' and 'practical consciousness' provides a way of understanding Said's 'virtual unity of purpose' as being anything but spontaneous – as instead a product of the *coercive* disciplining in the consciousness, experience, intention, and practice of those who participate in that 'imperial consensus'. Indeed, I demonstrate how two of Said's principal influences – Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci – both theorised collective modes of belonging and agency according to a similar disjuncture between the consciousness and intentions of an individual, and the terms of whatever collective they belong to, whether a society, a community, an identity, or a political movement.

For both Foucault and Gramsci, no human collective occurs spontaneously, at least as a group of individuals whose consciousness, experience, and intentions are completely interchangeable, both with each others' and with those of the group. This equivalence can only be the product of disciplining and coercion, even in cases where an individual eagerly, voluntarily, or 'positively'[7] subscribes to a collective.

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[6] Williams, Raymond, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 110.

[7] Williams, p. 118.

For if one's individual consciousness, experience, and intentions always exceed the terms of any collective, then subscribing to one always entails what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls 'self-metonymisation'. In other words, to be recognised as belonging to a collective, one must take

> the part [of oneself] that seems to agree [with the terms of the collectivity] [...] to stand for the whole. I put aside the surplus of my subjectivity and metonymise myself, count myself as the part by which I am connected to the particular predicament so that I can claim collectivity, and engage in action validated by that very collective.[8]

Collective identities never exhaustively articulate one's consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices, and so there is always an 'unassimilable excess'[9] that one must disavow if one wishes to continue being recognised as belonging to a particular collective. In this chapter, I highlight a similar implication in Foucault's claim regarding the ubiquity of both power and resistance, and Gramsci's description of how a 'collective will' becomes 'universal and total'[10] through the 'policing function'[11] of the political party.

Spivak's notion of 'self-metonymisation' suggests that all forms of collective identification – including *self*-identification – are at some level *mis*identification, since something always exceeds one's efforts to identify oneself as a member of a collective. As such, Spivak's notion of occupying 'a position of identity'[12] might well apply more generally than Spivak acknowledges, given how she associates this notion almost exclusively with that of the 'subaltern'. As I will demonstrate below, Spivak's infamous declaration that '[t]he subaltern cannot speak'[13] is especially

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[8] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', in *Postcolonial Studies*, 8, 4 (2005), p. 480.

[9] Young, Robert J.C., *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 136.

[10] Gramsci, 'Brief Notes on Machiavelli's Politics', in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973), p. 129.

[11] Gramsci, 'The Political Party', in Hoare and Nowell Smith eds., p. 155.

[12] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', in *Postcolonial Studies*, 8, 4 (2005), p. 476.

[13] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 308.

vulnerable to misconception. Yet accusations against Spivak of being 'unnecessarily deterministic and politically pessimistic'[14] are understandable when considering how she addresses the problematic of political inarticulacy[15] via only its most extreme instances. For Spivak's preferred example of this inarticulacy is the uneducated Third World woman – usually lower-caste Indian – who is either a peasant or a 'subproletarian' employed by transnational capital, and whose lack of education confines her to 'traditional' social structures, including patriarchal ones. According to Spivak, this demographic is 'doubly in shadow' since, '[o]n the other side of the international division of labor, the subject of exploitation [the Third World peasant or 'subproletarian'] cannot know and speak the text of female exploitation'.[16] Existing accounts of what constitutes 'the subject of exploitation' cannot apprehend this figure as anything more or other than a worker, such as a *female* worker. Subsequently, these discourses overlook an entire dimension of her exploitation, as a *woman*, and so this exploitation goes unaddressed and – by extension – unredressed.

Despite exploring subalternity via reference to this particular demographic, Spivak herself has claimed that '[t]he subaltern has no 'examples'',[17] in the sense that the subaltern 'is not the empirical peasant or tribal in any straightforward sense that a populist program of history writing may want to imagine.'[18] 'Subaltern' is not the name of a demographic, but rather of a problematic, one that has mostly plagued attempts to apprehend, articulate, or 'represent' 'popular' forms of consciousness, but which is not entirely restricted to particular sections of society, as I will

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[14] Moore-Gilbert, Bart, 'Spivak and Bhabha' in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray (Oxford, Malden MA: Blackwell, 2000), p. 464.

[15] By 'political inarticulacy' I do not mean an inability to understand politics, but rather an inability to articulate oneself – or rather aspects of one's experience – using existing political conventions, owing to the inadequacy of these conventions to do so. This inadequacy renders one 'inarticulate' in the sense that one cannot articulate oneself in ways that others recognise as the appropriate 'voice' of a legitimate political subject, with legitimate political demands.

[16] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p. 288.

[17] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 484.

[18] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 94; the 'populist program of history writing' that Chakrabarty has in mind here is, of course, the *Subaltern Studies* collective founded by Ranajit Guha, with which Chakrabarty and Spivak were both affiliated.

demonstrate towards the end of this chapter. Thus, as Dipesh Chakrabarty notes, this problematic does not apply 'exclusively to socially subordinate or subaltern groups, nor to minority identities alone. Elite and dominant groups can also have subaltern pasts to the extent that they participate in life-worlds subordinated by the "major" narratives of the dominant institutions.'[19] To be sure, the socio-economic and political consequences of this problematic vary profoundly between disparate demographics. I do not wish to detract, therefore, from the incomparable extent to which Spivak's Third World female peasant or 'subproletarian' is 'removed from all lines of social mobility'.[20] Nevertheless, I find that Spivak's subaltern embodies a disjuncture – between individual consciousness, collective or 'official' narratives, and the analyst's interpretive framework – that, by other accounts, inevitably obtains throughout any given social or political unit, whether a society, a polity, a nation, a class, an ethnicity, a race, a gender, a political ideology, or an analytical framework.

As such, in this chapter I consider whether Spivak's approach to the task of 'making' the subaltern 'speak' – not substantively, but rather as something that exceeds existing interpretive frameworks, and so demonstrates their limits – affirms this more general 'inarticulacy'. Again, though, I do not wish to claim that somehow we are all 'subalterns' in the strict sense of a profoundly disenfranchised, impoverished, and exploited demographic. Instead, I demonstrate how the problematic of accessing or representing subaltern conscsciousness is by no means restricted to the most disempowered sectors of society, as if we had full, unrestricted access to the consciousness of relatively empowered demographics. Chakrabarty might agree, given that his distinction between 'History 1' and 'History 2' suggests that all categories and interpretive frameworks are incapable of apprehending the entire range of social form, content, and experience, including individual, collective, 'popular', and 'elite' forms of consciousness. Chakrabarty defines 'History 1' as referring to the universal claims of concepts and traditions derived from Enlightenment capitalist modernity, according to which social forms that appear to be unique to a specific locale nonetheless remain 'some kind of an effect of capital', on the basis that all social form derives from 'a deeper and more determining level,

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[19] Chakrabarty, p. 101.

[20] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', pp. 475-76.

the level at which the capitalist mode of production creates abstract space.'[21] Noting how this narrative subscribes to the historicist, '"first in Europe and then elsewhere" structure of time',[22] Chakrabarty proposes an alternative, non-Eurocentric way of conceiving these unique, localised forms, as evidence of 'the undertow of singular and unique histories, my history 2s, as always arresting the thrust of such universal histories and producing the concrete as a combination of the universal logic of History 1 and the heterotemporal horizons of innumerable History 2s.'[23]

Chakrabarty's 'History 2', therefore, entails the whole range of social forms, discourses, practices, traditions, values, relations, experiences, and consciousnesses that cannot be incorporated into the singular, all-encompassing, universal narrative of capitalist or secular modernity, and which therefore 'constantly [interrupt] the totalizing thrust of History 1',[24] or rather its endeavour to incorporate absolutely everything. Thus, according to Chakrabarty, we may grasp whatever distinctiveness obtains in any given locale as a compromise between 'the totalizing thrust of History 1' and the arresting effect upon that thrust of innumerable 'History 2s' that cannot be translated into the terms of – and thus incorporated into – 'History 1'. In my previous chapter, I argued that totalist articulations of 'the West' in postcolonial studies are best understood as referring to something similar to Chakrabarty's 'hyperreal Europe'. As such, I argue in this chapter that this perpetual interplay between 'History 1' and 'History 2' provides a way of redressing the conflation – described in my previous chapter – between a totalist, hence *unitary* articulation of 'the West' and the constituent societies of the 'geopolitical West'. For if Chakrabarty's 'hyperreal Europe' embodies his 'History 1', then to conflate this 'imaginary figure' with 'the region of the world we call "Europe"' is to suggest that the latter is somehow a site in which 'the universal logic of History 1' is *not* interrupted by 'the heterotemporal horizons of innumerable History 2s.' Indeed, this

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[21] Chakrabarty, p. xvi.

[22] Chakrabarty, p. 7.

[23] Chakrabarty, p. xvi.

[24] Chakrabarty, p. 66.

conflation suggests that no such 'History 2s' exist within this region, an assumption that would capitulate to Lazarus's 'disposition to homogenisation'.[25]

Thus, if we are to redress this conflation, then we must acknowledge the possibility that innumerable 'History 2s' intersect the constituent societies of the 'geopolitical West' as much as anywhere else, even if this 'heterotemporality' is obscured by a more immediate semblance of unity and, moreover, equivalence with Chakrabarty's 'History 1'. I am certainly not the first to call for a greater awareness of the many ways in which this geopolitical space is fractured, contested, and overdetermined. As I have noted above, both Said and Lazarus insist upon the importance of acknowledging 'different imaginations, sensibilities, ideas, and philosophies',[26] the 'many and manifest differences'[27] that otherwise fracture 'Western society'. I wish to extend these arguments further, though, by suggesting that it is equally important to acknowledge that 'Western society' is fractured by more than just *manifest* differences. For attending only to manifest differences – that is, differences that are readily observable using existing interpretive frameworks – encourages the assumption that wherever such recognisable fractures are absent, social unity is entirely spontaneous.

For example, Benita Parry has warned against apprehending Said's 'virtual unity of purpose' without reference to the substantial class divisions that otherwise fractured Victorian society, socio-economically, politically, culturally, and ideologically. According to Parry, these divisions were historically overcome by way of the very same colonial discourse whose 'histrionic and hyperbolic rhetoric' has been roundly deconstructed by critics like Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha, but

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[25] Frederick Cooper argues similarly, that Chakrabarty's articulation of secular modernity as 'decidedly singular and decidedly European' has the 'pleasant irony' of rendering Europeans as 'the people without history, a tag formerly reserved for the victims of their colonial endeavors. European history, from Denis Diderot to Jacques Derrida, is flattened into a single post-Enlightenment era. A reference to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel stands in for a European history reduced to the claim of progress' (Cooper, Frederick, 'Postcolonial Studies and the Study of History', in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, ed. by Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton and Jed Esty (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 407). Given Chakrabarty's claim that he is uninterested in 'the region of the world we call 'Europe'', I wonder whether Cooper overstates the irony of Chakrabarty's argument here.

[26] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 62.

[27] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 15.

which was equally 'addressed to both the native and the metropolitan subject'.[28] In this capacity, this discourse 'offer[ed] to the English an imaginary mapping of their situation', one that 'invoked working-class women as proud mothers of empire and working-class men as natural rulers of lower races'.[29] Given her particular attention to how colonial discourse addressed the British working classes, Parry emphasises how this address anticipated 'metropolitan' dissent along pre-existing class antagonisms, thus 'inducing social conformity and class defence at home, and racial arrogance and bellicosity abroad.'[30] Parry here attends to how British colonial discourse interpolated a demographic that was already visibly predisposed towards opposing the British establishment on account of other grievances, in this case class exploitation. The implication, though, is that British imperialism was under no pressure to actively solicit the consent of other, less aggrieved demographics, as if we can deduce these demographics' political and ideological self-alignments – their *intentions* – solely from their socio-economic status or position, within both localised and global economic structures.

Without refuting them entirely, in this chapter I demonstrate how such deductions foreclose the possibility of heterogeneous consciousnesses obtaining in places that we might not have anticipated within received interpretive frameworks. It is towards the 'recuperation' of such *unrecognisable* forms of consciousness that Spivak elaborates her notion of 'learn[ing] to learn from below, *from* the subaltern, rather than only study[ing] him(her)'.[31] In this chapter, I argue that this practice encompasses a more general 'lesson' or implication, concerning not just our inability to completely apprehend the *subaltern's* consciousness, but also that of individual consciousness *as such*, regardless of wherever that consciousness derives within a given configuration of social power. For if all '[h]istories of capital […] cannot escape the politics of the diverse ways of being human [which Chakrabarty

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[28] Parry, Benita, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 34.

[29] Parry, p. 34.

[30] Parry, p. 34.

[31] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 482 (emphasis in original).

collectively refers to as his 'History 2']',[32] then consciousness always exceeds what we observe or anticipate within the pre-existing interpretive frameworks that come under the rubric of 'History 1', including 'analytical history'.[33] This sense of the irreducibility of consciousness resonates with Foucault's controversial claim that resistance to power is as ubiquitous as power itself,[34] that in fact 'it is the *absence* of resistance which is impossible.'[35] If postcolonial critics – like Said – register no resistance to imperialism within the 'geopolitical West' itself, then it is because they proceed according to a very different understanding of what resistance entails, to that which informs Foucault's claim here.

In this chapter, I demonstrate how Foucault's understanding of resistance resonates with Chakrabarty's account of how subaltern consciousness has the effect of 'stubborn knots that stand out and break up the otherwise evenly woven surface of the fabric',[36] the 'fabric' being the otherwise coherent, exhaustive and thoroughly systematic social analysis that falls under Chakrabarty's 'History 1'. In both cases, resistance is the disruptive effect of 'the odd term in relations of power',[37] 'odd' in the sense that it does not, or rather *cannot* be made to accommodate those relations, at least without disrupting and rearranging them. Crucially, resistance here does not immediately denote *opposition*, but rather *dissonance*; not a *refusal* of incorporation but rather an *inability* to be incorporated within those relations of power. Resistance here is mere *incommensurability*, and subsequently need not denote an act of outright opposition to prevailing relations of power. In decoupling resistance from opposition, though, I do not wish to downplay the necessity of opposing imperialism to the task of overcoming it. Instead, I wish to establish the preconditions that make opposition more likely. I will demonstrate in Chapter 3 of this thesis how, if we are to encourage opposition among the principal beneficiaries of imperialism, then we

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[32] Chakrabarty, pp. 70-71.

[33] Chakrabarty, p. 71.

[34] Foucault, Michel, *History of Sexuality, Volume I: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. by Robert Hurley (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1998), pp. 92-96.

[35] Young, p. 87 (emphasis in original).

[36] Chakrabarty, p. 106.

[37] Foucault, p. 96.

must allow for the possibility that these preconditions obtain in places where we might not have anticipated them in existing interpretive frameworks, including among those beneficiaries. In this chapter, I explore how we can identify unanticipated sites of resistance, albeit resistance not necessarily as opposition, but rather as dissonance.

To begin with, I demonstrate how we might attribute Said's totalising articulation of 'metropolitan' socio-politics to a conflation between resistance and opposition. Ironically, despite distancing himself from Foucault after *Orientalism*, Said's account of 'Western' socio-politics became increasingly 'Foucauldian', at least as Said interpreted Foucault's contention that '[p]ower is everywhere'.[38] In his efforts to redress his neglect in *Orientalism* of 'counter-hegemonic voices',[39] in *Culture and Imperialism* Said only addressed instances of resistance that occurred among Europe's *colonial* subjects. The apparent absence of 'counter-hegemonic voices' in the 'metropolis' itself suggests an absence of resistance that corresponds to how Said interprets Foucault's above contention, an interpretation that otherwise prompted Said to distance himself from Foucault. I suggest that Said continued to register no evidence of 'counter-hegemonic voices' in the 'metropolis', because he continued to equate resistance with opposition. This understanding of resistance becomes even more apparent when considering how Said resolved the tension in *Orientalism* between 'recogniz[ing] individuality'[40] – that is, 'the determining imprint of individual writers'[41] – and apprehending Orientalist discourse as a 'vast *anonymous* collectivity',[42] on account of its impressive 'internal consistency'.[43] Said's way of resolving this tension was to articulate it in despotic terms that

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[38] Foucault, p. 93.

[39] Porter, Dennis, '*Orientalism* and its Problems', in *The Politics of Theory*, ed. by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iverson and Diana Loxley (Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1983), p. 181.

[40] Said, Edward W., *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 9.

[41] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 23.

[42] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 155.

[43] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5.

resemble those in which he would later apprehend the 'national domestic consensus' in support of U.S. military belligerence in *Culture and Imperialism*.[44]

I do not find this to be an adequate resolution, though, insofar as it suggests that the tension between 'individuality' and the systematic strictures of Orientalist discourse obtained only wherever a writer consciously, explicitly sought to distinguish themselves against the 'vast anonymous collectivity' of that discourse. In fact, Said's despotic articulation of this tension subscribes to his conviction – according to Young – that Orientalism's 'internal consistency' can only be disrupted or brought into crisis by 'the intervention of the outsider critic, a romantic alienated being battling like Byron's Manfred against the totality of the universe.'[45] In this respect, Said's resolution of this tension corresponds to his theological' insistence on 'hang[ing] on to the individual as agent and instigator while retaining a certain notion of system and of historical determination.'[46] Young may have a point when arguing that Said 'must retain a notion of individual agency in order to retain the possibility of his own ability to criticize and change it.'[47] However, I find it rather unfair to attribute this tension in *Orientalism* – between 'the particular [and] the universal, and thus [between] free will [and] necessity'[48] – solely to Said's insistence on 'hav[ing] it both ways',[49] and thus as reflecting nothing more than theoretical inconsistency or even stubbornness on Said's part. For a similar tension informs Foucault's assertion that both power and resistance are 'everywhere' – a tension between the irreducibly infinite 'positive' form and content of society, and any attempt to corral that content into a more systematic, regulated, *coherent* form, whether by the 'administrators, managers, and technocrats of what [Foucault] calls

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[44] See Chapter 1 of this thesis, p. 53.

[45] Young, p. 136.

[46] Young, p. 134.

[47] Young, p. 134.

[48] Young, p. 134.

[49] Young, p. 134.

disciplinary power',[50] or by other agencies, including ones that formally oppose themselves to these 'official' authorities.

The problem, then, lies not with the fact that *Orientalism* is beset by this tension, but rather with how Said attempts to resolve it – that is, by apprehending the ways in which 'individualists' like Gustave Flaubert and Richard Burton conformed to Orientialist orthodoxy in despotic terms, as if the latter was imposed upon these writers 'against the[ir] informed will'.[51] Alternatively, we might approach this tension between individuality and discursive anonymity as evidence of 'odd term[s] in relations of power' that act like Chakrabarty's 'History 2s', those 'stubborn knots that stand out and break up the otherwise evenly woven surface of' his 'History 1'. By identifying disruptive elements in the otherwise conformist writings of Flaubert and Burton, Said encounters something that resembles Foucault's understanding of resistance as dissonance or friction, more so than Said's own. Nevertheless, Said is only able to perceive this resistance-as-friction wherever a writer openly, explicitly denounces some aspect of Orientalist orthodoxy, which suggests that he is only able to apprehend resistance as opposition.

After demonstrating how Said equates resistance with opposition, I consider how we might establish the existence of 'odd terms' even in those places where we might not expect to find them within existing interpretive frameworks. I begin by demonstrating how Gramsci – whom Said looked towards for a solution to Foucault's 'theoretical overtotalisation'[52] of power – equally articulated collective modes of social belonging as being internally differentiated, and therefore sustained only through the exclusion of social elements that would disrupt the holistic integrity of those collectives. For Gramsci, the process of establishing a 'collective will' that encompasses otherwise disparate, potentially conflicting groups and interests is invariably a double moment. For any group or interest can only be incorporated into

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[50] Said, 'Foucault and the Imagination of Power', in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. by David Couzens Hoy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 150.

[51] Goonatilake, Susan, 'Cultural Imperialism: A Short History, Future, and a Postscript from the Present', in *Cultural Imperialism: Essays on the Political Economy of Cultural Domination*, ed. by Bernd Hamm and Russell Smandych (Peterborough ON: Broadview Press, 2005), p. 33.

[52] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (London: Vintage, 1983), p. 179.

a 'collective will' by removing from it anything that would put it into conflict with other constituent groups or interests, such as certain claims, interests, beliefs, practices, identities, or values. Otherwise, the 'collective will' would be riven internally by dissonance and disunity. In short, what Gramsci describes resonates with Spivak's notion of 'self-metonymisation' described above, as the repression of all the ways in which one exceeds the terms of a given collective in order to be recognised as belonging to it. Taking my cue from Foucault's contention regarding the ubiquity of both power and resistance, as well as from Gramsci's concession that all 'collective wills' exclude as much as they include, I argue that Spivak's approach to the dilemma of rendering the subaltern articulate provides a way of perceiving the exclusionary aspect in this synecdochal process by which one is incorporated into a 'collective will'. In this manner, I challenge Said's conviction that the 'internal consistency' of Orientalist discourse, no less than the lack of 'demurral' from an imperialist worldview in the contemporary 'West', simply denotes a total absence of 'odd terms' – that this consistency corresponds to a unitary, internally undifferentiated 'unity of purpose' that occurs spontaneously, *noncoercively* across 'Western society'.

2.1 Edward Said and Michel Foucault on 'power', 'resistance' and 'opposition'

Said's objections to Foucault's claim that '[p]ower is everywhere'[53] are both well-known and controversial in postcolonial studies. According to Lazarus, Said's usage of Foucault in *Orientalism* has given rise to a 'multifarious scholarship […] that finds *Orientalism* wanting not because of any supposed weaknesses in the argument it puts forth, but for *programmatic* reasons – that is, because it falls short of Foucauldian orthodoxy'.[54] Arguing that much of this scholarship 'tend[s] to accord Foucault's key concepts and ideas the status of scripture, such that Said's heterodox use of them is understood and frowned upon as heretical', Lazarus objects – rather glibly, it must be said – to this apparent 'reprobation of [Said] as an idolater in the

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[53] Foucault, p. 93.

[54] Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 189.

cathedral of St Michel'[55]. For '[n]othing could be more inimical to Said's own deep-set commitment to secular criticism (and perhaps to Foucault's own intellectual practice also)'.[56] I agree with Lazarus here only insofar as these commentaries prescribe an unconditional deferral to Foucault's work. Otherwise, I profoundly disagree with Lazarus's own way of accounting for Said's infamously ambivalent stance regarding Foucault: namely, by claiming that 'in *Orientalism*, Said attempted to talk the Foucauldian talk – even though he had no intention of walking the Foucauldian walk – because he hoped through this means to reach his prospective readership, to make the greatest possible impact on their judgements and sensibilities.'[57]

For one thing, we might well agree that Said in *Orientalism* drew upon Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975) solely in order to 'associate the book with the ascendancy of post-structuralist approaches at the beginning of the 1980s, to flatter the many readers at that time who favoured post-structuralism'.[58] Yet we must still explain why Said's analysis of 'metropolitan' or 'Western' socio-politics in *Culture and Imperialism* so strongly resembles Foucault's account of the ubiquity of power, at least as Said describes this account in his various critiques of Foucault from 1983 onwards. For as I noted in my previous chapter, Said in this later book often found the 'epic scale of United States

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[55] Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 189.

[56] Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 189.

[57] Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 192.

[58] Spencer, Robert, *Cosmopolitan Criticism and Postcolonial Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 174; Spencer proceeds from here to claim that Said's 'unnecessary and misleading' recourse to Foucault in *Orientalism* served 'to obscure the book's largely materialist presentation of Orientalism as an ideology susceptible to critique and transformation' (Spencer, 174). Considering how Spencer here aligns himself with Lazarus regarding Said's intellectual debt to Foucault, his claim on Said for the 'materialists' renders rather ironic Lazarus's very fair observation that, 'within postcolonial studies, 'Edward Said' is both the name of a particular scholar and also the site of a dispute or battle over meaning, with deep consequences for the field itself' (Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 184). Simply put, both Lazarus and Spencer seem unaware of how their own accounts of Said's position regarding 'post-structuralist approaches' are no less contestable than those of other claims made on Said in this 'dispute or battle over meaning', insofar as both claim to know the 'real' Said as opposed to that version of Said that arises from post-structuralist 'misreadings'. My own account of Said in this thesis makes no claim to any such authenticity: instead, I only wish to point out Said's misreading of Foucault.

global power and the corresponding power of the national domestic consensus',[59] to be just as total and insurmountable as he found the scale and 'internal consistency' of Orientalist discourse in *Orientalism*. Indeed, if Said articulated 'metropolitan' socio-politics in increasingly despotic, totalitarian terms in *Culture and Imperialism*, then this analysis only became *more* 'Foucauldian' in the years between 1978 and 1993.

During this period, Said vocally distanced himself from Foucault's 'profoundly pessimistic view' that 'there is an unremitting and unstoppable expansion of power favouring the administrators, managers, and technocrats of what he calls disciplinary power. Power, [Foucault] writes in his last phase, is everywhere. It is overcoming, co-opting, infinitely detailed, and ineluctable in the growth of its domination.'[60] Karlis Racevskis notes that Said's 'interpretation of Foucault is fixated on one theme: the disciplinary or carceral society in which the mechanisms of power are so entrenched that resistance becomes futile.'[61] Indeed, Said was so fixated on this one particular aspect of Foucault's work, that he mostly ignored the ways in which Foucault sought to affirm 'the precariousness, the impending transformations, and the contingency of social structures rather than their necessity or immobility.'[62] Thus, it is more accurate to state that Said's analysis of 'metropolitan' socio-politics increasingly resembled Said's own understanding of Foucault's account of the ubiquity of power, an understanding that Said derived from a rather selective reading of Foucault. For although Foucault did indeed contend that '[p]ower is everywhere', he also maintained that '[w]here there is power there is resistance', in the sense that 'points of resistance are everywhere in the power network', rather than solely in one 'single locus of Great Refusal', some singular 'source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary.'[63]

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[59] Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 391.

[60] Said, 'Foucault and the Imagination of Power', pp. 150-51.

[61] Racevskis, Karlis, 'Edward Said and Michel Foucault: Affinities and Dissonances', in *Research in African Literatures*, 36, 3 (Fall 2005), p. 91.

[62] Racevskis, p. 91.

[63] Foucault, p. 95-96.

The weakness of Said's critique of Foucault, though, extends beyond this apparently selective reading. For I find that Said ignored Foucault's contention regarding the ubiquity of *both* power *and* resistance on the basis of a misreading of what Foucault meant by 'power' and 'resistance' in the first place. To be sure, Foucault's own definition of 'power' is frustratingly vague, given his attention primarily to how it is used to 'discipline' or actively, coercively mould individuals in ways that are conducive towards those who already wield it. State power often proves to be the paradigmatic instance of this *instrumental* form of power [64] for Foucault, especially as it is used to enforce compliance with state authority among those who might otherwise oppose it. Insofar as 'power' for Foucault is *state* power, Said is correct to question the extent to which this power's expansion into all aspects of social life is 'unremitting and unstoppable'. However, Foucault's contention that '[p]ower is everywhere' suggests a rather different understanding of 'power', one that resonates with accounts of the *constitutive* role of power in establishing and maintaining a given society – or indeed any form of collectivity, including a political movement – as a stable, coherent unit.

Oliver Marchart identifies many such accounts with a strain of political thought that draws upon what he calls 'post-foundationalism', a philosophical project that encompasses the post-war 'interrogation of metaphysical figures of foundation – such as totality, universality, essence, and ground.'[65] In particular, Marchart identifies the constitutive role of power with the figures of Claude Lefort and Ernesto Laclau, both of whom reconceive political, judicial and sovereign

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[64] The following discussion will distinguish between two 'modes' of power: 'instrumental power' and 'constitutive power'. By 'instrumental power' I mean the deliberate, calculated exertion of power, for whatever end, in whatever way and with whatever consequences. Simply put, 'instrumental power' can be referred to an agent who exerts it. Subsequently, by 'constitutive power' I mean more diffuse instances of power that obtain not due to the efforts of an agent to accrue power for themselves, but rather simply in a given social aggregation or historical conjuncture. It will become clear in the following discussion that any adequate account of the unity, cohesiveness or stability of a given social aggregation must acknowledge the inevitability, even the *necessity* of power in sustaining that unity.

[65] Marchart, Oliver, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 2; for discussions of various moments in this critique – as outlined with specific reference to orthodox Marxism by Laclau and Mouffe, and more generally by Young – see Chapter 1 of this thesis, pp. 69-73.

authority according to a scenario in which these forms of authority can no longer justify themselves according to any such 'metaphysical figures of foundation'. For both Lefort and Laclau, any attempt to ground sovereign authority in any of these foundations was exposed as contingent, and thus contestable, upon the epochal moment of what Lefort calls the 'democratic revolution', a moment that emerged spectacularly with the beheading of Louis XVI of France in 1793. For Lefort, in this moment, '[t]he linkage between the earthly realm and the transcendent legitimatory ground of society, formerly incorporated in the king's body, [was] finally broken in the moment of the disincorporation of the king' himself.[66] Marchart explains that for Lefort, '[w]hat is staged by that spectacle is not only the decapitation of [Louis's] earthly body, but also the disincorporation of the mystical, transcendent body of the king, which leaves the place of power empty', that is, 'freed of any positive or substantial content'.[67] Power is no longer fixed to any particular person or institution, and can therefore be claimed by anyone.

This decoupling of power from certain, suitably qualified persons clearly opens up the possibility of dissolving unjust configurations of power, such as that of eighteenth-century monarchical France. Nonetheless, Lefort argues that, from the moment of this decoupling, 'every regime – democratic or not – will have to come to terms with the absence of an ultimate ground and with the unbridgeable chasm of division that opens up in place of such a ground.'[68] Lefort, though, maintains that '[t]he fact that such a single ground disappears […] does not imply the disappearance of the *questions* of social institution',[69] since 'if we did not have any stable ground, any guiding principle' or 'any certainty regarding our social affairs – then everything would be allowed. We would be in total confusion, without any orientation and deprived of any symbolic framework within which we could position ourselves.'[70] The democratic revolution might well have deprived all instances of political, judicial, and sovereign authority of any claim to an *ultimate*, *immutable*

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[66] Marchart, p. 95.

[67] Marchart, p. 95.

[68] Marchart, pp. 95-96.

[69] Marchart, p. 105 (emphasis in original).

[70] Marchart, p. 104.

legitimating 'ground' that exists beyond human influence. Yet it remains that social unity, stability and coherence can only be established by limiting what can be 'allowed'. This imposition of limits – Lefort argues – is itself an act of *power*, one that society *depends* upon for its stability and coherence, insofar as 'power offers society a 'point of reference''[71] by which individuals can orient themselves socially and symbolically. As Laclau and Chantal Mouffe contend, the necessity of such points of reference – or *nodal points*, as Laclau and Mouffe call them – is apparent when considering that 'a discourse incapable of generating any fixity of meaning is the discourse of the psychotic.'[72]

For Laclau and Mouffe, nodal points are established via 'hegemonic articulation',[73] a process in which a social or political bloc is founded by 'arrest[ing] the flow of differences' between its innumerable constituent elements, differences that – being equally innumerable – otherwise threaten to dissolve that bloc's unity entirely.[74] 'Arresting' these differences is achieved by 'construct[ing] a centre'[75] – a *point of reference* – which, by subordinating each of these elements to itself, establishes unity between them in the form of their shared relation of subordinacy to this centre or 'nodal point'.[76] Thus, for Laclau and Mouffe, establishing a nodal point is invariably an exertion of power, insofar as whoever establishes a nodal point effectively establishes how a society and everyone in it are to comprehend themselves and the wider world.[77] Williams might agree, given his assertion that the

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[71] Marchart, p. 103.

[72] Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2014), p. 99.

[73] Laclau and Mouffe, p. 100.

[74] For an explanation of how Laclau and Mouffe come to assert the infinite number of these constituent elements, see my Introduction to this thesis, note 78, p. 20.

[75] Laclau and Mouffe, p. 99.

[76] Laclau and Mouffe's primary example of this process is the claim, in certain strands of Marxism, that a society's form is 'determin[ed] in the last instance by the (economic) mode of production', which influences all other 'superstructural' determinants, regardless of the extent of their 'relative autonomy [...] and their specific effectivity' (Althusser, p. 111).

[77] Williams makes a similar contention when describing how 'what the dominant has effectively seized is indeed the ruling definition of the social' (Williams, p. 125).

notion of 'hegemony' 'relat[es]' the 'whole social process' to specific distributions of power and influence', rather than only to those particular social practices, institutions and relations that are self-evidently meant to facilitate the exertion of executive power.[78] Williams, though, maintains a largely instrumental understanding of power, according to which 'hegemony' remains a way of grasping certain, relatively innocuous modalities of executive power. In contrast, for Laclau and Mouffe, as for Marchart and Lefort, 'society' as an intelligible entity or context is inconceivable without the role of power in 'arrest[ing] the flow of differences' between a society's constituent elements. In short, without power, there is no social stability – indeed, there is no *society* itself.

When Foucault argues that '[p]ower is everywhere', what he means by 'power' is comparable to this constitutive understanding of power, as having an indispensable role in 'grounding' 'society' in order to render it legible, coherent, and stable. As with Williams, though, Foucault is primarily interested in tracing how this constitutive power consolidates existing, uneven distributions of social power within a given social bloc and, moreover, how this power is deliberately exerted – *instrumentalised* – in order to sustain this hierarchy. As such, Foucault does not emphasise the indispensability of power for social stability, given his efforts to establish the contingency of any such stability, by demonstrating how it is not guaranteed by any arresting factor that extends *beyond* society, and thus beyond human influence. Hence Foucault's contention that '[w]here there is power there is resistance' – not in the sense of the defiant *opposition* of the power that is enshrined in the state, its institutions and its apparatuses, but rather in the sense of the constant friction that persists between individual elements, even after their incorporation into a social or political bloc via hegemonic articulation. For this incorporation never manages to completely eliminate the infinitude of differences that exist between these elements, in which case any hegemonic articulation is contingent, precarious, and always at risk of total dissolution.

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[78] Williams, p. 107; by 'executive power' I mean institutionally recognised, codified and formalised instances of instrumental power – in other words, particular forms and remits of instrumental power as delimited by the executive authority attached to a particular office, such as the office of monarch, president, director, manager, teacher, or doctor.

Thus, Foucault defines these 'resistances' as 'the odd term in relations of power' that 'are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite', and which are 'distributed in irregular fashion' rather than orbiting one singular, inevitable 'source of all rebellions'.[79] As I have noted above, this friction is comparable to the dissonance that Chakrabarty posits between 'History 1' and 'History 2'. Indeed, both Foucault and Chakrabarty use the image of a knot to visualise how elements that – for whatever reason – cannot be incorporated into a particular social or symbolic order disrupt the harmony or regularity of that order.[80] Thus, if Said found that Foucault 'never discuss[es] the resistances that always end up dominated by the system he describes',[81] then it is because he maintained a very different understanding of what constituted 'resistance' to that which prompted Foucault's assertion that resistance, like power, is 'everywhere'. In short, whereas Said retained a necessary, causal relation between 'resistance' and 'opposition', Foucault did not.

That Said retained a causal relation – not to say one of synonymy – between these two terms becomes clear when considering his attempt with *Culture and Imperialism* to redress his neglect in *Orientalism* of resistance to European and U.S. imperialism. Said mostly acknowledges resistance that occurred in *colonial* settings in this later book. Thus, Said maintains that 'there was scarcely any dissent, any departure, any demurral' from an imperialist worldview in the 'metropole' itself; on the contrary, 'there was virtual unanimity that subject races should be ruled, that they *are* subject races'.[82] As I mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis, James Clifford attributes Said's inattention to 'counter-hegemonic voices'[83] in *Orientalism* to his use of discourse analysis, a methodology that 'is always in a sense unfair to authors.

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[79] Foucault, p. 96; compare this refutation of any such 'single locus of Great Refusal' with Laclau and Mouffe's contention that what appear to be immutable, insurmountable 'datums' or points of reference are in fact nodal points that are contingent, and which therefore do not guarantee either social or political unity, or any particular meaning.Moreover, if society lacks any fixed points, then revolution proceeds from no specific site, such as a contradiction in relations of production. The task, then, is to establish what social and political circumstances give rise to revolutionary change.

[80] Foucault, p. 96; Chakrabarty, p. 106.

[81] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 177.

[82] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 62.

[83] Porter, p. 181.

It is not interested in what they have to say or feel as subjects but is concerned merely with statements as related to other statements in a field.'[84] Clifford attributes the relative absence of 'odd terms' in Said's account of 'Western' socio-politics to his methodology. As Young notes, though, in *Orientalism*, Said had sought to 'praise those [Orientalist] scholars who are both methodologically self-conscious and sensitive to the material before them, that is, to experience itself'.[85] Thus, wherever Said highlights exceptional instances of a 'sceptical critical consciousness' that is not 'blind to human reality', he registers an internal dissonance within the otherwise 'consistent' discursive structure of Orientalism, something that Clifford overlooks.

This dissonance takes the form of a disjuncture between a writer's subscription to Orientalist orthodoxy, and aspects of their personal experiences of 'the Orient' that do not entirely correspond to that orthodoxy. Often these experiences are of an immutable common 'humanness' that – according to Said – bridges the otherwise profound gap between 'Orientals' and their 'Western' observers, and which gives rise to exceptional moments in which the latter identify with the former 'sympathetically'. Young quickly points out that Said largely ignores the possibility that 'human experience' is never unmediated, even for those who experience it first-hand, given that it is 'always experienced, analysed and given meaning through forms of knowledge that will themselves be already ideological', and therefore 'cannot be posited as prior to knowledge as such.'[86] One such form of knowledge, of course, is Said's own humanistic conviction in that immutable 'humanness' that overrides any spurious compartmentalisation of 'the human community'[87] according to artificial categories of race, nation, gender, culture, class, or 'civilisation'. According to Young, Said all too easily presumes the immutability of certain of his own foundational assumptions and principles, taking for granted their claims to universality. Nonetheless, as Young notes, Said's desire to acknowledge those exceptional cases in which personal experience departs from

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84 Clifford, James, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 270.

85 Young, p. 132.

86 Young, p. 132.

87 Young, p. 131-32.

Orientalist orthodoxy, casts doubt upon the extent to which Orientalism really is as much of a totality as Said claims. After all, opposing 'a consciousness derived from experience' to a 'totalizing culture' makes it unclear how 'that consciousness or experience [could have] been produced outside that culture if it is indeed totalizing', if that culture incorporates absolutely everyone and everything.[88]

As Young observes, Said is well aware of this ambiguity, given his recognition – early on in *Orientalism* – of how difficult it would be for him 'to recognize individuality and to reconcile it with its intelligent, and by no means passive or merely dictatorial, general and hegemonic context'.[89] It is debatable whether Said manages to reconcile these seemingly antithetical demands by the end of *Orientalism*. Either way, his preferred solution is to articulate an individual writer's subscription to the 'impersonal' strictures of 'bookish Orientalism', in terms of being forcibly coerced into doing so 'against the[ir] informed will'.[90] In the process, it becomes unclear whether individual Orientalists could have ever broken out of these strictures. Moreover, Said presents conflicting accounts of the will of Orientalists like Flaubert and Burton, who vacillate between paragons of humanistic sympathy and dutiful 'voice[s] of Empire'.[91] The following discussion of *Orientalism* will suggest that Said approached Flaubert and Burton as if they were 'odd terms', 'stubborn knots that stand out and break up the otherwise evenly woven surface of' Orientalist discourse, although he only did so because they consciously distinguished themselves against the 'the uniformed teachers who ran Europe and European knowledge with such precise anonymity and scientific firmness.'[92] Thus, Said registered resistance within Orientalist discourse only wherever an individual Orientalist explicitly opposed the institutional pressures upon 'anonymity'. Nonetheless, Said's accounts of how Orientalism eventually 'reduced' writers like Flaubert and Burton 'to the role of imperial scribe',[93] cast doubt over whether only

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[88] Young, p. 137.

[89] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 9.

[90] Goonatilake, p. 33.

[91] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 196.

[92] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 194.

[93] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 197.

those writers who consciously resisted Orientalist orthodoxy were subject to experiences that did not corroborate it. This friction between individual experience and Orientalist orthodoxy, therefore, might weill have been more prevalent than Said suggests, and so he only notices it among 'non-conformists' like Flaubert and Burton because he equates resistance with opposition.

According to Said, Flaubert and Burton purposely wrote against a 'regimented' Orientalist tradition in which 'everything but "learning" had been squeezed out', leaving no room for 'a sense of immediacy, imagination, and flair'.[94] Said contrasts writers like Flaubert – whose accounts of 'the Orient' were derived from actually visiting 'Oriental' locales like the Levant – from the 'wholly bookish Orientalism' of figures like Silvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan, who mostly just refined existing accounts in Europe itself without claiming 'any particular expertise with the Orient *in situ*'.[95] Said further distinguishes between three strains of those writers who, like Flaubert, could ever make such a claim:

> One: the writer who intends to use his residence [in 'the Orient'] for the specific task of providing professional Orientalism with scientific material, who considers his residence a form of scientific observation. Two: the writer who intends the same purpose but is less willing to sacrifice the eccentricity and style of his individual consciousness to impersonal Orientalist definitions. These latter do appear in his work, but they are disentangled from the personal vagaries of style only with difficulty. Three: the writer for whom a real or metaphorical trip to the Orient is the fulfillment [sic] of some deeply felt and urgent project. His text therefore is built on a personal aesthetic, fed and informed by the project. In categories two and three there is considerably more space than in one for the play of a personal – or at least non-Orientalist – consciousness[.][96]

As Said discusses case examples of each of these categories, it becomes clear that he is pursuing evidence of unmediated 'experience' that might justify his belief – contrary to Foucault, apparently – in 'the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism.'[97] Thus, as an example of the first category, Said finds

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[94] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 189.

[95] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 156.

[96] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 157-58.

[97] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 23.

that in his *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), Edward William Lane succeeded in 'literally abolish[ing] himself as a human subject' by refusing to integrate into Egyptian society – such as by declining the offer of an Egyptian wife – thus 'preserv[ing] his authoritative identity as a mock participant and bolster[ing] the objectivity of his narrative.'[98] Otherwise, 'had he become one of them, [Lane's] perspective would no longer have been antiseptically and asexually lexicographical' or 'scientific', since '[u]seful knowledge such as his could only have been obtained, formulated, and diffused by such denials.'[99] Lane might legitimately claim personal experience of 'the Orient *in situ*', yet this experience was curtailed from the start by certain, well-established Orientalist principles. Thus, even before he subjected his account to 'considerable editing' – even while maintaining that it was 'a work of immediate and direct, unadorned and neutral, description'[100] – Lane's initial encounters with 'Oriental' society were shaped according to his conviction that 'such uniform accreditation as clothed the work of Orientalist scholarship, not personal testimony nor subjective impressionism, meant Science.'[101]

The second two categories are addressed simultaneously via the examples of Flaubert and Burton, both of whom – Said argues – were 'fully aware of the necessity of combat between [themselves] and the uniformed teachers who ran Europe and European knowledge with such precise anonymity and scientific firmness.'[102] Thus, whereas Lane's initial experiences of 'Oriental' society were marked by his retention of the position of the distant, Archimedean observer, Said finds that Flaubert and Burton represent a more immediate, or rather less mediated experience. Indeed, according to Said, 'Burton took the assertion of personal, authentic, sympathetic, and humanistic knowledge of the Orient as far as it would go

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[98] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 164; Lane eventually married a Greek-Egyptian woman in 1840, apparently several years after having bought her as a slave.

[99] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 164.

[100] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 159.

[101] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 191; indeed, Said's treatment of Lane corroborates Young's claim that individual experience 'always experienced, analysed and given meaning through forms of knowledge that will themselves be already ideological', and therefore 'cannot be posited as prior to knowledge as such' (Young, p. 132).

[102] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 194.

in its struggle with the archive of official European knowledge about the Orient.'[103] Nonetheless, Said maintains that '[i]n no writer on the Orient so much as in Burton do we feel that generalizations about the Orient […] are the direct result of knowledge acquired about the Orient by living there, actually seeing it firsthand, truly trying to see Oriental life from the viewpoint of a person immersed in it.'[104] Despite striving to both 'use his Oriental residence for scientific observation *and* not easily to sacrifice his individuality to that end',[105] ultimately Burton's 'individuality perforce encounters, and indeed merges with, the voice of Empire, which is itself a system of rules, codes, and concrete epistemological habits.'[106]

In order to reconcile it with his admiration for Burton as an 'individualist', Said apprehends this merger as evidence of some kind of 'formidable mechanism [...] operat[ing] specifically (and effectively) upon personal human experiences that otherwise contradicted' the strictures of 'bookish Orientalism'. The task, then, is to establish what happened to those particular experiences – 'where *they* went and what forms *they* took, while they lasted.'[107] Said, though, provides very little evidence that Flaubert and Burton's personal experiences ever did contradict these strictures in any way. Ultimately, Said suggests that the experiences of both writers mostly corroborated the claims of 'bookish Orientalism', and what distinguished them from precursors like Sacy and Renan was merely their claim to have experienced 'the Orient' first-hand, rather than solely through the European archive. Said's quest for unmediated experience in Flaubert and Burton yields no more evidence of 'odd terms' disrupting the 'internal consistency' of Orientalist discourse, than does the 'bookish Orientalism' that they purportedly wrote against. Only Karl Marx offers compelling evidence of this friction between the regularity of received ideology and individual experiences that might have contradicted its truth-claims. Said notes that 'Marx's humanity, his sympathy for the misery of people, are clearly engaged'.[108]

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[103] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 197.

[104] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 196.

[105] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 197.

[106] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 196.

[107] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 156 (emphases in original).

[108] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 154.

Yet even Marx's 'style pushes us right against the difficulty of reconciling our natural repugnance as fellow creatures to the sufferings of Orientals' under violent, oppressive colonial rule, with the historical necessity of that rule to the achievement of global socialism.[109] Ultimately, Said finds that Marx returns to the 'classically standard image' of a diminished 'Orient' desperately needing revitalisation via European colonial tutelage.[110]

Marx's recourse to a banal, 'Romantic Orientalist vision',[111] though, suggests to Said 'that something happened before the labels took over', before '[a]n experience was dislodged by a dictionary definition'.[112] In many of these case examples, Said describes this recourse to the standard tropes of 'bookish Orientalism' in despotic terms that are comparable to how he conveys the manipulation of U.S. public opinion towards the end of *Culture and Imperialism*. Thus, in Marx's case, Said speaks of how '[t]he vocabulary of emotion dissipated as it *submitted* to the lexicographical *police action* of Orientalist science and even Orientalist art.'[113] Similarly, Burton's 'assertion of personal, authentic, sympathetic, and humanistic knowledge of the Orient' is a '*struggle* with the archive of official European knowledge about the Orient.' Indeed, Said describes Burton as 'a *rebel* against authority',[114] whose work 'was meant to be testimony to his *victory* over the sometimes scandalous system of Oriental knowledge'.[115] Yet Burton was ultimately '*reduced* […] to the role of imperial scribe' by Orientalism's 'regulated college of learning'.[116] As for Flaubert, Orientalism's insistence upon 'impersonal academic rules of procedure' rendered it an '*imposed* discipline' that Flaubert fought to

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[109] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 153.

[110] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 154.

[111] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 154.

[112] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 155.

[113] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 155 (my emphases).

[114] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 195.

[115] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 196.

[116] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 197.

resist.[117] At the very end of *Orientalism*, Said remarks that 'Orientalism failed to identify with human experience, failed also to see it as human experience.'[118] However, the despotic language in which Said conveys these 'exceptions' or 'interesting complications'[119] to the 'internal consistency' of Orientalist discourse leaves it unclear whether this failure lies with the Orientalists themselves, or with an oppressive 'bookish Orientalism' whose impositions the individual Orientalist was largely unable to resist.

Said's recourse to this despotic language of forcible submission to 'bookish Orientalism' may well overstate the extent to which Lane, Flaubert, and Burton's personal experiences diverged from the claims of Orientalist orthodoxy. Again, as Young notes, Said does not consider the possibility that experience itself is never unmediated, or 'prior to knowledge' or ideology. Indeed, we might critique Said here for too readily presuming that the tension in Flaubert and Burton obtains between 'actual experience of the Orient and knowledge of what is Oriental' – that is, 'experience itself' – and the regulated, impersonal and systematic strictures of 'bookish Orientalism'. In fact, Said demonstrates that what distinguishes Flaubert and Burton is their endeavour to directly experience something that nonetheless largely existed within the European archive, to corroborate the truth-claims of that archive by 'witnessing' it first-hand, in 'the Orient' itself. Said provides no evidence that either of these writers ever did experience anything that prompted them to question the authority of 'bookish Orientalism's' claims regarding the nature of either 'Oriental' societies or peoples, or Europe's colonial regimes in 'the Orient'. We might attribute this lack of evidence either to Said's use of discourse theory – whose limitations Clifford highlights above – or to the possibility that, like Lane, Flaubert and Burton excised from their accounts certain experiences of 'terrestrial reality'[120] that conflicted with the claims of 'bookish Orientalism'. As I will demonstrate shortly, this latter explanation correlates not just with Foucault's contention that both power and resistance are ubiquitous, but also with the

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[117] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 189 (my emphasis).

[118] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 328.

[119] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 153.

[120] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 174.

implications of several accounts of hegemonic articulation, including those of Gramsci and Williams. Moreover, this explanation correlates with Spivak's notion of 'self-metonymisation' as well.

This correlation, though, raises the question of how prevalent such excisions were among Orientalists, along with the tension between individual experience and the regulated, impersonal, and systematic strictures of 'bookish Orientalism'. Said establishes Burton's individuality by contrasting him with Alexander William Kinglake, whom Said claims capitulated entirely to 'a public and national will over the Orient', since there is no evidence to suggest that he ever 'struggled to create a novel opinion of the Orient; neither his knowledge nor his personality was adequate for that'.[121] I cannot claim sufficient knowledge of Kinglake to be able to challenge Said's appraisal of him here. However, Said's distinction between Kinglake the conformist and Burton the 'individualist' seems arbitrary, given the paucity of textual evidence that Said musters in support of his claim, coupled with the brevity of the comparison itself. Indeed, this distinction seems all the more dubious when Said describes how Burton's narrative persona 'merges' with 'the voice of Empire', effacing any trace of his individuality. Simply put, Said leaves it unclear whether or not *all* Orientalists experienced a disjuncture between the claims of 'bookish Orientalism' and their own, individual experiences of 'terrestrial reality' *in* 'the Orient' itself, no matter how conscious they were of that disjuncture.

Said's discussion of Flaubert and Burton demonstrates a perceptiveness in *Orientalism* towards the existence of 'odd terms' that disrupt the 'internal consistency' of Orientalist discourse, albeit in the form of the individual's awareness of that consistency and the anonymity it imposes upon them as individual writers. In this respect, Said's account of the 'disciplinary power' of Orientalist discourse is actually closer to Foucault than has been allowed by those critics of *Orientalism* whom Lazarus derides for findingthat Said 'falls short of Foucauldian orthodoxy'. Ironically, this account is closer to Foucault than even Lazarus himself allows, when claiming that Said was anything but a 'Foucauldian'. Said may register little *dissent* against either Orientalism or European imperialism, and might well be criticised for overstating the extent to which '*every* European, in what he could say about the

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[121] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 194.

Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric.'[122] However, with Flaubert, Burton, and Marx, Said registers a potential dissonance between individual experience and the strictures of 'bookish Orientalism' – a friction that, with Flaubert and Burton, Said articulates in terms of opposition and eventual, forcible interpolation, but which nonetheless resonates with Foucault's understanding of 'resistance' as outlined above. It is unclear, though, to what extent Said finds that this dissonance obtains throughout all Orientalist discourse, in the same way that for Foucault 'resistance' is as ubiquitous as 'power'. For Said largely observes this dissonance in seemingly exceptional cases. As such, it becomes unclear whether we might attribute Kinglake's apparent lack of originality, for example, to the very same 'imaginative pressures […] institutions and traditions [or] cultural forces'[123] that ultimately 'reduced' Burton 'to the role of imperial scribe'.

If in *Orientalism* Said articulated these pressures in terms of the forcible limitation of what an individual writer could accomplish within a rigidly-defined discourse, in *Culture and Imperialism* he gives no indication that the 'imperial consensus' spanning all of British society was sustained by a similar set of pressures. Said's discussion of Joseph Conrad is an exception; for despite his 'residual imperialist propensities', Conrad was nonetheless aware of the fact that 'if, like narrative, imperialism has monopolized the entire system of representation […] your self-consciousness as an outsider can allow you actively to comprehend how the machine works, given that you and it are fundamentally not in perfect synchrony or correspondence.'[124] Thus, for Said, Conrad's 'explicit references to the outside' in *Heart of Darkness* (1899) point 'to a perspective outside the basically imperialist representations provided by Marlow and his listeners', demonstrating in the process how '[b]eing on the inside shuts out the full experience of imperialism, edits it and subordinates it to the dominance of one Eurocentric and totalizing view'.[125] Yet although this perspective allowed Conrad to grant the infamously 'impenetrable' Congo interior 'an autonomy of its own', he was unable – in Said's opinion – to

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[122] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 204 (my emphasis).

[123] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 49.

[124] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 27.

[125] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 31.

perceive this impenetrability as evidence that the Congo's 'non-European 'darkness' was in fact a non-European world *resisting* imperialism so as one day to regain sovereignty and independence, and not, as Conrad reductively says, to reestablish the darkness.'[126] Nonetheless, Said registers this resistance as a spectral presence-as-absence in *Heart of Darkness*, one that refuses to be muted quite as easily as the personal experiences of 'the Orient' that were 'squeezed out' of so much Orientalist writing by the discipline's rigid doxa, at least according to Said.

Conrad, though, is the sole exception to a rule that Said otherwise establishes comprehensively in *Culture and Imperialism*, according to which resistance to imperialism only emerged among colonial populations – that is, 'outside' the apparently closed circuit that is imperialist ideology. Other than in Conrad, Said finds no evidence of 'odd terms' in the numerous other European or 'Western' writers he discusses, as if 'disciplinary power' really was 'unremitting and unstoppable [...] in the growth of its domination', at least as it was exerted and consolidated in the 'metropole'. In this respect, Said's articulation of his 'imperial consensus' in *Culture and Imperialism* is actually closer to how Young describes his totalised articulation of Orientalism in the earlier book. Given his engagements with exceptional cases like Flaubert, Burton, and Marx in *Orientalism*, in *Culture and Imperialism* Said's analysis conveys an even greater sense that 'Western' imperialism is riven by 'no internal conflict that can be exploited, no heterogeneity, no contradictory logics, no totalization that always requires supplementation, no writing that runs away with an unassimilable excess.'[127] It therefore becomes all the more necessary in *Culture and Imperialism* for Said to 'demand a counter-intention from outside the system for any resistance.'[128]

Thus, in rather ironic fashion, Said's approach in *Culture and Imperialism* only further corresponds in many ways to his own, reductive understanding of Foucault's account of the ubiquity of power, even as he responds to charges of ignoring anti-imperialist resistance in *Orientalism*. As I demonstrated in Chapter 1, only in the final chapter of this later book does Said begin to register the possibility

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[126] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 33 (emphasis in original).

[127] Young, p. 135-36.

[128] Young, p. 135.

that a discrepancy exists between imperialist ideology and individual citizens. Even here, though, Said's analysis subscribes to what he himself perceives is Foucault's 'theoretical overtotalization' of the 'unremitting and unstoppable expansion of power', insofar as he perceives no possibility of seeing beyond what the U.S. mass media – and, by extension, the U.S. government – allows one to see. Said might have declared that he 'wouldn't go so far as saying that Foucault rationalized power, or that he legitimized its dominion and its ravages by declaring them inevitable'.[129] Yet by the end of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said risks conveying a no less 'profoundly pessimistic view' concerning the ubiquity or final victory of power in 'the West', and therefore risks opening himself up to a similar charge as that which he had levelled at Foucault.

2.2 Edward Said and Antonio Gramsci on spontaneous totalisation

Following *Orientalism*, Said looked towards Gramsci for a way of affirming the possibility of alternative sensibilities to 'Western' imperialism. For unlike Foucault – Said argues – Gramsci believed that 'there is always something beyond the reach of dominating systems, no matter how deeply they saturate society' – something that 'makes change possible, limits power in Foucault's sense, and hobbles the theory of that power.'[130] Given this conviction, Gramsci would have found Foucault's 'theoretical overtotalization' of power 'uncongenial. He would certainly appreciate the fineness of Foucault's archeologies but would find it odd that they make not even nominal allowance for emergent movements, and none for revolutions, counterhegemony, or historical blocks [sic].'[131] In itself, Said's account of Gramsci's thinking here is mostly unobjectionable. Nonetheless, I find that this account grossly overstates the divergence between Gramsci and Foucault's thinking. For one thing, Foucault's 'archaeologies' might themselves be considered investigations into the 'internal' structure and composition of 'hegemonic articulations' as defined above by Laclau and Mouffe. Indeed, Foucault's definition

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[129] Said, 'Foucault and the Imagination of Power', p. 152.

[130] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp. 246-47.

[131] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 246.

of 'power' in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* encompasses the 'strategies' through which 'force relations' 'take effect, [and] whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social *hegemonies*.'[132] This definition renders Said's appraisal of Foucault's theory of power all the more ironic, given Said's contention that '[w]hat one misses in Foucault is something resembling Gramsci's analyses of hegemony, historical blocks, ensembles of relationship done from the perspective of an engaged political worker for whom the fascinated description of exercised power is never a substitute for trying to change power relationships within society.'[133] To repeat Racevskis's argument, Foucault sought to affirm 'the precariousness, the impending transformations, and the contingency of social structures rather than their necessity or immobility',[134] just as much as Gramsci.

More importantly, though, Said's recourse to Gramsci's thinking did little to dissuade him from articulating Europe, 'the West', or the 'metropolis' – whether as a society, a culture, a consciousness, or an intention – as a homogeneous, undifferentiated unit that occurs spontaneously. Said presented his turn to Gramsci as a way of redressing the fact that in *Orientalism*, he 'said *nothing* about the possibility of resistance' to Orientalist orthodoxy, an oversight that he directly attributed to Foucault's influence on his methodology.[135] Given his claim, though, that for Gramsci 'there is always something beyond the reach of dominating systems', it is clear that Said continued to understand resistance solely as the interruption of these systems from 'beyond' them. The implication, then, is that these systems suffer from no *internal* conflicts, heterogeneities, or contradictory logics.[136] Hence Said's claim that Conrad's 'self-consciousness as an outsider', his 'extraordinarily persistent residual sense of his own exilic marginality' – as a Polish immigrant publishing in his third language – is what gave him his exceptional ability

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[132] Foucault, pp. 92-93 (my emphasis).

[133] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp. 221-22.

[134] Racevskis, p. 91.

[135] Said, '*Orientalism* and After', in *A Critical Sense: Interviews with Intellectuals*, ed. by Peter Osborne (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 214 (emphasis in original).

[136] Young, pp. 135-36.

'to comprehend how the machine [of imperialist representation] works'.[137] This ability was exceptional because British imperialism had effectively 'monopolized the entire system of representation', to such an extent that '[b]eing on the inside shuts out the full experience of imperialism, edits it and subordinates it to the dominance of one Eurocentric and totalizing view'.[138]

Said, then, might well have attested to Gramsci's conviction that the reach of 'dominating systems' is never all-encompassing, never *total*. Yet he continued to articulate the 'virtual unity of purpose' that he observed in contemporary 'Western society' precisely as if such systems had managed to saturate that society comprehensively, *totally*. Funnily enough, this articulation does accord with Gramsci's notion of the 'integral' or 'ethical State', a conjuncture 'that tends to put an end to the internal divisions of the ruled, etc., and to create a technically and morally unitary social organism.'[139] For Gramsci, no state-form is 'ethical' if it is not intended to 'raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level'[140] – that of the ruling classes. Much of Gramsci's political thought aspires towards this vision of a 'technically and morally unitary social organism'. Hence his preoccupation with how to render a 'collective will [...] universal and total',[141] how to produce a unity of purpose or consciousness that cuts across the multitude of social divisions underlying complex modern industrial societies, like those of interwar Europe. It is debatable whether Gramsci shared Foucault's conviction in the ubiquity of resistance, as an inevitable disjuncture and subsequent friction between the irreducibly infinite 'positive' content of 'the social' and the integral, regulated, systematic terms in which power renders 'the social' coherent and legible. Nonetheless, it is just as debatable whether Gramsci believed that there could ever be a total *absence* of this friction – a perfect alignment between state and popular will, between ruling and subordinate classes, and between 'practical

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[137] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 27.

[138] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 31.

[139] Gramsci, 'The State', in Hoare and Nowell Smith eds., p. 259.

[140] Gramsci, 'The State', p. 258.

[141] Gramsci, 'Brief Notes on Machiavelli's Politics', p. 129.

consciousness' and 'official consciousness', or what Gramsci calls 'technique-as-work' and 'technique-as-science'.

For even in its most optimistic moments, Gramsci's vision of a 'technically and morally unitary social organism' concedes that this unity could be neither spontaneous nor absolute, under any circumstances. Hence Gramsci's interests in how education and 'intellectual activity' shape the structure of a society, including its social relations. Hence also Gramsci's concession that no 'political and legal order' can ever expect to enjoy only the '"spontaneous" consent [of] the great masses of the population' – spontaneous in the sense of being given without any solicitation, persuasion, or coercion. As we saw in my Introduction to this thesis, Guha found that substituting 'Persuasion' for Gramsci's original term 'consensus' better reflected how Gramsci understood the practicalities of ruling by consent over coercion. Moreover, this substitution also better reflected how that 'liberal absurdity [...] of the idea of an uncoercive state' runs counter to 'the basic drive of Gramsci's own work'.[142] The following discussion of Gramsci will return to that porous distinction between 'consensus' and 'coercion' proposed in my Introduction to this thesis, in order to highlight how for Gramsci popular consent is not always 'spontaneous' as defined above. As a result, neither is the kind of 'moral and intellectual' unity that characterises Gramsci's 'ethical state'. Instead, this unity must be both encouraged and enforced, by both soliciting popular consent, and 'policing' those groups that withhold their consent, for whatever reason.

Moreover, in his reflections on the role of education and of intellectuals in establishing this unity, Gramsci suggests that even the most 'spontaneous' consent does not always indicate a perfect alignment between the will of the group in question, and the 'collective will' that they subscribe to in the act of consent. Gramsci does not entirely foreclose the possibility of a perfect alignment between the two. Hence his notion of 'progressive elements' that embody the 'vital forces of history',[143] social groups whose 'particular conception[s] of the world' and

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[142] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 23; see p. 117 above.

[143] Gramsci, 'The Political Party', in Hoare and Nowell Smith eds., p. 155.

'conscious line[s] of moral conduct'[144] come together as a 'collective will' that can eventually become 'universal and total'.[145] Two obstacles, though, prevent any 'collective will' from becoming 'universal and total' spontaneously. The first obstacle are 'reactionary social elements', groups that are 'dispossessed' whenever a new 'political and legal order' is established, after a previously subordinate group 'conquers' the state and refashions it according to their will. The second obstacle are 'those elements which have not yet reached the level of civilisation which' this newly-dominant social group 'can be seen as representing',[146] along with its newly-established 'political and legal order'. In order to overcome these obstacles, a 'collective will' must give rise to a political party that can 'keep the dispossessed reactionary forces within the bounds of legality', and 'raise the backward masses to the level of the new legality.'[147]

These two functions roughly correspond to Gramsci's distinction between 'coercion' and 'consensus' respectively, and Gramsci's interest in education and 'intellectual activity' are central to how he figures the latter of these functions. For Gramsci, one significant reason why Italian society between the two world wars not 'a technically and morally unitary social organism' was the country's education system. Gramsci explains how the system was divided 'into classical and vocational (professional) schools [...] the vocational school for the instrumental classes, the classical school for the dominant classes and the intellectuals.'[148] The 'classical school' taught 'a humanistic programme of general culture based on the Græco-Roman tradition', and which perpetuated 'the general and traditionally unquestioned

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[144] Gramsci, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', in Hoare and Nowell Smith eds., p. 9.

[145] Most likely, Gramsci means 'universal and total' in a *demographic* sense, as incorporating everyone in a given society. Whether he means every*thing* as well, though, is unclear. Williams concludes that this latter feat is simply impossible, for 'no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention' (Williams, p. 125). Instead, a 'dominant culture' can only 'select from and consequently exclude the full range of human practice.'

[146] Gramsci, 'The Political Party', p. 155.

[147] Gramsci, 'The Political Party', p. 155.

[148] Gramsci, 'The Organisation of Education and of Culture', in Hoare and Nowell Smith eds., p. 26.

prestige of a particular form of civilisation.'[149] The 'vocational school' itself was subdivided into 'a whole system of specialised schools [...] to serve entire professional sectors, or professions which [were] already specialised and defined within precise boundaries.'[150] These divisions had two effects on the composition of Italian society. Firstly, the division between 'classical and vocational (professional) schools' gave rise to 'the function of intellectuals', according to which only 'particular conception[s] of the world' and 'conscious line[s] of moral conduct' were deemed 'intellectual'. These particular 'form[s] of intellectual activity' were weighted towards 'intellectual elaboration' rather than 'muscular-nervous effort' – abstraction over practical application, and holistic overviews rather than attention to minutiae. These emphases led those who were of 'the function of intellectuals' – Gramsci's 'traditional intellectuals' – to 'think of themselves as "independent", autonomous, endowed with a character of their own',[151] without any connection to any other social group or 'function'.

To an extent, this latter claim was borne out by the fact that for the most part, the abstractions of the 'traditional intellectuals' were not derived from the 'muscular-nervous effort' of any of the 'instrumental classes', whose 'particular conception[s] of the world' and 'conscious line[s] of moral conduct' were derived from the comparatively specialised, technical curricula of the 'vocational (professional) school'. Yet for Gramsci, 'traditional intellectuals' were merely the 'deputies' of the 'dominant social group',[152] consolidating their dominance by 'exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government.'[153] Again, Gramsci's definition of these 'functions' roughly corresponds to his twin concepts of 'consensus' and 'coercion' respectively. Thus, 'social hegemony' here entails '"spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which

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[149] Gramsci, 'The Organisation of Education and of Culture', pp. 26-27.

[150] Gramsci, 'The Organisation of Education and of Culture', p. 26.

[151] Gramsci, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', pp. 8.

[152] Gramsci, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', pp. 7-8.

[153] Gramsci, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', p. 12.

the dominant group enjoys'.[154] By 'political government' Gramsci means the 'apparatus of state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively'. These coercive apparatuses are unnecessary as long as 'the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group' – through the efforts of its 'deputies', the intellectuals – enjoys a 'general and traditionally unquestioned prestige' among 'the great mass of the population'. Yet no 'dominant social group' can hope to rely solely on these coercive apparatuses to maintain their dominance. For a dominant group that finds itself 'exercising coercive force alone' is beset by a '"crisis of authority"', insofar as it 'has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer "leading" but only "dominant"', because 'the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously'.[155] This 'rift between popular masses and ruling ideologies' cannot 'be "cured" by the simple exercise of force',[156] for doing so only further compounds the 'crisis of authority', by turning the 'great masses' even further against the dominant group and their intellectual 'deputies'.

For Gramsci, the division of the Italian education system into 'classical and vocational (professional) schools' had led to a 'rift between popular masses and ruling ideologies'. For the two 'schools' imparted completely different 'form[s] of intellectual activity'. As such, the 'classical school' produced 'traditional intellectuals' whose 'intellectual activity' has absolutely no basis in the 'muscular-nervous effort' of the 'instrumental classes', and thus bore no relevance to their 'particular conception[s] of the world' and 'conscious lines of moral conduct'. Meanwhile, the 'vocational (professional) school' imparted no singular, general, or over-arching 'form of intellectual activity' that would unite the 'instrumental classes', that would cut across all the 'particular conception[s] of the world' pertaining to every specialised 'function' undertaken by these groups. Hence the second effect of this divided education system on the composition of Italian society: the lack of political or ideological unity between the disparate 'instrumental classes'.

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[154] Gramsci, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', p. 12.

[155] Gramsci, '"Wave of Materialism" and "Crisis of Authority"', in Hoare and Nowell Smith eds., pp. 275-76.

[156] Gramsci, '"Wave of Materialism" and "Crisis of Authority"', p. 276.

This system, then, could hardly hope to 'put an end to the internal divisions of the ruled, etc., and to create a technically and morally unitary social organism.' Moreover, as the 'deputies' of Italy's 'dominant social group' – the bourgeoisie – Gramsci's 'traditional intellectuals' upheld a 'general direction imposed on social life' that was in no way responsive to the will of the 'instrumental classes', nor did it cater to their interests.

The 'instrumental classes', though, were unable to challenge this 'political and legal order' by themselves, precisely because their highly specialised and technical education had both divided them between their myriad social functions, and deprived them of the 'forms of intellectual activity' that were recognisably 'political'. Gramsci, therefore, envisioned a reformed education system based upon his 'common school, or school of humanistic formation [...] or general culture',[157] which would merge the 'classical' and 'vocational (professional) schools', abstraction and practical application. Thus, 'in addition to imparting the first "instrumental" notions of schooling – reading, writing, sums, geography, history' – the common school would also 'deal with [...] "rights and duties", with the first notions of the State and society as primordial elements of a new conception of the world which challenges the conceptions that are imparted by the various traditional social environments, i.e. those conceptions which can be termed folkloristic.'[158] The 'common school' would provide each 'instrumental class' not only with the knowledge and skills necessary for the fulfilment of its particular social function, but also 'an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.'[159] In the process, the 'common school' would lead to a

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[157] Gramsci, 'The Organisation of Education and of Culture', p. 29.

[158] Gramsci, 'The Organisation of Education and of Culture', p. 30; elsewhere in the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci defined '[c]ommon sense' [as] the folklore of philosophy', given how it was 'always half-way between folklore properly speaking and the philosophy, science, and economics of the specialists. Common sense creates the folklore of the future, that is as a relatively rigid phase of popular knowledge at a given place and time' (Hoare and Nowell Smith, p. 326). As we saw in my Introduction to this thesis, Williams defined 'common sense' as the unquestioning acceptance of 'the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system', as the immutable 'pressures and limits' of the natural order of things (see pp. 19-20 above). 'Folklore', then, is a principal vehicle of hegemonic ascendancy and articulation.

[159] Gramsci, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', p. 5.

greater 'moral and intellectual' 'coincidence of the rulers and the ruled', by 'ensuring for each non-ruler a free training in the skills and general technical preparation' for both work and government, as if they were both workers and legislators.[160]

This educational reform, though, was a component of a 'political and legal order' that had yet to be established, and which would only be established after the 'instrumental classes' 'conquered' the Italian state. Yet the 'instrumental classes' could not hope to do so as long as they lacked any 'moral and intellectual' unity, owing to how their highly specialised educations had imparted to each of them a very 'particular conception of the world'. Gramsci's corrective here was his call for 'a new stratum of intellectuals' tasked with

> the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself, in so far as it is an element of a general practical activity, which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world.[161]

This 'new type of intellectual' would familiarise themselves with the 'particular conception of the world' and 'conscious line of moral conduct' pertaining to each 'instrumental class'. These 'organic intellectuals' would then translate this 'technique-as-work' into 'technique-as-science',[162] establishing its role as an 'element' in the wider social conjuncture, in relation to those of other such 'elements'.[163] This process of translation would impart to the 'instrumental classes'

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[160] Gramsci, 'In Search of the Educational Principle', pp. 40-41.

[161] Gramsci, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', p. 9.

[162] Gramsci, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', p. 12.

[163] A good example of this process of translation is Gramsci's critique of how Italian intellectuals had understood the revolutionary movement of David Lazzaretti in the mid-nineteenth century. As Marcus E. Green recounts, Lazzaretti presented himself to his supporters, 'who were mostly peasants', as 'the messiah of a new moral and civil order', only to be shot in the head by the Carabinieri, and posthumously dismissed by the intellectuals as 'psychologically mad and abnormal, as if political and religious dissent signified inappropriate responses to political discontent' ('Rethinking the subaltern and the question of censorship in Gramsci's *Prison Noetbooks*', in *Postcolonial Studies*, 14.4 (2011), pp. 396-97). According to Green, Gramsci attributed these claims to the fact that the Lazzaretti movement's religious overtones did not accord with what the intellectuals understood to be 'political' practice. As a result, the

a heightened awareness of their place within wider society, including their rights and obligations as citizens. Meanwhile, the 'organic intellectuals' would bring together their knowledge of the 'particular conception[s] of the world' and 'conscious line[s] of moral conduct' obtaining among the 'instrumental classes', in order to produce a plausible vision of 'a technically and morally unitary social organism' – an 'integral' or 'ethical state' that would 'put an end to the internal divisions of the ruled'.

The 'organic intellectuals' would then mobilise the 'instrumental classes' by soliciting their '"spontaneous" consent' to this vision, thus giving rise to a 'collective will' that would unify the 'instrumental classes', and eventually become 'universal and total'. In short, Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals' are the 'intermediary element' in his schematic of the 'triumphant' political movement. In order to succeed in 'conquering' the state, Gramsci contends that a political movement must entail three basic 'elements'. The first is the 'mass element, composed of ordinary, average men, whose participation takes the form of discipline and loyalty, rather than any creative spirit or organisational ability.'[164] According to Gramsci, this first element is 'a force [only] in so far as there is somebody to centralise, organise and discipline them. In the absence of this cohesive force, they would scatter into an impotent diaspora and vanish into nothing.'[165] Because this first 'element' lack any 'organisational ability' of their own, two more elements become necessary if this first is to become an effective, indeed an *irresistible* political force. The second

movement's actions and articulations of their cause appeared nonsensical to the intellectuals, precisely because they broke away from a commonsensical definition of what 'politics' entailed. As we shall soon see, the more recent distinction between 'politics' and 'the political' makes much the same point about conventional definitions of what 'politics' entails, as Gramsci does when critiquing this attribution of the Lazzaretti movement to Lazzaretti's apparent mental instability. As Jacques Rancière notes, '[i]f there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing him as the bearer of signs of politicity, by not understanding what he says, by not hearing what issues from his mouth as discourse' (Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans,. by Steven Corcoran (London, New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 38). Similarly, these claims that Lazzaretti was mad resonate with Laclau and Mouffe's that in all its forms, meaning depends on fixity, and that 'a discourse incapable of generating any fixity of meaning is the discourse of the psychotic' (Laclau and Mouffe, p. 99). Hence Laclau and Mouffe's insistence on the necessity of nodal points for society to exist, and thus of power to establish and maintain these nodal points.

[164] Gramsci, 'The Political Party', p. 153.

[165] Gramsci, 'The Political Party', p. 152.

element is the 'principal cohesive element, which centralises nationally and renders effective and powerful a complex of forces which left to themselves would count for little or nothing.'[166] The third is an 'intermediate element, which articulates the first element with the second and maintains contact between them, not only physically but also morally and intellectually.'[167]

It is not entirely clear what or who each of these 'elements' are, and we can only provisionally identify them with notions elaborated elsewhere in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*. Given its fractured nature, the first 'element' is most likely the 'instrumental classes', given their initial lack of a general grasp of the social conjuncture, and of their individual functions in relation to those of other groups. Meanwhile, the second 'element' might well be that unifying vision of 'a technically and morally unitary organism', of 'a complex element of society in which a collective will, which has already been recognised and has to some extent exerted itself in action, begins to take concrete form.'[168] The third 'element', then, are Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals', who through their 'active participation in practical life, as constructor[s], organiser[s], [and] "permanent persuaders"', facilitate the 'collective will [in its] tend[ency] to become universal and total.' Together, the second and third 'elements' comprise Gramsci's 'political party', whose role it is to be the direct expression of a unity of purpose that emerges among the 'great mass of the population'. Without the authority conferred by the consenting 'instrumental classes'; without a 'mass element', a political party cannot hope to 'conquer' the state, and is as inconsequential as a disunified 'mass element' is ineffectual.

For Gramsci, then, no 'collective will' ever becomes 'universal and total' spontaneously; equally, no society ever becomes 'a technically and morally unitary organism' of its own volition. In both cases, unity can only arise and then endure through the active interventions of a unifying agency – a political party; a state – in how 'the great mass of the population' perceive the world, themselves, and those around them. So much accords with Said's claim in *Orientalism* that 'all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated

[166] Gramsci, 'The Political Party', p. 152.

[167] Gramsci, 'The Political Party', p. 153.

[168] Gramsci, 'Brief Notes on Machiavelli's Politics', p. 129.

by, the gross political fact'.[169] Very early on in *Orientalism*, Said acknowledges Gramsci's 'useful analytic distinction between civil and political society, in which the former is made up of voluntary (or at least rational and noncoercive) affiliations like schools, families, and unions, the latter of state institutions (the army, the police, the central bureaucracy) whose role in the polity is direct domination.'[170] Moreover, Said suggests that this distinction is often blurred, given how 'political society [...] reaches into such realms of civil society as the academy and saturates them with significance of direct concern to it.'[171] Said's Orientalists, then, are the intellectual 'deputies' of European imperial interests. Indeed, the claims among Said's Orientalists that their knowledge of the 'Orient' was 'scientific' – that is, disinterested – are comparable to the claims among Gramsci's 'traditional intellectuals' to being 'autonomous and independent of the dominant social group.'[172] Just as Gramsci challenges this assumption by claiming that 'traditional intellectuals' were merely the ideological 'deputies' of the bourgeoisie, so Said challenges the claims of Orientalists to being practitioners of 'pure' knowledge, by retracing 'the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when [Orientalist] knowledge is produced.'[173]

What remains unclear, though, is how the Orientalists came to be the intellectual 'deputies' of European imperial interests – whether their 'recruitment' was spontaneous or coerced. Said's disparate accounts of how the 'gross political fact' 'imposed' itself upon Flaubert, Burton, and Kinglake largely subscribes to something like Gramsci's distinction between 'coercion' and 'consensus' respectively. Thus, Flaubert and Burton tried their best to resist the enforced anonymity of 'bookish Orientalism', but were ultimately 'reduced to the role of imperial scribe' by that mysterious, 'formidable mechanism of omnicompetent definitions', that 'lexicographical police action of Orientalist science'[174] that

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[169] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 11.

[170] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 6-7.

[171] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 11.

[172] Gramsci, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', p. 7.

[173] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 10.

[174] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 155-56.

submitted even Marx to its 'romantic Orientalist vision'. In contrast, Kinglake's writings give no indication that his consciousness and experience – let alone his intentions and practices – diverged from the claims of 'bookish Orientalism'. According to Said, Kinglake's 'particular conception of the world' and 'conscious line of moral conduct' was indistinguishable from the 'technique-as-science' that was Orientalist orthodoxy. If we think of Orientalism as a 'collective will', then, Kinglake belonged to the 'progressive elements', while Flaubert and Burton belonged to those elements that 'do not "consent" either actively or passively'', and who must therefore be kept 'within the bounds of legality' by the 'apparatus of state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline' upon non-consenting groups.

Gramsci might be sceptical towards the possibility of establishing 'a technically and morally unitary organism', in which every 'individual can govern himself without his self-government thereby entering into conflict with political society – but rather becoming its normal continuation, its organic complement.'[175] Yet as I mentioned above, Gramsci does maintain the possibility that an individual's 'particular conception of the world' and 'conscious line of moral conduct' corresponds entirely to 'general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group'. The question, though, is whether for Gramsci this correspondence is anything more than a theoretical possibility – whether he genuinely believes that the subjective experience of individuals belonging to his 'progressive elements' does not exceed the terms of the 'collective will'. Ultimately, there is no clear answer to this question, only the implication that if a 'collective will' becomes 'universal and total' through the efforts of 'organic intellectuals' to 'educate' the 'instrumental classes', then it is a product of 'technique-as-science', more so than of 'technique-as-work'. Gramsci leaves it unclear whether his 'organic intellectuals' could ever manage to close the gap between 'technique-as-work' and 'technique-as-science' entirely, such that the former would never need to be 'translated' into the latter, since the two would be identical. For Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals' are '*permanent* persuaders'; as the third, 'intermediary element' of Gramsci's 'triumphant' political movement, their task of '*maintain[ing]* contact' between the first and second 'elements' is permanent, never-ending. Moreover,

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[175] Gramsci, 'Statolatry', in Hoare and Nowell Smith eds., p. 268.

these two 'forms of intellectual activity' are very different: 'technique-as-work' is specialised and practical, 'technique-as-science' general and abstract.

This disjuncture between these two forms of 'intellectual activity' leaves open the possibility that 'the great masses [might] become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they [are encouraged] to believe' by the 'organic intellectuals', in their role as the 'deputies' of the dominant social group. Hence Said's claim that for Gramsci, 'there is always something beyond the reach of dominating systems, no matter how deeply they saturate society' – something that 'makes change possible, limits power in Foucault's sense, and hobbles the theory of that power.'[176] Hence also Williams's claim that 'no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention.'[177] Instead, these various 'modes of domination […] select from and consequently exclude the full range of human practice.'[178] It is among those excluded practices that alternative and oppositional hegemonic formations arise, and so just as for Said, so for Williams, change can only be imagined as a possibility when we contend that 'there is always something beyond the reach of dominating systems'. This contention resonates with Gramsci's account of the role of the political party and the 'apparatus of state coercive power', in either '"legally" enforce[ing] discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively', or 'rais[ing] the backward masses to the level of the new legality.' There will always be groups whose 'particular conception of the world' and 'conscious line of moral conduct' diverges – to whatever extent – from that of the 'collective will' or 'general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group'.

Moreover, Gramsci's reflections on the role of education and his 'organic intellectuals' in imposing that 'general direction' impute that this divergence can never be entirely mitigated. For there will always be a gap between 'technique-as-work' and 'technique-as-science', no matter how deeply the latter is based in

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[176] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp. 246-47.

[177] Williams, p. 125.

[178] Williams, p. 125.

'technical education, closely bound to industrial labour even at the most primitive and unqualified level'.[179] Given how a 'collective will' can only become 'universal and total' by being derived from 'technique-as-science', it will always be at a remove – however minimal – from all forms of 'technique-as-work'. With this claim, then, comes the implication that even Gramsci's 'progressive elements' evince 'particular conceptions of the world' and 'conscious lines of moral conduct' that do not correspond entirely to the 'technique-as-science' of the 'organic intellectuals', and by extension, the 'collective will' itself. Even among these embodiments of 'the vital forces of history',[180] there might be ways of experiencing the world that are at odds with how the 'collective will' makes sense of the world and that experience. Thus, a 'collective will' 'select[s] from and consequently exclude[s] the full range of human practice' obtaining not only among 'reactionary' and 'backward elements', but also among the 'progressive elements' themselves. Hence Williams's claim that the irreducibly infinite complexity of 'practical consciousness' always exceeds the structured, coherent terms of 'official consciousness'. Gramsci might continue to aspire towards 'a technically and morally unitary social organism' that 'tends to put an end to the internal divisions of the ruled'. Yet as he explores the practical obstacles to such unity, it becomes increasingly unlikely that anyone of us could ever 'govern [ourselves] without [our] self-government thereby entering into conflict with political society'. For even those of us who consent the most 'spontaneously' to the 'general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group', must be continually 'persuaded' to do so by those '*permanent* persuaders', the 'organic intellectuals'.

Gramsci, therefore, does allow Said to continue totalising 'the West' – whether as a society, a culture, a consciousness, or an intention – without foreclosing the possibility either of something 'beyond' this totality, or of resistance in the form of an oppositional intention that intervenes from that 'beyond'. Said, though, departs from Gramsci insofar as he imputes that this totality occurs spontaneously, even as he acknowledges all the internal fractures and antagonisms that jeopardise the unity of the 'geopolitical West'. In *Orientalism*, Said looked to

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[179] Gramsci, 'The Formation of the Intellectuals', p, 9.

[180] Gramsci, Antonio, 'The Political Party', p. 155.

Gramsci's distinction between 'civil society' and 'political society', 'consensus' and 'coercion', in order to maintain that the 'internal consistency' of Orientalist discourse hardly reflected the *spontaneous unity* of 'Western consciousness'. In contrast, throughout most of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said articulates the 'imperial consensus' encompassing all of 'Western society' as if it were indeed spontaneous – as if it had somehow managed to become 'universal and total' without the need for the 'policing function' of a political party, a state, or any other apparatus of instrumental power. Gramsci might maintain the belief that a 'collective will' can become 'universal and total', yet he concedes that this totalisation cannot occur spontaneously, and can only be accomplished by actively soliciting the consent of 'the great mass of the population'. Moreover, this process cannot but entail influencing how 'the great mass of the population' perceive the world and their interests, which in turn entails *dissuading* them from other 'conceptions of the world' and 'conscious lines of moral conduct', especially those that do not comply with the 'collective will'.

Thus, although Gramsci never lets go of the possibility that a 'collective will' can incorporate every*one* within a given social aggregation, it remains that any such 'collective will' is still established, maintained, and extended by continually 'select[ing] from and consequently exclud[ing] the full range of human practice.' No 'collective will', therefore, can ever incorporate every*thing* within a given social conjuncture, and so its claim to being 'universal and total' can only ever be a pretence – precarious, contingent, and thus capable of being disputed and challenged. Gramsci might not entirely agree with Foucault that resistance is 'everywhere', that Foucault's 'odd terms' or Chakrabarty's 'History 2s' obtain everywhere within a social conjuncture. No less than Foucault, though, Gramsci attests to the contingency of any form of human collectivity. If 'technique-as-work' and 'technique-as-science' can never completely converge, then all 'collective wills' are beset by 'internal conflicts', 'heterogeneities', and 'contradictory logics' that arise from 'unassimilable excesses' obtaining *among* their constituent elements, rather than solely beyond them. It is because of these excesses that Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals' are '*permanent* persuaders' who must continually, actively 'maintain contact' between the 'great mass of the population' and that vision of a 'technically and morally unitary [social] organism'. After *Orientalism*, Said turned to Gramsci as an alternative to Foucault's 'theoretical overtotalization of power',

only to impute in *Culture and Imperialism* that the 'moral and intellectual' unity of 'the West' is thoroughly spontaneous. As I have demonstrated here, on this account, Said departs no less from Gramsci than he does from Foucault.

2.3 'Politics', 'the political', and 'the postcolonial': Gayatri Spivak and the 'subaltern' as problematic

For both Foucault and Gramsci, collective unity is never spontaneous, whether in a society, a community, a group identity, an ideology, or a political movement. Instead, any such collective exists only as long as power disciplines or 'educates' those who subscribe to it. So far in this chapter, I have explored how Foucault and Gramsci offer a way of reconceiving Said's 'virtual unity of purpose' that avoids assuming that it occurs spontaneously. It remains unclear, though, how we might demonstrate the existence of resistance-as-dissonance among those who subscribe to this 'imperial consensus'. Having established the *theoretical* ubiquity of Foucault's 'odd terms', Young's 'unassimilable excesses', and Chakrabarty's 'History 2s', we must now consider how we might 'empirically' *observe* them in places where either an apparent lack of dissonance would indicate their absence, or one would not expect to find them within existing interpretive frameworks. To begin with, we must acknowledge that an apparent lack of evidence that would indicate the presence of 'odd terms' does not in itself establish their absence, non-existence, or impossibility. As such, we must reconsider what kind of evidence might indicate the presence of 'odd terms' in cases where they otherwise appear to be absent. This argument may well sound farfetched, yet a very similar contention arises within many other avenues of inquiry in postcolonial studies.

In particular, this contention is at the very heart of the debate surrounding the figure of the 'subaltern', a heavily contested concept that has mutated considerably from its original significance as a military term to refer to junior officers. According to Marcus E. Green, Gramsci used the term to refer to social groups that 'are subordinated to the power, will, influence, leadership, and direction of a dominant group or a 'single combination' of dominant groups.'[181] Given how 'class is a major

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[181] Green, Marcus E., 'Rethinking the subaltern and the question of censorship in Gramsci's *Prison Noetbooks*', in *Postcolonial Studies*, 14.4 (2011), p. 400.

element of his understanding of power and subordination',[182] these groups are often Gramsci's 'instrumental classes', including the urban proletariat and rural agrarian peasantry. Green, though, warns against a common assumption that for Gramsci, 'subaltern' and 'proletarian' were interchangeable. Green traces this assumption back to David Arnold's unsubstantiated claim in 1984 that Gramsci used 'subaltern' as a euphemism for 'proletarian', in order to evade Fascist prison censors.[183] Given Arnold's founding involvement in the *Subaltern Studies* project, this 'censorship thesis' was popularised by other scholars associated with the group, including Spivak and Ranajit Guha. Green's close reading, though, categorically emonstrates how Gramsci used both 'subaltern' and 'proletarian' right up until his death, often side by side in the same passage of writing. Clearly, then, the two categories had different functions even for Gramsci.

Moreover, Gramsci did not use 'subaltern' in a strictly socio-economic sense. For what rendered one a 'subaltern' was not one's place within the myriad modes of production, but rather one's place in a network of social relations that was determined by far more than economic structures.[184] If ever Gramsci gave the impression to the contrary, then it is only because the category of 'subaltern' emerged from his engagements with the dispersion and subjugation of his 'instrumental classes' as a political force. Otherwise, Green states that Gramsci used the term in reference

> to slaves [when discussing classical Roman society], peasants, religious groups, women, different races, the *popolani* (common people) and *popolo* (people) of the medieval communes, the proletariat, and the bourgeoisie prior to the Risorgimento as subaltern groups. In his separate analyses, Gramsci never reduces subordination to a single relation, but rather conceives subalternity as an intersectionality of the variations of race, class, gender, culture,

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[182] Green, p. 399.

[183] Green, p. 390.

[184] Here we see the Gramscian genealogy of Althusser's notion of 'overdetermination', which – as we have seen – was in turn adopted by Williams, and Laclau and Mouffe, all of whom also draw heavily on Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony'. Indeed, Althusser remarked that Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* represented the only significant advance towards a plausible theory of 'the relative autonomy of the superstructures and their specific effectivity', which even in the 1960s 'remain[ed] a realm sketched in outline [...] often unknown in detail beyond a few well-known regions' (Althusser, p. 111, 114).

religion, nationalism, and colonialism functioning within an ensemble
of socio-political and economic relations.'[185]

Clearly, then, Gramsci's 'subaltern' anticipated Spivak's 'reasonable and rarefied definition of the word', as being in a position that is 'removed from all lines of social mobility', 'where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognisable basis of action.'[186] Gramsci's subaltern might well have been unrecognisable, yet according to Green, Gramsci nonetheless contended that 'subaltern groups do not necessarily lack political power by definition.'[187] Gramsci's subaltern was subordinated merely to the will of another group, which in itself did not equate to total disempowerment. Hence Green's contention that for Gramsci, that 'a subaltern group's level of subordination is relative to its level of political organization, autonomy, and influence upon dominant groups and dominant institutions.'[188]

In contrast, Spivak's subaltern has absolutely no political organisation, no autonomy, and no influence upon any group, let alone those which are dominant. Spivak is perhaps best known in postcolonial studies for declaring in 1988 that '[t]he subaltern cannot speak',[189] a statement that as I will demonstrate here, is highly misleading, and has in fact been continually misconstrued by her detractors. I have already mentioned how for Lazarus, Spivak 'fetishiz[es] difference under the rubric of incommensurability', foreclosing any possibility that we might have of apprehending 'the social aspirations and forms of consciousness of "the people"'. Lazarus is not alone in objecting to Spivak on this account. Similarly, according to Bart Moore-Gilbert, much of Spivak's work has responded to Said's implication in *Orientalism* that 'power and discourse is possessed entirely by the colonizer',[190] by exploring 'the degree to which the (post-)colonial subaltern [...] enjoys agency'.[191]

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[185] Green, pp. 399-400.

[186] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 475.

[187] Green, p. 400.

[188] Green, p. 400.

[189] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p. 308.

[190] Parry, p. 40.

[191] Moore-Gilbert, p. 452.

Yet in many respects, Moore-Gilbert finds that '[w]hile seeking to correct an obvious lacuna in *Orientalism,* Spivak's work on the subaltern nonetheless in some ways reinforces the substance of her mentor's arguments.'[192] Hence Moore-Gilbert's remark that Spivak 'might justifiably be considered to be unnecessarily deterministic and politically pessimistic.'[193] I find that Lazarus and Moore-Gilbert overstate the extent to which Spivak renders 'popular' or 'subaltern' forms of consciousness inaccessible to the analyst or the activist. For Spivak's emphasis is on the subaltern's inability to form 'a *recognisable* basis of action', which is not to say that we can *never* apprehend this basis, or that this inability forecloses every possibility of the subaltern ever accessing any 'lines of social mobility'. The subaltern is incommensurable only because existing interpretive frameworks are as yet unable to apprehend their consciousness *as consciousness*, their practice *as practice*.

The task of apprehending subaltern consciousness as consciousness, therefore, demands that we adjust these frameworks in order to accommodate diverse modes of consciousness and practice that we are as yet unable to anticipate within them. Rather than a licence for '[political] pessimi[sm]', the subaltern's incommensurability demands that we address the limits of how we understand 'action', 'consciousness', even 'politics'. Spivak generally elaborates her understanding of the term via reflections on its usage by the *Subaltern Studies* project, with which both Spivak and Chakrabarty were affiliated, and which was founded by Ranajit Guha. Yet even in Gramsci, we see how the subaltern is marked by a sense of irreconcilability with certain interpretive frameworks, such as those which Gramsci associates with 'the function of intellectuals'. For as we have seen, Gramsci's 'instrumental classes' are 'subaltern' because their 'particular conceptions of the world' and 'conscious lines of moral conduct' are not always of much use to the task of political organisation. Hence Gramsci's claim that the 'instrumental classes' can only 'conquer' the state if they are organised by a political party made up of 'organic intellectuals'. We have also seen, though, that Gramsci remained uncertain over whether the 'organic intellectuals' could ever completely translate the 'technique-as-work' of the 'instrumental classes' into 'technique-as-

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[192] Moore-Gilbert, p. 454.

[193] Moore-Gilbert, p. 464.

science' – whether something in the former was irreducible to the relatively general, abstract terms of the latter. Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' was a '"*permanent persuader*"' precisely because their 'technique-as-science' always remained at a remove – however slight – from the 'technique-as-work' of the 'instrumental classes'.

Gramsci, thought, was not as concerned as Spivak is by this apparently permanent gap between 'technique-as-work' and 'technique-as-science', between the intellectuals' 'form[s] of intellectual activity' and those of 'non-intellectual' groups. The goal of Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' was not to close this gap entirely, so much as to align 'technique-as-work' and 'technique-as-science' close enough to enable dialogue between the two, one that would give rise to an effective 'moral and intellectual' unity between the disparate 'non-intellectual' groups. That a total, integral unity between 'technique-as-work' and 'technique-as-science' can never be achieved was, for Gramsci, no obstacle to mobilising 'non-intellectual' groups into a political force whose 'triumph' would be inevitable. As we shall see, a very similar implication arises from Spivak's distinction between the categories of 'the subaltern' and 'the popular'. Yet this implication is generally overshadowed in Spivak by her emphasis on that gap that will always exist between 'technique-as-work' and 'technique-as-science', and which will always prevent the former being fully apprehended on its own terms within the terms of the latter.

This emphasis might well have arisen from the fact that Spivak mostly discusses the term 'subaltern' as it was used by the *Subaltern Studies* group. Thus, we see how this emphasis marks Guha's objection – in his *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (1983) – to Eric Hobsbawm's characterisation of the Santal rebellion as 'prepolitical'.[194] According to Chakrabarty, Hobsbawm's argument was prompted by the fact that the Santal understood and articulated their defiance of the British Raj as the fulfilment of the divine will of Thakur, one of their gods. Hobsbawm, therefore, subscribed to a rather restricted, 'modernist' or 'secularist' definition of 'the political', given how he described the Santal as 'prepolitical' on the basis of their continued belief in 'the agency of gods, spirits,

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[194] Hobsbawm, E. J., *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), pp. 2-3.

and other supernatural beings'.[195] As Chakrabarty notes, Guha's objection demonstrates how he 'was prepared to suggest that the nature of collective action by peasants in modern India was such that it effectively stretched the category of the "political" far beyond the boundaries assigned to it in European political thought.'[196] Hobsbawm excluded the Santal from 'the political' not because they themselves were not political, but rather because Hobsbawm could not recognise their practices as being 'political'. Rather than adapt his understanding of what could be considered 'political', though, Hobsbawm chose to preserve it, which could only have been possible if he excluded the Santal from the category of 'the political' entirely, as an 'unassimilable excess'.[197]

For Chakrabarty, the Santal exemplify what he calls 'subaltern pasts', modes of social existence that cannot be rationalised or 'adequate[ly] theoriz[ed]'[198] in secular-modernist modes of thought, and which are therefore synonymous with Chakrabarty's 'History 2s'.[199] Rather than crippling our ability to grasp these modes of social existence, though, their incommensurability within secular-modernist modes of thought – such as professional historiography – 'act as a supplement' to the latter, 'helping to show what [their] limits are.'[200] Thus, by 'calling attention to the limits of historicizing', these 'subaltern pasts' 'help us distance ourselves from the imperious instincts' of secular-modernist thought, including 'the idea that

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[195] Chakrabarty, p. 12.

[196] Chakrabarty, p. 12.

[197] Compare Guha's critique of Hobsbawm here with Gramsci's of how Italian intellectuals had dismissed David Lazzaretti as a madman: see note 162, p. 122 above. As Green notes, Gramsci's account of Lazzaretti casts doubt over whether he used the term 'subaltern' all that differently to Guha and the other *Subaltern Studies* scholars.

[198] Lazarus, 'Introducing postcolonial studies', in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. by Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 9.

[199] Indeed, Chakrabarty actually uses his metaphor of 'stubborn knots that stand out and break up the otherwise evenly woven surface of the fabric' when outlining what he means by 'subaltern pasts', rather than 'History 2' as I have implied elsewhere in this chapter.

[200] Chakrabarty, p. 112.

everything can be historicized or that one should *always* historicize.'[201] This latter claim is reminiscent of Young's contention – discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis – that European thought is permeated by an 'ontological imperialism', given that its 'universalizing narrative of the unfolding of a rational system of world history is simply a negative form of the history of European imperialism.'[202] Chakrabarty, though, is hardly claiming anything as totalising and fatalistic as what Young claims here. For one thing, Chakrabarty maintains that concepts derived within secular-modern thought – such as rationality, universality and the 'generalized and necessarily disembodied observer'[203] – have proven indispensable in enabling the disempowered to pursue justice and demand rights. Instead, the 'imperious instincts' that Chakrabarty's 'subaltern pasts' warn us against are tendencies to reduce 'heterogeneities' to some 'principle that speaks for an already given whole'.[204]

These 'subaltern pasts', then, always manage to be 'beyond' or in excess of that 'already given whole', demonstrating how what we expected or anticipated is never all that there is, and how we should be prepared to reassess our received understandings when encountering the unexpected, rather than simply reducing the latter to the former. This attention to forms of consciousness and practice that disclose the limits of received categories and analytical frameworks may well account for the '*culturalist* emphasis'[205] that Lazarus perceives – and often laments – in postcolonial studies. Lazarus notes that postcolonial criticism has generally taken up approaches to 'popular consciousness', 'popular practice', and 'popular' 'forms of representation' that are 'derived not from sociology or political economy but from the more *culturally* inflected disciplines of history and anthropology'.[206] As a result, Lazarus finds that the discipline has largely disregarded much of

> the pioneering work in sociology or political economy or development
> studies [that is] aimed at the recovery and adequate theorization of

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[201] Chakrabarty, p. 112.

[202] Young, p. 2.

[203] Chakrabarty, p. 119.

[204] Chakrabarty, p. 107.

[205] Lazarus, 'Introducing postcolonial studies', p. 9 (emphasis in original).

[206] Lazarus, 'Introducing postcolonial studies', p. 9 (my emphasis).

> popular consciousness and popular practice […] insurgent sociologies, new approaches in political economy, mould-breaking developments in anthropology, feminist and environmentalist work in all sectors of the social sciences, and so on.[207]

The implication here is that if critics like Spivak have concluded that subaltern consciousness is inaccessible, on account of its incommensurability, then it is because their preference for critical frameworks derived from allegedly[208] 'more *culturally* inflected' disciplines like history and anthropology, has simply left them ill-equipped for 'adequately' recuperating 'popular consciousness and popular practice'. Subaltern consciousness is not incommensurable *as such*: instead, this impression merely reflects the insufficiency of these frameworks to the task of 'adequate[ly] theoriz[ing]' them. The solution, therefore, is to abandon these approaches in favour of recent, 'mould-breaking' alternatives derived from sociology, political economy, and development studies.

Once again, I profoundly disagree with Lazarus here. We might well be able to 'adequately' apprehend '*popular* consciousness and *popular* practice' within existing critical frameworks. However, dismissing approaches that explore the inadequacy of these frameworks for apprehending *all* forms of consciousness and practice, risks compounding the inarticulacy of anyone who exhibits forms that those frameworks are as yet unable to comprehend *as consciousness* or *as practice*. In short, dismissing the problematic of subalternity as addressed in 'culturalist' terms risks compounding the status of subalternity itself, along with the underprivilege, exploitation, disenfranchisement, or discrimination that it often leads to across the world. A 'culturally inflected' approach attends to *amorphous* forms of

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[207] Lazarus, 'Introducing postcolonial studies', p. 9 (emphasis in original).

[208] I find it highly questionable to what extent 'history' is 'culturally inflected' compared with sociology, political economy and development studies, considering how much of history is given to studying the history of society and societies, politics and economics. Furthermore, blaming postcolonial critics' incapacity to 'recover' or 'adequate[ly] theor[ise]' 'popular consciousness and popular practice' completely ignores the fact that *Subaltern Studies* was a *historiographical* attempt at such recuperations. Certainly, this attempt had mixed results, but Lazarus's contempt for the subsequent concession that 'popular consciousness and popular practice' always exceeds our critical frameworks frankly conveys an obstinate refusal to even consider the methodological lessons that *Subaltern Studies* yielded, and which are outlined by Chakrabarty – in *Provincializing Europe* – and Spivak – in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography' and 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular'.

consciousness and practice; amorphous in the sense that they do not conform to the relatively determinate[209] categories of sociology, political economy, and development studies including the category of 'politics' itself. Thus, by attending to these amorphous forms, this approach demonstrates the limits of these categories, the ways in which they are insufficient to the task of 'adequate[ly] theoriz[ing]' *all* consciousness and practice obtaining among those demographics that conventionally fall into the category of 'the popular'.

As something that exceeds existing categories and interpretive frameworks, the subaltern is comparable to the notion of 'the political' as opposed to that of 'politics'. According to Marchart, this dyad – which he calls the 'political difference'[210] – is central to the postfoundational political thought of Lefort, Laclau, Mouffe, and Jacques Rancière, among others. The distinction primarily describes two ways of comprehending politics, including what it is, what it does, what it is for, and what forms of consciousness and practice it encompasses. Thus, on one hand, 'politics' restricts politics to certain forms of consciousness and practice that one must necessarily assume in order to participate in certain institutions, organisations, or 'spheres' of 'the social' – the state, parliament, elections, trade unionism, and civil society, for example. As a result, by identifying certain practices and institutions, as well as certain forms of consciousness as being 'political', 'politics' effectively 'depoliticises' other spheres of society, and thus other forms of consciousness and practice. Indeed, 'politics' depoliticises politics itself, insofar as it establishes one particular definition of what politics is, what its purpose is, and who can legitimately participate in it. Subsequently, for Rancière, any such compartmentalisation amounts to 'a privatization of politics' itself, an 'appropriation

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[209] Note here that I do not mean 'determinist', a pejorative term that imputes reductive inflexibility. Neither do I discount the possibility that sociology, political economy, and development studies can break the mould, in order to more adequately grasp unfamiliar forms of consciousness, experience, will, intention, and practice. My point here, then, is that it is one thing to argue against accusations that these disciplines are determinist; it is another thing entirely, though, to claim that their adaptability enables us to *exhaustively* apprehend anyone's subjective experience. No matter how adaptable these disciplines might be, I maintain that what Lazarus calls a 'culturalist' sensibility provides a useful way of testing the limits of new adaptations.

[210] Marchart, p. 4.

by small oligarchies'[211] who reduce political conflict 'into problems to be resolved by learned expertise and the negotiated adjustment of interests.'[212] Political disputes become disputes over how best to resolve particular grievances, reducing politics to the mere task of identifying the most appropriate solution to such grievances, and restricting access to politics to those who are best qualified for this task: Rancière's 'learned experts', his 'small oligarchies'.

In contrast, if 'politics' defines politics as something that is conducted in a certain way, to certain ends, and by those with certain qualifications, then 'the political' defines politics as something that 'cannot be restricted to a certain type of institution, or envisaged as constituting a specific sphere or level of society'.[213] In its most immediate sense, 'the political' defines politics as a dispute over how to define politics itself – what it is, what it consists of, what it does, what it is supposed to achieve, and who can participate in it. The process of establishing these parameters, though, inevitably involves establishing some kind of 'definition' of 'the social' itself, insofar as one defines politics – its purpose, its methods – according to the requirements or priorities of those who must suffer its consequences, whether gladly or otherwise. As a result, the definition of politics upheld by those who seem best qualified to conduct politics becomes just one of a multitude of disparate, competing definitions. Subsequently, whereas 'politics' defines politics as something in which only those who are suitably qualified can participate, 'the political' defines politics as something in which everyone – without any exception – can participate, without having to claim any qualification or competency whatsoever. 'The political', therefore, eschews any attempt to define politics according to strict criteria, whether they be moral proscriptions against certain kinds of demands or actions; philosophical treatises that prescribe what politics 'really' is or is 'really' about; or sociological accounts of what social grievances 'rationally' take priority over others. Any such reductive definition of politics is merely an attempt to establish a 'ground' or 'point of reference' that can guide the task of rendering society coherent and

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[211] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', in *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 21, 4 (December 2007), p. 563.

[212] Rancière, 'Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?', in *Dissensus* (London, New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 71.

[213] Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London, New York: Verso, 1993), p. 3.

manageable. Subsequently, 'the political' defines politics as a dispute over not only the most appropriate way of defining politics itself, but also the most appropriate way of 'grounding' or defining society in general.

For those figures that Marchart identifies with his 'post-foundational political thought' – including Lefort, Laclau, Mouffe, and Rancière – we can never hope to resolve this latter dispute over how best to 'ground' society. As Rancière contends, no matter how comprehensively and accurately one manages to 'count [...] the parts of the population'[214] – to apprehend the structure, content, and composition of a given society – there will always be something that one leaves out, a 'part of those without part'.[215] This exclusion or mere oversight of the 'uncounted'[216] can only jeopardise the authority of one's 'count', and by extension any political authority one derives from it. Subsequently, one can either 'recount' 'the parts of the population' or sustain the current 'count', by formalising the exclusion of the 'uncounted'. The latter move often entails formally disenfranchising the 'uncounted', refusing to recognise any obligation to them as legitimate 'parts' of society, with legitimate demands upon it. This latter response to this supplementary 'part' is what Rancière refers to as 'the police', by which he means 'not a social function but a symbolic constitution of the social', something whose 'essence [...] lies neither in repression nor even in control over the living', but rather 'in a certain way of dividing up the sensible.'[217] Rancière contends that this 'partition of the sensible', this 'dividing-up of the world [...] and of people [...], the *nemeïn* upon which the *nomoi* of the community are founded [...] should be understood in the double sense of the word: on the one hand, as that which separates and excludes; on the other, as that which allows participation.'[218] As with Lefort, Williams, Laclau, and Mouffe – as well as with Gramsci, as I have outlined above – so for Rancière, a 'community' can only be 'founded' by way of *both* inclusion *and* exclusion, by way

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[214] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 33.

[215] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 35.

[216] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 33.

[217] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 36.

[218] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 36.

of distinguishing those who *can* participate from those who *cannot*, or those practices that constitute 'participation' from those that do not.

By referring to this 'symbolic constitution of the social' or 'partition of the sensible' as 'the police', Rancière risks encouraging a serious misconstruction, according to which the act of partitioning 'the sensible' is always a despotic, totalitarian one. Indeed, Rancière often discusses this notion of partitioning 'the sensible' via reference to scenarios in which law enforcement agencies impose or uphold a 'political and legal order' 'against the informed will'[219] of a defiant public. Moreover, Rancière associates this exclusion of the 'uncounted' by the prevailing 'partition of the sensible' with attempts to extinguish politics itself, to enforce an 'end of politics', by which he means 'not the accomplishment of the ends of politics but simply a return to the normal state of things – the non-existence of politics.'[220] As Rancière acknowledges, this phrase – 'the end of politics' – is not his own, but rather one that gained currency within a contemporary, influential 'sociological thesis' that

> posits the existence of a state of the social in which politics no longer has any necessary reason for being; whether this is because it has accomplished its ends by bringing this state into being (the exoteric American Hegelian-Fukuyama-ist version) or because its forms are no longer adapted to the fluidity and artificiality of present-day economic and social relations [...] The thesis thus amounts to asserting that the logical *telos* of capitalism entails the extinction of politics.[221]

As his allusion to Francis Fukuyama indicates, the 'sociological thesis' Rancière describes here is that which proclaimed the 'end of history' following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Rancière often associates his notion of 'the police' with the emphasis on 'consensus' that gripped international and domestic policy across the world after this event, 'as the appropriate name for a world that was no longer structured by any radical division and no longer offered any radical alternative'[222] to the rampant, increasingly unchecked neoliberalisation of national and international social, economic, and political policy.

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[219] Goonatilake, p. 33.

[220] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 42.

[221] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 43.

[222] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', pp. 565-66.

For its champions, 'consensus' meant 'a modern form of government whose task is to locate providers of expertise, arbitration and negotiation between diverging groups and interests in order to avoid conflicts.'[223] In contrast, for Rancière, the principle entailed 'a global re-configuration of the space of the community', a restriction of that space

> solely to the interplay of state mechanisms with combinations of social energies and interests. This restriction entails the dismissal of all supplements, the steady identification of the political people with the count of the parts of the population. Consensus says: there is a multiplicity of groups, interests, values and aspirations in our society, but there is only one sensory reality that is given to all of us in the same way, only one sense that can be made of that given reality, and only one particular set of possibilities allowed by it.[224]

This refusal to tolerate a 'radical alternative' to neoliberal globalisation was recast as prudent submission to the inevitable, 'allow[ing] our governments to appear as the mere agents of global necessity and to be legitimized by both their impotence and their competence: they are legitimized because they can't do anything other than what can be done, and they are legitimized because they do all that can be done.'[225] Rancière's 'police', therefore, is heavily associated with the function of sustaining a worldwide 'partition of the sensible' that in turn consolidates neoliberal globalisation, by 'fram[ing] a world where the supplementary activity of political subjects has no place'[226] – that is, by formalising the exclusion of the 'uncounted' from the prevailing 'count of the parts of the [global] population'. The 'uncounted' here incorporates not only those demographics that have not benefited from neoliberal globalisation, but also those who oppose this new regime, regardless of how much they have benefited from it.

In this respect, Rancière's 'police' is reminiscent of Gramsci's 'regressive' political party, which 'carr[ies] out its policing function in order to conserve an outward, extrinsic order which is a fetter on the vital forces of history', an order 'which has been superseded' by a newly-emergent 'collective will', and which has

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[223] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 566.

[224] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 566.

[225] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 566.

[226] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 566.

therefore become 'anti-historical'.[227] Nonetheless, even Gramsci's 'progressive' political party 'carr[ies] out a policing function', one that is necessary if the party's 'mass element' is to become a unified, organised, irresistible 'force'.[228] For Gramsci, what renders a political party 'regressive' is not its recourse to 'policing' the 'great mass of the population' as such, but rather the intention behind this recourse. A similar implication arises from Rancière's definition of politics as 'a conflict between one sensible order and another',[229] an 'opposition between logics that count the parties and parts of the community in different ways.'[230] For Rancière, politics occurs whenever the prevailing 'count' is challenged by an alternative that incorporates those who are 'uncounted' in that prevailing 'count'. However, it remains that this alternative 'count' is still a 'count', a 'partition of the sensible' that is no less likely to have overlooked or omitted certain other 'parts of the population'.

Hence Rancière's conviction that there can never be an 'end of politics'. For even if this alternative superseded the prevailing 'count', its 'triumph' would not entail any such 'extinction', since there will always be a section of the population that goes 'uncounted', even in the most comprehensive 'count'. To somehow put an end to politics, therefore, is not to find some lasting solution to all social problems, disagreements, and antagonisms. Instead, putting an end to politics entails establishing a *totalitarian* regime, one that formalises the omission of the 'uncounted' as exclusion, as a refusal – rather than a mere failure – to acknowledge the regime's obligation to take seriously their grievances, their consciousness, their practice.[231] As such, the misconstruction I mentioned above pertains to the negative connotations of Rancière's notion of 'the police' and of partitioning 'the sensible'.

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[227] Gramsci, 'The Political Party', p. 155.

[228] Gramsci, 'The Political Party', p. 155.

[229] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560.

[230] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 35.

[231] Rancière here echoes Lefort's account of totalitarianism as the attempt to found a 'society without internal division and antagonism', not be resolving all possible divisions and antagonisms – an impossible feat, under any circumstances, given the irreducibly infinite complexity of any social aggregation – but rather by concealing, denying or condemning them instead, along with whoever foments them. Under a totalitarian regime, internal divisions are externalised as 'the 'enemy within': the kulaks, the bourgeoisie, the Jews, spies, and saboteurs', in order to sustain the impression of a unified, self-identical 'People-as-One' (Marchart, p. 102).

For Rancière, the goal of politics is not an 'end of the police' and of the exclusion of the 'uncounted', since no 'count' can ever include everyone and everything, in much the same way as Williams's 'dominant cultures'.

Unlike Mouffe, Rancière never uses Marchart's dyad of 'politics' and 'the political', yet his own dyad of 'police' and 'politics' articulates a very similar distinction. On one hand, Marchart's 'politics' and Rancière's 'police' refer to a way of conceiving politics and society as having limits, in which case it is entirely possible to comprehensively or 'adequately' 'count' what exists within those limits. On the other hand, Marchart's 'the political' and Rancière's 'politics' refer to a way of conceiving politics and society as being quite literally limitless in its irreducible infinitude. As such, the second term in both dyads – 'the political' and 'politics' – draws attention to how the first term can only apprehend politics and society as being limited, by 'select[ing] from and consequently exclud[ing] the full range of human practice.'[232] As distinguished from 'the popular', the category of 'subaltern' – I believe – functions in precisely the same way as this second term in these two dyads. As something that exceeds existing critical frameworks, including those that – supposedly – 'adequately theorize' 'popular consciousness and popular practice', 'the subaltern' approximates Rancière's 'uncounted', the supplementary 'part of those without part' that these frameworks omit when conducting their own 'partition of the sensible'.[233]

It is important, therefore, to avoid conflating 'the subaltern' with 'the popular', for the former attends to forms of consciousness and practice that the latter *cannot* 'adequately theorize'. To simply presume that no such amorphous forms exist is effectively to formalise their oversight as *exclusion*, within critical

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[232] Williams, p. 125.

[233] Again, on this point we might distinguish Spivak's subaltern from Gramsci's. For the latter goes 'uncounted' only within 'the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group', within the dominant group's own, 'particular conception of the world' and 'conscious line of moral conduct'. Gramsci's subaltern, then, may well be 'counted' in some other 'conception of the world', in which case what makes them a subaltern is the fact that this other 'sensible order' has yet to become dominant. In contrast, Spivak's subaltern goes 'uncounted' in *all* such orders – *no one* as yet recognises this subaltern, not even those who contest the prevailing 'sensible order' in the name of 'the part of those without part'. Whereas Gramsci's subaltern might well belong to a recognisable identity or category, Spivak's belongs to no such category whatsoever.

frameworks that otherwise adequately apprehend forms that are recognisably 'popular'. Lazarus may well be correct to argue that it is indeed possible to adequately 'recover' or 'theor[ise]' 'popular consciousness and popular practice'. However, in countering Spivak's apparent foreclosure of our ability to access the *subaltern's* consciousness, Lazarus conflates 'popular consciousness and popular practice' with that of the subaltern. As Spivak points out, though, the subaltern – or at least the 'reasonable and rarefied definition of the word'[234] that interests her – is far from synonymous with the idea of 'the popular'. For the latter term invariably denotes a collective identity or collective mode of belonging. In contrast, the former is based around 'singularity', in the sense of 'life as pure immanence',[235] pertaining to something that is not in some way the repetition of something larger, like a 'universal law' or a collective identity.

The singular cannot be categorised without becoming a repetition of the category itself and all other instances or examples of that category. As a result, Spivak's subaltern-as-singular cannot form 'a *recognisable* basis of action' because that basis – along with the action it enables – cannot be made to correspond to any available category, and thus recognised as an instance of that category. To be able to claim to have 'adequately' 'recovered' or apprehended the subaltern's 'consciousness', 'experience', 'will', or 'practice', one must be able to recognise it as consciousness, experience, will, or practice. Thus, any such claim invariably apprehends the subaltern as something other than a subaltern. For making such a claim is to recognise the subaltern as an agent with a recognisable grievance, interest, or demand. Moreover, as a recognised, recognisable agent, we will have recognised the subaltern's practice as articulating that demand, and thus *as an articulation of a demand*, as *articulacy*, as indicating that *the subaltern has spoken*. Yet because they 'cannot speak' as long as they cannot form 'a recognisable basis of action', the subaltern would not 'speak' as a subaltern, but rather as whatever we 'recognise' them as, whether as a woman, a citizen, a worker, a human, 'the people', or indeed a category that we must invent in cases where what we observe is irreducible to all existing categories.

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[234] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 475.

[235] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 475.

Thus, paradoxically, even when we have 'recognised' the subaltern as any of these categories – and thus allegedly dispelled their subaltern status – we must bear in mind the ways in which this 'recognition' is actually *mis*recognition, as we apprehend the subaltern's consciousness and experience solely as an instance of whatever category we 'recognise' them as. Lazarus, therefore, is correct to insist that existing critical frameworks are capable of adequately apprehending '*popular* consciousness and *popular* practice', but only with respect to forms of consciousness and practice that correspond to what we understand to be the category of 'the popular'. Because 'the subaltern' is not synonymous with 'the popular', this contention does not establish the adequacy of those frameworks for 'theorising' *subaltern* consciousness and practice. Nonetheless, to insist upon this inadequacy hardly forecloses the possibility of emancipating the subaltern, of alleviating them of their subaltern status and lending them truly effective agency. Instead, this insistence forecloses the possibility of *fully*, *comprehensively* grasping subaltern 'consciousness', 'experience', 'will', and 'practice' *in their own terms*. This foreclosure draws attention to how the subaltern can only become an agent by assuming an identity or subject-position that is already recognisable – having already been recognised – but which will always be inadequate to the task of *exhaustively* articulating their subjective experience. As Spivak attests, no one can claim the identity of 'subaltern' for themselves – '[n]o one can say 'I am a subaltern' in whatever language'[236] and remain a subaltern. Of course, there are innumerable demographics across the world today that could legitimately claim to being unable to form 'a recognisable basis of action'. However, it remains that successfully 'claiming' that grievance and thus being recognised as a 'subaltern' requires performing some kind of recognisable action, in which case the successful claimant would cease to be a subaltern in the very moment in which they are 'recognised' as one.

Spivak's category of the 'subaltern', therefore, suggests that something always exceeds existing categories like 'the popular', in much the same way as Foucault's 'odd terms' jar with power's regulated vision of a stable, coherent society. For all their similarities, though, Spivak's rendition of the subaltern-as-supplement and Foucault's of resistance-as-dissonance also have their differences.

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[236] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 476.

For one thing, whereas the latter describes something that is socially ubiquitous, that is 'everywhere', the former derives from Spivak's analyses of social, cultural, political and juridical forms that exist on just one 'side' of the so-called 'international division of labour' – that is, the 'other side',[237] the 'Third World'. I wonder, though, whether this apparent rootedness within a particular historical conjuncture is due to the fact that Spivak's original interest in the term 'subaltern' came from her engagements with the work of the *Subaltern Studies* group, which largely attended to India.[238] Spivak has claimed that, 'given the active circuit of socialized capital, it is hard for us to think of a genuine subaltern in the First World.'[239] Nonetheless, if subalternity pertains to something that exceeds the remit of existing categories, then to claim that it obtains only in particular social conjunctures is to claim that these categories are adequate to the task of comprehensively articulating all forms of consciousness, experience, intention, and practice that obtain in other social conjunctures.

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[237] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p. 288.

[238] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 476.

[239] Spivak, 'Negotiating the Structures of Violence', in *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. by Sarah Harasym (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 142; in a much later article, Spivak would remark that, as she 'search[ed] [for] the subaltern' in the years following the publication of 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', the category 'kept moving down the social strata', a 'downward trajectory [that] came to relate to home working, permanent casuals, more orthodox doubts of the Marxist analysis of the female laboring body as the agent of production' (Spivak, 'Scattered speculations', p. 481). Whether Spivak ever 'found' the subaltern is unclear, given her contention in the same essay that '[t]he subaltern has no 'examples'' (Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 484). Again, Spivak's subaltern departs from Gramsci's on this note. For on one hand, like Gramsci, Spivak has arguably 'found' plenty of 'subalterns', albeit insofar as they are 'uncounted' within prevailing 'sensible orders'. Hence her emphasis on female peasants or sub-proletarians in rural India, subjected to 'traditional' and patriarchal social structures. (See pp. 131-32 above for a list of some of the subaltern groups Gramsci identified.) Yet the uncertainty over whether she has ever found *the* 'Subaltern' reflects Spivak's understanding of the term in a singular sense, as a position without any identity whatsoever, and which accords with no known category. Indeed, according to this highly rarefied understanding, Spivak will never 'find' the 'Subaltern', because as soon as she purports to have found it, she will have identified it as something other than a subaltern, and so she will have redressed its lack of recourse to any existing identity.

This claim resembles Guha's that the 'metropolitan bourgeoisie [...] professed and practiced democracy at home',[240] in almost direct antithesis to their autocratic rule throughout colonial South Asia. If the subaltern acquires agency by 'cathecting' a recognised identity and yet in some respects remain a 'subaltern' – insofar as that identity cannot articulate every aspect of their consciousness, experience, will, or practice – then it becomes possible that the problematic that the category of 'subaltern' addresses obtains in all cases of 'cathecting' a collective, hence recognised identity. We might even argue that this wider applicability extends not just to all cases of 'cathecting' identities like 'worker' or 'people', but even to cases of 'cathecting' relatively 'privileged' identities, such as those of 'middle class', 'beneficiary', 'white', or 'man' as idealised in the discourses of heteronormative masculinity. For example, if Said claims that orthodox Orientalism 'squeezed out' 'everything but "learning"', then we might think of Burton's reduction to 'the voice of Empire' not as enforced conformity to those strictures 'against [his] informed will', so much as Burton 'cathecting' the identity of the Orientalist, the European, or the 'coloniser'.

As I have already discussed above, Said approaches Burton's reduction to 'the voice of Empire' as evidence of some kind of 'mechanism operat[ing] specifically (and effectively) upon personal human experiences that otherwise contradicted'[241] the strictures of 'bookish Orientalism'. I concluded my discussion of Gramsci by considering whether this 'mechanism' resembled the process of selective incorporation as described above, a process whose exclusionary nature resembles Spivak's notion of 'cathexis', the act of embodying or inhabiting a collective identity or category. According to Spivak, this act is synecdochal: it involves taking 'the part [of oneself] that seems to agree' or correspond with the terms of the assumed identity 'to stand for the whole [of oneself]. I put aside the surplus of my subjectivity and *metonymise* myself, count myself as the part by which I am connected to the particular predicament so that I can claim collectivity, and engage in action validated by that very collective.'[242] In order to be recognised

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[240] Guha, p. 4.

[241] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 156 (emphases in original).

[242] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 480 (my emphasis).

as 'belonging' to a collective – as a *repetition* of a *category* – one must identify the part of oneself that corresponds to the terms of that collective as the whole of oneself, excising or 'putting aside' in the process the remainder, the 'surplus' that cannot be reduced to those terms – the '*unassimilable excess*'. In precisely the same way, Burton 'put aside' those 'personal human experiences that otherwise contradicted', that were *irreducible* to the strictures of 'bookish Orientalism'. The 'mechanism' leading to this excision, therefore, might well be something like Spivak's process of 'self-metonymisation'.

It still remains unclear, though, whether only those 'individualists' like Burton 'metonymised' themselves in this manner, or whether all Orientalists equally did so. For if conformists like Kinglake lacked any 'personal human experiences' that diverged from or contradicted Orientalist orthodoxy, then we would have no reason to assume that they equally had to 'metonymise' themselves in order to conform to that orthodoxy. Again, though, Said provides very little evidence that 'non-conformists' like Burton ever had any such experiences, and so we have little more reason to assume that their reduction to 'the voice of Empire' did indeed entail 'self-metonymisation'. Said is unable to sustain his distinction between Burton and Kinglake as long as he is unable to establish where Burton's 'personal human experiences' went, or rather 'what forms *they* took, while they lasted'.[243] For this inability renders Said unable to *demonstrate* that Burton ever did have any such experiences in the first place, and that Kinglake did not. We thus return to the dilemma with which I introduced the current section of this chapter – the dilemma concerning how to demonstrate a presence using existing critical frameworks that are unable either to recognise that presence as such, or to even comprehend it as something that is possible.

Of course, what I am suggesting here is a rather different way of explaining the apparent absence of 'personal human experiences' of 'the Orient' in 'non-conformist' accounts like those of Burton and Flaubert. For whereas Said claims that these experiences are simply absent or 'squeezed out', I am suggesting that they only *appear* to be absent, because Said cannot perceive any evidence of them within his chosen interpretive framework. At the very least, though, Said does notice that

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[243] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 156 (emphases in original).

curious manner in which 'personal human experiences' are somehow 'squeezed out' – the oddity of how a wholly 'bookish Orientalism' seems corroborated by 'terrestrial reality' itself, despite all the ways in which the former allegedly misrepresents the latter. We can read this observation in two ways. Either Flaubert and Burton's accounts of 'the Orient' are haunted by something like that presence-as-absence that Said notes throughout Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; or it is Said's analysis that is haunted by this presence-as-absence, insofar as he ignores 'odd terms' in these accounts in favour of emphasissing how both writers ultimately subscribe to 'the voice of Empire'. As such, whenever he notes the curious absence of 'odd terms' in Flaubert and Burton's accounts, what he observes is the limits of his own interpretive framework, the moment in which he unduly homogenises European experiences of 'terrestrial reality' in 'the Orient'.

In this respect, Said might be accused of succumbing to an 'imperious instinct'[244] in the sense that, rather than 'stay[ing] with heterogeneities', instead he 'reduce[s] them to [an] overarching principle that speaks for an already given whole.'[245] I am not suggesting that either Flaubert and Burton were 'counter-hegemonic voices', or that they were 'reduced [...] to the role of imperial scribe' 'against the[ir] informed will', as if they were opposed to European imperialism as much as Orientalist 'anonymity'. No doubt Said was correct to insist that Orientalist orthodoxy in no way corresponded to 'terrestrial reality'. Yet we would surely then observe a tension in Flaubert and Burton's accounts of 'terrestrial reality', between the details of their experiences of that reality and the strictures of 'bookish Orientalism', even if they were both 'reduced [...] to the role of imperial scribe'. Rather than a deliberate, defiant violation of those strictures, this tension would indicate how the former simply cannot be reduced to the terms of the latter, no matter how hard Flaubert and Burton try. We would observe this irreducibility in the form of Foucault's 'odd terms', Young's 'unassimilable excesses', and Chakrabarty's 'stubborn knots', or what Spivak calls 'misfits in the text', 'moments

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[244] Chakrabarty, p. 112.

[245] Chakrabarty, p. 107.

of transgression', or 'critical moments''[246] – details that do not conform to a wider pattern, and which the pattern therefore cannot explain.

As we have seen, Rancière would refer to these irreducible details as 'the part of those without part', 'supplements' that disturb the 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies'[247] that – as a result – can only be maintained by excluding this 'part' of the 'uncounted'. This exclusion of the 'uncounted' is what Rancière means by 'consensus', a state of harmony in which everyone is 'in his or her place, with the occupation suited to his or her place and the name fitting that occupation.'[248] Thus, as soon as the 'uncounted' protest their exclusion, they step 'out of place',[249] disrupting that 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies', and inciting what Rancière calls *dissensus*. Rancière provides numerous definitions of this term that do not always co-align, as I will explore in my next chapter. Generally, though, dissensus for Rancière describes a situation that arises whenever 'there is something wrong in the picture, when something is not at the right place. There is dissensus when we don't know how to designate what we see, when a name no longer suits the thing or the character that it names, etc.'[250] 'Dissensus' arises whenever existing interpretive frameworks cannot categorise something or someone, or recognise them according to existing identities. Once again, Rancière's notion of the 'uncounted', or the 'part of those without part', resonates with Spivak's figure of the subaltern.[251]

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[246] Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', p. 21.

[247] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

[248] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

[249] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 559.

[250] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560.

[251] Throughout this thesis, my emphasis when reading Rancière is on how to go 'uncounted' is to be deprived of agency. Yet this status is not always one of disempowerment. An especially apt example of 'dissensus' from postcolonial studies is Frantz Fanon's account of how a revolutionary national consciousness takes form in the cultural practices and productions of colonised peoples. Initially, native cultural forms calcify under colonial rule. National culture 'becomes a set of automatic habits, some traditions of dress and a few broken-down institutions. Little movement can be discerned in such remnants of culture [...] The poverty of the people, national oppression and the inhibition of culture are one and the same thing' (Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 2001), p.

Indeed, this comparability helps establish how Spivak manages to 'observe' subaltern consciousness, and how we might 'observe' 'odd terms' in places where they otherwise appear to be absent, unlikely, or impossible within existing frameworks. For as long as Rancière's 'uncounted' are excluded from the prevailing 'partition of the sensible', they cannot be observed – except via the dissensus that arises wherever they step 'out of place'. In the same way, Spivak's 'misfits in the text' or 'moments of transgression' indicate the presence of something that theoretically should not be there, according to existing frameworks. Indeed, Foucault's 'odd terms', Young's 'unassimilable excess', and Chakrabarty's 'stubborn knots' all indicate something very similar – a presence that was unanticipated, and which is therefore as yet unnameable and unexplainable. Of course, what Said observes in Flaubert and Burton is an unanticipated *absence* rather than a presence, a dearth of dissensus in the form of a disjuncture between their accounts of 'terrestrial reality' and the claims of 'bookish Orientalism'. However, there is dissensus as long as Said is unable to explain this absence – as long as he cannot establish where Burton and Flaubert's 'personal human experiences' went, 'what forms *they* took, while they lasted',[252] or identify that 'formidable mechanism [...] operat[ing] specifically (and effectively) upon [those] personal human experiences'. According to Said, these experiences have stepped 'out of place'.

Of course, Flaubert and Burton themselves hardly step 'out of place', given how they excise certain 'personal human experiences' from their accounts of 'terrestrial reality' in order to conform to the strictures of 'bookish Orientalism'. On the contrary, both writers remain squarely in the place of the 'disinterested' Orientalist observer, sustaining in the process Orientalism's own 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies' by refusing to allow 'terrestrial

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191). Gradually, though, as 'the Negro comes to an understanding of himself, and understands the rest of the world *differently*,' (my emphasis) so native customs and crafts take on new, more vivid, more colourful, and more innovative forms. In response, the occupying power condemns these developments 'in the name of a rigid code of artistic style and of a cultural life which grows up at the heart of the colonial system. The colonial specialists *do not recognize* these new forms and rush to the help of the traditions of the indigenous society' (Fanon, p. 195 (my emphasis)). These new cultural forms disrupt the 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies' of the European specialist in the native culture, and the natives themselves effectively step 'out of place' as dictated within that 'sensible order'.

[252] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 156 (emphases in original).

reality' – including 'Orientals' themselves – to depart from Orientalist orthodoxy in ways that would disrupt that particular 'partition of the sensible'. However, insofar as Said finds this absence remarkable, then we might argue that neither Flaubert nor Burton's 'personal human experiences' were reducible to the strictures of 'bookish Orientalism'. Thus, despite their efforts to conform to those strictures, the very absence of these experiences denotes a disavowed yet irrepressible presence – the presence of an 'unassimilable excess', of evidence of how 'terrestrial reality' is too infinitely complex to be reduced to the tidy regularities of Orientalist orthodoxy. Again, it may be the case that this absence obtains in Said's analysis of these accounts, rather than the accounts themselves. Either way, this presence-as-absence suggests that neither Flaubert nor Burton's consciousness or experience coincided perfectly with Orientalist orthodoxy. Moreover, if Said finds no evidence of 'personal human experiences' that diverged from Orientalist orthodoxy in the writings of 'conformists' like Kinglake, then I see no reason to doubt that this absence equally indicates a presence-as-absence. Once again, we cannot conclude from the absence of 'odd terms' in Kinglake's accounts, that his consciousness and experience of 'terrestrial reality' did not exceed the strictures of 'bookish Orientalism', even if he by no means intended to acknowledge this disjuncture.

Thus, if Flaubert, Burton, and Kinglake's accounts of 'terrestrial reality' are marked by dissensus, then it reflects a disjuncture between consciousness and experience on one hand, and will and intention on the other – between an awareness that 'terrestrial reality' exceeds the strictures of 'bookish Orientalism', and a desire to corroborate those strictures nonetheless. This dissensus arises because 'the Orient' refuses to stay in its place as dictated by Orientalist orthodoxy. However, if they are indeed aware of this refusal – however much they do not acknowledge it – then Flaubert, Burton, and Kinglake are equally 'out of place'. As such, their excisions of 'personal human experiences' that jar with Orientalist orthodoxy are efforts to step back into place, as much as they are efforts to put 'the Orient' back into its place. We can therefore avoid totalising the individual Orientalist's consciousness and experience of 'terrestrial reality', by assuming that a disjuncture exists between the two, just as much as between that reality and 'bookish Orientalism'. Wherever we observe such absences, what we observe is not a spontaneous totality, but rather 'self-metonymisation', as defined above by Spivak. In my next chapter, I will demonstrate how this principle becomes important not just

methodologically, but also politically. For the possibility of challenging the ascendancy of Said's 'imperial consensus' depends on there being a disjuncture between that consensus and the individual consciousness and experience of those who subscribe to it. In short, we should never assume that the latter does not exceed the former, under any circumstances.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have pursued a way of reconceiving Said's 'virtual unity of purpose' without assuming that it occurs spontaneously, as if all 'Westerners' were congenitally imperialist. Building on Williams's distinction between 'official consciousness' and 'practical consciousness', I have looked towards Foucault and Gramsci for ways of reconciling Said's claims that this unity is often absolute, with the fact that – as Said acknowledged – 'Western society' is also deeply divided. I have suggested that, in light of these fractures, we must understand this 'imperial consensus' not as something that occurs spontaneously, but rather as something that persists only as long as there is an apparatus of instrumental power that sustains it, by actively disciplining or coercing those who participate in it. For both Foucault and Gramsci, no form of collective unity ever occurs spontaneously, whether in a society, a collective identity, or a political movement. Thus, in the absence of a disciplining agency performing a 'policing function', such collectives can only dissolve under the pressure of the myriad of differences between their constituent elements. One implication, of course, is that one's individual consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices might never correlate perfectly with whatever collective one might subscribe to. Hence Spivak's contention that subscribing to any given collective entails 'self-metonymisation', the disavowal of aspects of oneself that exceed the terms of the collective in question.

No collective, therefore, ever manages to totalise itself, in the sense of incorporating every aspect of everyone in a given polity – not even Said's 'imperial consensus'. There is always an 'unassimilable excess' that haunts even the most expansive or 'total' 'consensus', an 'odd term' or 'stubborn knots that stand out and break up the otherwise evenly woven surface of the fabric'[253] that is the seemingly

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[253] Chakrabarty, p. 106.

total, spontaneous, and undifferentiated 'collective will'. Gramsci's 'policing function', therefore, serves a similar purpose to that of Rancière's 'police' – the 'dismissal of all supplements' that, having stepped 'out of place', disrupt the prevailing 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies'. Spivak's notion of 'self-metonymisation' describes a very similar effect, although here the 'policing' agent is oneself, rather than some exterior agency, like a state, a political party, or a 'ruling class'. If the logic of 'consensus' never prevails absolutely – as Rancière argues – then these 'supplements' never disappear entirely. Thus, just as Foucault claims that 'it is the *absence* of resistance which is impossible',[254] so I argue that an apparent absence of 'odd terms' merely indicates the inadequacy of existing interpretive frameworks to perceive them.

To this end, I have suggested that Said's distinction between 'individualist' Orientalist writers like Flaubert and Burton, and conformists like Kinglake is potentially false. For Said does little to establish that the 'imaginative pressures […] institutions and traditions [or] cultural forces'[255] that 'reduced' the former 'to the role of imperial scribe' did not act upon the latter in equal measure. Indeed, Said derives this distinction from Flaubert and Burton's conscious efforts to resist being 'literally abolish[ed]' as individual 'human subject[s]' by these pressures, rather than from textual evidence that indicates that these two writers were subject to 'personal human experiences' that conformists were not. If Said ever finds evidence of equivocation in the otherwise 'anonymous' edifice of Orientalist 'Science', he only does so wherever a writer explicitly opposes something about Orientalism. Thus, if Said attributes the 'internal consistency' of Orientalist discourse to an absence of 'odd terms', then he does so because he equates 'resistance' with 'opposition'. In the process, Said overlooks forms of resistance-as-friction that arise from the dissonance between 'personal human experience' and Orientalist orthodoxy, 'practical consciousness' and 'official consciousness'.

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[254] Young, p. 87 (emphasis in original).

[255] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 49.

Chapter 3
Consent, subjectivity, and excess

We should avoid assuming that existing interpretive frameworks can ever be capable of *exhaustively* apprehending the consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices of *any* given individual or group. In my previous chapter, I argued that we should avoid this assumption with respect to individual consciousness, experience, intention, and practice *as such*, rather than solely among the most impoverished, disenfranchised, and marginalised demographics. In this chapter, I argue that the prospect of successfully challenging the ascendancy of Edward W. Said's 'imperial consensus'[1] rests on us avoiding this assumption. After all, to claim that this consensus exhaustively articulates the consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices of those who subscribe to it, is to apprehend it as something that – unlike Raymond Williams's 'dominant culture' – does not 'select from and consequently exclude the full range of human practice.'[2] Subsequently, this understanding posits this 'imperial consensus' as being entirely free of any remainder or 'unassimilable excess'[3] that would indicate that those who subscribe to it are subject to something – an experience, perhaps, or a value, an idea, a belief, a subliminal awareness – that cannot be made to comply with an imperialist worldview. In short, to claim that Said's 'imperial consensus' fully represents the subjectivities of all who participate in it is to apprehend the latter *synecdochally*, just as Spivak argues with respect to the category of 'the popular'.[4]

In this chapter, I argue that this remainder is the necessary condition that makes it possible for us to challenge the hegemonic ascendancy of this 'imperial

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[1] Said, Edward W., *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 62.

[2] Williams, Raymond, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 125.

[3] Young, Robert J.C., *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 135-36.

[4] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Scattered speculations on the subaltern and the popular', in *Postcolonial Studies*, 8, 4 (2005), 480; For a discussion of the synecdochal effect of social categories like 'the popular', see Chapter 2 of this thesis, pp. 144-46.

consensus'. For this remainder is what prompts those who participate in this 'consensus' – or indeed, any 'sensible order',[5] 'collective will',[6] 'dominant culture'[7] or 'hegemonic formation'[8] – to experience what Jacques Rancière calls 'dis-identification', a moment of rupture in which an individual suddenly no longer identifies with either their 'place' within the 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies'[9] outlined within a prevailing 'sensible order',[10] or with that order itself. If political authority is hegemonic wherever it enjoys voluntary popular consent, then we can only challenge this form of authority by encouraging those who consent to 'dis-identify' in this manner. So far in this thesis, I have established how Said's account of imperialism's ascendancy among 'Westerners' – along with more general claims among postcolonial critics concerning the 'structuring assumptions'[11] underpinning all 'Western' thought – resembles various accounts of hegemonic articulation, including those of Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Oliver Marchart. Despite their obvious differences, each of these thinkers attests that any totalist articulation of society, community, identity, or consciousness cannot possibly encompass 'the full range of human practice', and can only be sustained by exteriorising – that is, *excluding* – anything that exceeds the terms of the totality. However, all of these thinkers maintain that society is much too complex for a straightforward, inside-outside, included-excluded opposition to ever occur spontaneously, without the

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[5] Rancière, Jacques, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', in *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 21, 4 (December 2007), p. 560.

[6] Gramsci, Antonio, 'Brief Notes on Machiavelli's Politics', *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973), p. 129.

[7] Williams, p. 114.

[8] Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London, New York: Verso, 1985), p. 123.

[9] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

[10] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. by Steven Corcoran (London, New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 36.

[11] Lazarus, Neil, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', in *Race and Class*, 53, 1 (2011), p. 15.

active organisation of both the distribution of matter – including bodies and their physical environment – and its symbolic inscriptions. Society itself, therefore, will never fully correspond to such oppositions and totalisations.

According to Rancière, the ascendancy of a 'sensible order' is challenged only whenever someone 'dis-identifies' from it. Rancière defines 'dis-identification' as a status of occupying a 'gap' or 'interval between identities' that reflects a 'difference between the voice and the body',[12] between one's allotted place within an ascendant 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies', and one's own, independent perception of oneself. This difference indicates that the latter is irreducible to the former. Rancière maintains that this difference can occur anywhere, among anyone. Indeed, any apparent absence of this disjuncture is by no means spontaneous. Instead, this absence denotes the active maintenance of 'an identity between law and fact, such that the former becomes identical with the natural life of society'.[13] Rancière maintains that no such identity ever occurs spontaneously; that a coincidence between 'law and fact' exists only as long as the possibility of 'dis-identification' is minimised. Yet since 'law and fact' never coincide spontaneously, 'dis-identification' always remains possible, no matter how improbable. As such, to assume that an apparent absence of 'dis-identification' denotes its impossibility, is to contribute to the ascendancy of a prevailing 'sensible order', by compounding its own foreclosure of the possibility of challenging its claim to 'an identity between law and fact'.

To challenge the hegemonic ascendancy of Said's 'imperial consensus', then, we must encourage those who subscribe to it to 'dis-identify' from it instead, which in turn demands that we avoid assuming that that consensus exhaustively articulates their consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices. Instead, we

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[12] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', in *October*, 61, 'The Identity in Question' (Summer 1992), p. 62.

[13] Rancière, 'Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?', in *Dissensus*, p. 72; in other words, the 'law' cannot ever become purely descriptive of a social reality that exists independently of it; human behaviour does not conform to the law spontaneously, but rather because one is constantly reminded of the consequences of not conforming to it. The law, therefore, must be actively upheld by regulating human behaviour and disciplining human bodies, whose spontaneous, independent conformity to the law cannot be guaranteed.

must assume that subscribing to that 'imperial consensus' requires one to 'metonymise [one]self', as outlined by Spivak. That is, to subscribe to an imperialist 'sensible order' is to take 'the part [of oneself] that seems to agree' with the terms of that order 'to stand for the whole'; to 'put aside the surplus of [one's] subjectivity and [...] count [one]self' entirely as that particular part.[14] Encouraging 'dis-identification', then, entails encouraging the opposite of this disavowal of 'the surplus of [one's] subjectivity'. For in contrast to this disavowal, to 'dis-identify' is to *embrace* that surplus. According to Rancière, 'dis-identification' is 'the denial of an identity given by another, given by the ruling order of policy',[15] out of a sense that that identity inadequately articulates one's consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices. Thus, wherever one subscribes to imperialism's 'sensible order' by 'metonymis[ing one]self', one is equally capable of 'dis-identifying' from that order instead. If claiming any collective identity is always an act of 'self-metonymisation' – as Spivak suggests – then it is always possible to encourage 'dis-identification' instead. As a result, to claim otherwise; to assume that it is impossible to encourage 'dis-identification' among those who subscribe to a given 'sensible order' or collective identity, is to compound that subscription.

Here it becomes politically disabling to assume that any such 'sensible order' exhaustively articulates the consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices of those who subscribe to it; that the conditions that would prompt them to 'dis-identify' from it instead are therefore absent; and that encouraging them to do so is therefore impossible. Hence my insistence that anyone who wishes to challenge the hegemonic ascendancy of Said's 'imperial consensus' must assume that the subjectivities among those who subscribe to it exceed its terms. Clearly, though, assuming the ubiquity of this excess is not enough to challenge that hegemonic ascendancy. We must equally address what it is that prompts one to favour disavowing that excess and subscribing to imperialism. Undoubtedly, every individual instance of this disavowal is prompted by a unique and complex combination of disparate factors. My point in this chapter, though, is that if we were to enumerate these factors, we must not overlook that assumption that the

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[14] Spivak, 'Scattered speculations on the subaltern and the popular', p. 480.

[15] Ranciere, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

consciousness, experience, intentions, or practices of anyone who subscribes to Said's 'imperial consensus' do not exceed its terms. A critical practice that is informed by this assumption can only contribute to the hegemonic ascendancy of that consensus, since it cannot imagine anyone subscribing to that consensus being capable of 'dis-identifying' from it instead. In my previous chapter, I warned against too readily assuming that anyone who subscribes to a collective identity or 'sensible order' do not exceed its terms in any way, albeit solely as a theoretical or methodological principle. In this chapter, though, I will argue that this principle is no less important *politically* – that is, as a principle for effective practice as well as cogent theory.

It might be objected that the ethical imperative to unconditionally oppose imperialism, on the basis of its fundamentally, self-evidently, irredeemably unjust nature, already provides an adequate means of encouraging one to 'dis-identify' from Said's 'imperial consensus'. No doubt this imperative is a compelling rationale for opposing imperialism, yet surely it should be clear by now that this imperative alone has so far failed to compel everyone to actively, unconditionally pursue the thorough dissolution of imperialism. For one thing, as Spivak and Albert Memmi have various shown, subscribing to this imperative, even to the point of 'dis-identifying' from imperialism, do not always lead to productive or even resolute opposition. In many cases, it can induce a sense of paralysis and uncertainty instead. Spivak and Memmi respond in different ways to this paralysis, and in this chapter I will explore how these responses indicate an appropriate, effective way of resolving it. For Memmi, this paralysis indicates that anyone who benefits from imperialism cannot possibly contribute meaningfully to its dissolution, that 'the colonizer who refuses' is beset by an 'impossible historical situation'. For anyone who 'participates in and benefits from those privileges which [they] half-heartedly denounce',[16] is caught in 'a contradiction which [...] depriv[es them] of all coherence and all tranquillity.'[17] Ultimately, Memmi finds that a 'colonizer who rejects colonialism

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[16] Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. by Howard Greenfeld (London: Earthscan, 2003), p. 64.

[17] Memmi, p. 64.

does not find a solution for his anguish in revolt', and invariably 'resigns himself to a position of ambiguity'[18] that he cannot hope to resolve.

No doubt objecting to whatever one benefits from leads to a contradiction between intention and practice. Yet I disagree with Memmi's claim here that because of this contradiction, no such objection can ever have integrity or even be sincere. Memmi's portrait of 'the colonizer' usefully registers multiple intentions among European colonial settlers, even though he is pessimistic regarding the realistic options available to his 'colonizer who refuses'. Moreover, this pessimism is borne out of a sense that the dissenting coloniser's political paralysis derives not from an underlying affinity with the colonial regime, but rather from Memmi's own conviction that political integrity depends on a perfect alignment of practice with intention. No doubt this is ultimately the case, yet Memmi does not allow for a gradation of integrity that would acknowledge, and thus encourage, objections among the colonisers that might lead to more effective ways of challenging colonial rule. For Memmi, only a thoroughly coherent, unambiguous, and consistent subject-position can facilitate active, unconditional opposition to injustice. As such, for Memmi, only the colonised can actively oppose colonialism, and so it is pointless to encourage the European colonisers to do so as well.

In her 2003 Introduction to *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957), Nadine Gordimer dismissed this argument as a 'failure of vision'[19] that prevented Memmi from recognising that 'there *was* a minority of colonizers, mainly of the Left spectrum, who identified themselves with the position that colonialism was unjust, racist and anti-human, and were prepared, first, to act against it along with the great mass force of the colonized'.[20] Gordimer points out several instances where the privileged circumstances of 'the colonizer who refuses' did not prevent historical beneficiaries of colonial rule from actively opposing colonial regimes. Memmi appears to be mistaken, therefore, in believing that only those occupying a thoroughly consistent subject-position can contribute meaningfully to overcoming

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[18] Memmi, p. 89.

[19] Gordimer, Nadine, 'Introduction', in Memmi, p. 38.

[20] Gordimer, p. 39 (emphasis in original).

colonialism. Moreover, by collapsing his distinction between 'the colonizer who refuses' and 'the colonizer who accepts', Memmi risks foreclosing any effort to encourage those that benefit from colonialism to oppose it nonetheless. The risk here is one of self-corroboration, of discouraging anyone from challenging the hegemonic ascendancy of colonialism among those who benefit from it, and thus compounding the relative absence of opposition to it among these beneficiaries, which in turn discourages one from trying to redress that absence, and so on. I find that Memmi's distinction between 'the colonizer who refuses' and 'the colonizer who accepts' is crucial to avoiding this feedback effect. No doubt Memmi was right to point out how the distinction was hardly borne out in reality. Nonetheless, however much it ever holds true or not, collapsing this distinction risks invalidating the very notion that someone who benefits from imperialism might object to it. In short, this distinction suggests that beneficiaries of imperialism are subject to diverse forms of consciousness, experience, intentions, and practice, many of which might be incompatible with, if not antithetical to imperialism.

This chapter will begin by exploring a curious situation that Spivak has described in numerous interviews and has confronted on several occasions, in which her more privileged students – typically 'bourgeois white male[s]'[21] – claim to be unable to participate in seminar debates. According to Spivak, this claim is prompted by the students' desire not to speak as 'bourgeois white males', coupled with a sense that they cannot speak as anything else. Elsewhere, Spivak is generally scornful towards this 'sort of breast-beating',[22] given her suspicion that it often serves as an alibi, an empty gesture 'that is left behind at the threshold and then business goes on as usual',[23] thus 'stop[ping] the possibility of social change'.[24] Spivak, though, takes these students' claims seriously, as reflecting both a genuine awareness of how their privilege impedes as much as it empowers, and a

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[21] Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', in *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. by Sarah Harasym (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 62.

[22] Spivak, 'The *Intervention* Interview', in Harasym ed., p. 121.

[23] Spivak, 'The *Intervention* Interview', p. 121.

[24] Spivak, 'The *Intervention* Interview', p. 121.

subsequent, no less genuine desire to be 'politically-correct'.[25] Hence Spivak's suggestion that the students 'actively investigate', even 'develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for [them] that [they] are silenced'.[26] Quite clearly, this response risks equating the students' apparent inarticulacy to the 'loneliness'[27] of Spivak's subaltern, a category that – as we saw in my previous chapter – often identifies an inability to 'speak' with only particular demographics.[28] Hence her claim in a 1987 interview that, 'given the active circuit of socialized capital, it is hard for us to think of a genuine subaltern in the First World.'[29] What interests me here, then, is whether Spivak's allusion to subalternity when making sense of her students' silence, indicates that being unable to 'speak' is not something that only the most thoroughly disenfranchised demographics experience. Insofar as it derives from occupying 'a position without identity',[30] I wonder whether this inability to 'speak' applies more generally, as something that derives merely from the absence of an established, *recognised* identity or discourse, and which can therefore be experienced as much by the relatively privileged and empowered – perhaps even the 'dominant' – as by Spivak's 'subalterns'.

I will consider whether the paralysis of Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses' arises from a similar absence, one that Memmi perpetuates by ultimately refusing to distinguish this figure from that of 'the colonizer who accepts'. We can apprehend this absence by playing upon an ambiguity in Rancière's account of 'dis-identification' as the inaugural moment of what Rancière means by 'politics'. As we saw in my previous chapter, Rancière defines 'politics' as 'a conflict between one sensible order and another',[31] an 'opposition between logics that count the parties

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[25] Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', p. 62.

[26] Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', p. 62.

[27] Spivak, 'Practical Politics of The Open End', in Harasym ed., p. 103; 'Negotiating the Structures of Violence', in Harasym ed., p. 142.

[28] See p. 87 above.

[29] Spivak, 'Negotiating the Structures of Violence', p. 142.

[30] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 476.

[31] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560.

and parts of the community in different ways.'[32] Elsewhere, though, Rancière defines the concept in a rather different way, as arising whenever 'there is something wrong in the picture, when something is not at the right place […] *when we don't know how to designate what we see*, when a name no longer suits the thing or the character that it names, etc.'[33] In both definitions, 'politics' arises from a lack, from the absence of a suitable 'name' for that 'something' that supposedly does not belong where it is. The distinction, therefore, lies in where these definitions locate that lack. In both cases, this lack equally obtains in the prevailing 'partition of the sensible'. However, in the former definition, 'politics' occurs as a dispute between this prevailing 'partition' and another that suffers from no such lack, an alternative 'sensible order' that has found a suitable 'name' for that 'something'. In contrast, the latter definition conveys a general absence of a suitable 'name', as if even these alternative ways of 'count[ing] the parties and parts of the community' have yet to find an adequate way of 'designat[ing] what we see', but which we are unable to 'name' within the prevailing 'sensible order'.

Once again, we observe parallels between Rancière's account of 'politics' and Spivak's of the subaltern, as discussed in my previous chapter. Spivak, though, is unable to 'think of a genuine subaltern in the First World' given the subaltern's inability to access 'those narratives of nationalism, those narratives of internationalism, nationalism, secularism, all of those things'.[34] There is no 'genuine subaltern' on 'this' side of 'the international division of labor' because together these narratives are capable of articulating all forms of consciousness, experience, intention, and practice that might ever occur in 'this' 'First World'. In contrast, Rancière's latter definition of 'politics' suggests that there is always 'something' that *no* existing narrative is able to articulate adequately. I propose that the silence that Spivak's students claim to suffer reflects a similar lack to that which Rancière articulates in this latter definition of 'politics' – a lack of an adequate way of articulating the experience of being a 'dis-identified beneficiary'. It is this lack that Memmi compounds when concluding that 'the colonizer who refuses' is no different

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[32] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 35.

[33] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560 (my emphasis).

[34] Spivak, 'Negotiating the Structures of Violence', p. 142.

to 'the colonizer who accepts'. In this chapter, I argue for the necessity of sustaining this distinction, even as envisaging a possibility, rather than describing an already-existing reality.

The latter half of this chapter will explore some literary portraits of the individual experience of benefitting from the misfortunes of others. Each of these portraits in some way objects to the structures that give rise to these misfortunes, and in some cases the beneficiaries they portray are 'colonizers who refuse', although they are paralysed by the contradiction Memmi describes above. My readings will demonstrate how overcoming this paralysis depends on retaining Memmi's distinction between 'the colonizer who refuses' and 'the colonizer who accepts'; or rather, more precisely, on leaving open the possibility that 'colonizers' – or indeed anyone who benefits from the suffering of others – are subject to forms of consciousness, experience, intention, and practice other than those of a 'colonizer who accepts'. I will begin by exploring how Jamaica Kincaid registers the limits of her own characterisation of white tourists in the Caribbean, in her extended essay *A Small Place*. Kincaid's antagonistic mode of addressing the reader in the second person as a selfish, ignorant, complacent white tourist visiting Antigua, initially appears to agree with Memmi that all 'colonizers' are 'colonizers who accept'. According to various critics, including Lindsay Pentolfe Aegerter and Rhonda Frederick, this is exactly what many readers of *A Small Place* presume.

Yet as Aegerter, Frederick, and Lesley Larkin variously demonstrate, Kincaid very subtly addresses her reader as someone who is not just a tourist, whose consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices may well exceed those of the tourist persona as defined by Kincaid. As such, Kincaid establishes that her mode of addressing her reader as a 'tourist' so defined is synecdochal. In claiming that no tourist is ever just a tourist, Kincaid asserts that tourists are subject to variances of consciousness, intentions and practices, and might even be aware of the malign consequences their activities as tourists have for native Antiguans. For Aegerter, Frederick, and Larkin, this mode of address opens up the possibility of encouraging Kincaid's assumed reader to object to the global structures that given rise to Antigua's destitution and institutional dysfunction. Yet as I will demonstrate, Kincaid's affirmation of this possibility is subtle enough to be easily missed, and a careless reader can easily misconstrue *A Small Place* as refusing to distinguish 'the

colonizer who refuses' from 'the colonizer who accepts'. Hence the hostile responses to the essay among Aegerter and Frederick's students, who 'dis-identify' from Kincaid's 'you' – the ignorant, selfish white tourist – without addressing, and in turn redressing, the ways in which they share the consciousness, intentions, and practices of Kincaid's selfish, ignorant white tourists.

So misconstrued, *A Small Place* refuses to recognise variances of consciousness or purpose among those who benefit most from today's uneven global conjuncture. As with Memmi, so with Kincaid – albeit on a careless, superficial reading – there is ultimately no such thing as a 'colonizer who refuses'. My readings of Orwell, Naipaul, and Courtemanche will demonstrate how refusing to acknowledge such variances only compounds the very paralysis that leads Memmi to refuse to distinguish the intentions of 'the colonizer who refuses' from 'the colonizer who accepts' in the first place. In various ways, all three writers echo Memmi's claim that a 'colonizer who refuses' must settle for 'a position of ambiguity', yet they disagree over how extensively this ambiguity undermines the integrity of that refusal, and so frustrates their ability to actively, productively oppose colonialism. In his non-fictional reflections on his experiences as a policeman in colonial Burma, Orwell demonstrates categorically how his consciousness, experience, and intentions conflicted with the 'sensible order' of British imperialism, and yet he felt unable to realign his practices accordingly. Similarly, Naipaul's contempt for 'white liberals [who] interfer[e] in, and romanticiz[e], other societies, about which they know little and from which they can safely flee the consequences of their interference', gives little sense that they could ever reconcile their practices with their professed intentions. Naipaul has been severely critiqued for his pessimism over the prospect of achieving a fully independent, stable, prosperous Third World. This pessimism extends to Naipaul's inability to imagine a 'colonizer who refuses' ever managing to do so actively, effectively, and with integrity. The dysfunction and destitution throughout the postcolonial world indicates that the damage caused by European colonialism is simply irreparable, as does the continuing complacency of those who benefit from this dysfunction.

Orwell's paralysis and Naipaul's pessimism both derive from the absence of something like Memmi's distinction between 'the colonizer who refuses' and 'the

colonizer who accepts' – that is, a lack of recognition that a variance of purpose obtains among those who benefit the most from colonial rule and its postcolonial legacies. On a careless reading, it is a comparable lack that provokes the hostile response of Aegerter and Frederick's students to *A Small Place*. Similarly, in his fictional memoir of the 1994 Rwandan genocide *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*, Courtemanche's protagonist Bernard Valcourt seems unable to make sense of, and thus act upon his 'dis-identification' from his fellow white expatriates, most of whom are as selfish and complacent as Kincaid's white tourists. As with Orwell, Valcourt clearly testifies to a variance of consciousness, intention, and to some extent practice among Rwanda's expatriate community; yet he initially identifies himself in ways that collapse these variances, and undercut his own 'dis-identification' from the other expats. Valcourt does so – I argue – partly because like Orwell, he does not know how else to identify himself. Like Orwell, Valcourt has recourse to no other, more suitable way of identifying himself, and so he mostly just agonises over his compromised integrity, rather than finding more effective ways of intervening in the events that lead to the genocide.

In different ways, all four of these writers contend that those who benefit from the misfortunes of others – whether through colonialism or its postcolonial continuations – exhibit variances of consciousness and intention, no matter whether they also exhibit a corresponding variance of practice. Kincaid's critical audience, in particular, have been perceptive to the subtle ways in which this contention informs her manner of addressing her tourist-reader in *A Small Place*. Towards the end of this chapter, I will contrast this critical response to how critics have read Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, a satirical yet metafictional exploration of the subjective experience of being a 'yuppie', or more precisely a member of Wall Street's financial elite during the zenith of so-called 'late capitalism'. Clearly, turning to *American Psycho* is to depart from the typical range of literature discussed in postcolonial studies, given how this novel does not address the economic structures underpinning its yuppie characters' considerable privileges on a *global* scale. Kincaid, Naipaul, and Courtemanche illustrate how endemic injustices occurring in a particular locale – Antigua, the Caribbean, and Rwanda respectively – derive from global economic structures that subordinate them to other locales, including North America, Western Europe, and China. In contrast, these transnational connections

barely register in *American Psycho*, and the global is present only in the form of economic migrants from Asia and South America that Ellis's yuppies encounter in Manhattan, where the novel mostly takes place.

We cannot let this marginality of the global, though, fool us into thinking that *American Psycho* is of no relevance to the task of adequately understanding 'what imperialism is and how it works'.[35] For as Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky illustrate, towards the end of the twentieth century, U.S. government policy became increasingly aligned with U.S. corporate power.[36] Ellis's Wall Street corporate elite, therefore, orchestrate and benefit from a global conjuncture that, being marked by the U.S.A.'s military belligerence and gross economic inequality, is comparable to that which prevailed at the height of European imperialism.[37]

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[35] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', in *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 54.

[36] Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), pp. 13-14.

[37] As discussed in my Introduction to this thesis, the 'manifestly undiminished consequences of imperialism' continue to haunt postcolonial studies, rendering its moniker anachronistic. For Lazarus, 'the years since 1968 [...] have borne witness not to any putative transcendence or leaving behind of capitalist modernity but, on the contrary, to a *consolidation* of the historical patterns of bourgeois class domination' (*Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 19). Robert Spencer has more recently echoed this claim, finding that the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 'made starkly visible an imperialist project that has not, as our field's moniker suggests, been drawing to a close but has on the contrary been expanding American hegemony, extending corporate power and hijacking international institutions of governance' ('Edward Said and the War in Iraq', in *New Formations*, 59 (Autumn 2006), p. 52). Curiously enough, the considerable media discourse on yuppies during the 1980s traced the phenomenon back to economic shifts that occurred around the same time as Lazarus's resurgence of imperialist 'bourgeois class domination'. Yuppies were in fact a tiny minority of the so-called 'baby boomers', a generation of roughly 78 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964. Media commentators regularly reminded their readers that not all 'boomers' were yuppies, and that indeed the majority of their generation had seen a decrease in average wages between 1962 and 1985. Subsequently, the fortunes of yuppies were distinguished from those of 'New Collars', the U.S.A.'s 'new, post-industrial working class which entered the work force when the manufacturing sector was stagnating and millions of jobs were emerging in the service sector' (Will, George F., 'New Collars: New Values', in *Newsweek*, November 24, 1986, p. 100). Described as being 'to the '80s and '90s what blue collars were to the '40s and '50s', 'New Collars' apparently did 'not think they [were] wealthier than their parents but [did] think they [were] happier, more able to do interesting things, more able to pursue satisfaction rather than merely money inc areers, freer to do what they want.' And yet this new sector were said to

American Psycho, though, explores how this conjuncture manifests solely in Manhattan at the end of the 1980s, and offers very little sense of the global consequences of the activities of Ellis's yuppies. Ellis, though, often alludes to the wider world, mostly to illustrate how ignorant his yuppies are of it. The marginality of the global, therefore, becomes significant, given how *American Psycho* is told from the perspective of its first-person narrator-protagonist Patrick Bateman. In short, *American Psycho* is a story about global capitalism as experienced by a Wall Street yuppie. The novel explores how the orchestrators and principal beneficiaries of global capitalism perceive the world, including global capitalism itself. In the process, Ellis considers how aware these people are of the suffering they inflict on others, both within and beyond Manhattan; how they respond to that awareness; and how their responses are conditioned by something like Herman and Chomsky's 'propaganda machine',[38] that informal process through which the mass media control what information becomes available to the general public.

In contrast to *A Small Place*, critics have mostly read *American Psycho* as affirming that yuppies are nothing other than yuppies, and that there is therefore no hope of encouraging them to fight against the structures that give rise to their excessive wealth. Patrick himself is generally regarded to epitomise the yuppie mentality: he certainly aspires to epitomise yuppie success, and in many respects he already does, being a good-looking, intelligent yet unremarkable W.A.S.P.[39] from a

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'have a sense of vulnerability because their alternative futures could vary dramatically'. What Lazarus claims were the U.S.A.'s resurgent imperialist ventures abroad, therefore, went hand-in-hand with the gradual demise of the country's post-war domestic consensus between capital and labour. Directing both were the U.S. corporate elite, among whom the most publicly prominent in the 1980s were the yuppies.

[38] Herman and Chomsky, p. lix.

[39] An acronym for 'White Anglo-Saxon Protestant'. According to Eric Kaufmann, the category denotes an ethnic group in U.S. society that has historically perceived U.S. national identity as 'coterminous with its own identity', to the point of marking other 'white' ethnicities – including Irish and Jewish immigrants – as off-centre categories (Kaufmann, Eric, 'The dominant ethnic moment: Towards the abolition of 'whiteness'?', in *Ethnicities*, 6.2 (2006), pp. 234-35). The category's centrality extends beyond cultural hegemony, with 'WASP dominance and normativity [being] accorded actual legal status' as early as the writing of the U.S. Constitution in 1790 (Myser, Catherine, 'Differences from Somewhere: The Normativity of Whiteness in Bioethics in the United States', in *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 3.2 (Spring 2003), 3). For a cultural history of this ethnic identity – and more recent challenges to its cultural

wealthy background, educated at Harvard and working for a Wall Street stockbroker. Patrick eats at trendy restaurants and frequents exclusive nightclubs. His dress sense is expensive and impeccable, and so is his tan. He regularly sleeps with supermodels, and his contempt for women is outmatched only by his disdain for anyone who isn't rich, young, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, and socially-conservative. For most critics, even Patrick's claims to being a serial killer compounds his exemplary status as 'Everyyuppie'.[40] After all, just as Patrick-the-yuppie regurgitates 'a mixture of *GQ* and *Stereo Review* and *Vanity Fair* and *Fangoria*',[41] so Patrick-the-serial-killer re-enacts the modus operandi of historical and fictional serial killers, reinforcing our sense that – as David Eldridge claims – Patrick 'has no identity beyond that which he consumes.'[42]

It remains, though, that simply by claiming to be a serial killer, Patrick distinguishes himself – quite spectacularly – from his peers, almost all of whom appear to be nothing more or less than stereotypically shallow, selfish, ignorant, materialistic yuppies.[43] Thus, even if he fails to convince us that he is indeed a serial killer, we must ask what motivates Patrick to try to do so in the first place. Elizabeth Young was the first to notice how often a case of mistaken identity occurs throughout *American Psycho*, owing to the fact that all the novel's yuppie characters look almost exactly the same.[44] David Roche attributes this merging of characters to

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hegemony within U.S. society – see Eric P. Kaufmann, *The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[40] Young, Elizabeth, 'The beast in the jungle, the figure in the carpet: Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*', in Elizabeth Young and George Caveney, *Shopping in Space: Essays on American "Blank-Generation" Fiction* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1992), p. 103.

[41] Eldridge, David, 'The Generic American Psycho', in *Journal of American Studies*, 42, 1 (2008), p. 27.

[42] Eldridge, p. 27.

[43] I say 'appear to' because Ellis reveals almost nothing about the private lives of Patrick's peers. For all we know, every one of the novel's yuppie characters might well be serial killers, or involved in some other moral, legal, or social transgression. Indeed, as I will discuss below, at least one of these characters is a closet homosexual, a heinous departure from the yuppies' heteronormative value system.

[44] For Young, this conceit – which runs throughout *American Psycho* – serves to emphasise 'deindividualization in contemporary society', and to 'obliterate rather than to define

the slavish adherence among Patrick and his peers to a personal etiquette that dictates in such minute detail how a yuppie should eat, dress, talk, and shop that it effaces any trace of their individuality. Roche, therefore, contends that Patrick's homicidal alter ego provides him with a sense that, despite conforming to the etiquette, there remains a part of him that 'originally signif[ies] prior to the symbolic order',[45] an immutable essence that cannot conform to the etiquette's prescribed image of yuppie perfection that he and his peers otherwise strive to embody.

If Patrick tries to convince us that he is more than a yuppie, then his efforts to embody this image amount to 'self-metonymisation'. I will explore, therefore, how Patrick exceeds the yuppie stereotype as defined by Ellis and his critical audience, before considering why he would then wish to articulate this excess by torturing women, homosexuals, dogs, rats, and street dwellers to death. Let me be clear here: Patrick is in no way a 'colonizer who refuses'. Neither is he a closet champion of the rights of anyone who is not a rich, young, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, socially conservative man. Compared with Kincaid, Ellis is certainly much less optimistic regarding the prospect of influencing the consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices of those who benefit the most from, and in some cases orchestrate today's uneven global conjuncture. I look to *American Psycho*, then, not as a guide for staging this intervention, but rather as a warning against relying too much on stereotypes. For in their eagerness to condemn his prejudicial nature, critics have largely ignored how Patrick is *not* a yuppie, in almost direct contrast to how Kincaid's critics have picked up on those subtle moments in which she addresses tourists as something other than a tourist.

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character in the traditional sense' (Young, p. 103). As Young notes, right at the end of the novel, the plot 'eventually turns upon the impossibility of anyone distinguishing one character form another.' Having somehow escaped a police manhunt after shooting dead a saxophonist on a Manhattan street, Patrick leaves a full confession of his murders on his lawyer's answering machine. After not hearing back, he confronts his lawyer – Harold Carnes – at a bar, only for Harold to mistake him for someone called 'David', then someone else called 'Donaldson' (Ellis, Bret Eason, *American Psycho* (London: Picador, 1991), pp. 387-88). Harold eventually claims to having recently had dinner with someone that Patrick claims to have killed several months previously. In this moment, it becomes clear that if he is indeed a serial killer, Patrick can continue on, shielded from the law by the total lack of fixed identity throughout his yuppie circles.

[45] Roche, David, 'Reading the Body in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991): Confusing Signs and Signifiers', in *GRAAT On-Line*, 5.1 (2009), p. 127.

Comparing *A Small Place* to Terry McMillan's *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, Frederick notes how the latter novel's third-person portrait of a tourist 'provides a character on which readers can heap criticisms'.[46] In contrast, by '[r]emoving the mediating character' and making 'you' the subject of her critique, 'Kincaid makes it difficult and [...] unproductive for readers to shift responsibility.'[47] Similarly, Young notes how the media controversy that greeted the initial publication of *American Psycho* was partly motivated by a sense that Patrick's crass, selfish materialism was all too familiar to the journalists that reviewed the novel in the leading newspapers, along with the U.S. publishing industry's corporate elites. Judging by their own responses to the novel, though, I wonder whether Ellis's *academic* audience are no less anxious to 'dis-identify' themselves from the novel's central figure, Patrick, in the same way as McMillan's readers distinguish themselves from Stella. Simply put, the subject of Ellis's critique of the 1980s and 'all the clichés of the decade in the West – the rampant self-serving greed, relentless aggression and one-upmanship; the manic consumer overdrive, exhaustion, wipe-out and terror'[48] – is not 'you'.

By exploring how Patrick amounts to more than these clichés, I will suggest that *American Psycho* has as much to say about its audience – particularly those readers who are socially-mindful – as it does about 1980s consumer society. By ignoring evidence that he is more than a yuppie, and that – moreover – he is marginally *aware* of this fact, critics like Young apprehend Patrick synecdochally, within an interpretive framework that cannot recognise multiple forms of subjectivity among yuppies. Insofar as he goes unrecognised as anything other than a yuppie, Patrick therefore occupies 'a position without identity', although as I will establish below, his homicidal alter ego is an effort to articulate that position within the terms of a recognised identity. By no means, though, should we celebrate Patrick's recourse to this particular identity, which instead serves to highlight a

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[46] Frederick, Rhonda, ''What If You're an 'Incredibly Unattractive, Fat, Pastrylike-Fleshed Man''? Teaching Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*', in *College Literature*, 30.3 (2003), p. 16.

[47] Frederick, p. 16.

[48] E. Young, p. 88.

general inability or refusal within the novel itself to acknowledge the possibility that yuppies are not just yuppies, or that they could ever be something other than a yuppie. Patrick is certainly not a subaltern, nor even a 'colonizer who refuses', in the sense of being opposed to an unjust configuration of social power that he otherwise benefits from. As such, my reading of *American Psycho* will serve to decouple the notion of occupying 'a position without identity' from that of being 'removed from *all* lines of social mobility'[49] – in short, inarticulacy from subalternity.

3.1 Spivak, 'silence', and 'subalternity'

For Spivak, these two notions imply one another, given how she approaches the first wherever it entails having recourse to *no* identity whatsoever. Quite literally, Spivak's subaltern 'is removed from *all* lines of social mobility', since they are unable to form *any* 'recognizable basis of action.'[50] It is unsurprising, therefore, that Spivak refrains from directly comparing the claims of her 'bourgeois white male' students that their privilege prevents them from being able to 'speak' in seminars, with this understanding of subalternity. For even though she takes these claims seriously, these students clearly have recourse to a number of identities – not least of which is that of the 'bourgeois white male' – that are not only recognised and thus articulate, but which also underpin their political, economic and other forms of social agency. These students may feel 'silenced' by their privilege as 'bourgeois white males', yet they can hardly claim to be 'subalterns' in Spivak's 'reasonable and rarefied definition' of the term, as being 'removed from *all* lines of social mobility', bar none. I wonder, though, whether the students' claims question the extent to which the subaltern alone can find themselves occupying or at least claiming 'a position without identity'. For although these students clearly occupy a position *with* identity – given that Spivak identifies them as 'bourgeois white males' – what they mean when claiming that they 'can't speak' may well be that they cannot 'speak' as anything other than a 'bourgeois white male'. In short, these claims reflect a claim upon another position, one that might indeed be 'a position without identity': that of someone who is a 'bourgeois white male' and more

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[49] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 475 (my emphasis).

[50] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 476.

besides, whose consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices are not entirely reducible to those of 'bourgeois white males'.

At the very least, a 'bourgeois white male' claiming that he 'can't speak' distinguishes his practices from what Spivak might understand to be typical of 'bourgeois white males'. The question, then, is what else to identify him as, given that he is not a subaltern, on account of his recourse to at least one identity, which in turn is a composite of at least three others – 'bourgeois', 'white', and 'male' – all of which are themselves heterogeneous. Spivak outlines her response to these claims as they arise in her classroom, a response which – although insightful and sympathetic – leaves it unclear whether Spivak ever manages to find a more adequate way of identifying the claimants. Spivak describes how, '[i]n that situation[,]

> I say to them: "Why not develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for you that you are silenced?" Then you begin to investigate what it is that silences you, rather than take this very deterministic position – since my skin colour is this, since my sex is this, I cannot speak […] From this position, then, I say you will of course not speak in the same way about the Third World material, but if you make it your task not only to learn what is going on there through language, through specific programmes of study, but also at the same time through a *historical* critique of your position as the investigating person, then you will see that you have earned the right to […] be heard.[51]

The question remains, though: what will the claimants 'have earned the right to [...] be heard' *as*? At most, this response encourages the claimants to remedy their silence by exploring, and then disclosing, how their constitution as 'speaking' subjects only allows them to 'speak' in certain ways. The students therefore 'speak' by drawing attention to how they cannot 'speak' – to wit, how they cannot speak as anything other than a 'bourgeois white male'. I cannot see, though, how this disclosure is any different to the original complaint, and how it therefore remedies the students' professed inarticulacy. Spivak may well be aware of this ambiguity, given her suggestion that the claimant 'develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for you that you are silenced'. Spivak's antagonistic phrasing here is reminiscent of how Rancière describes 'dis-identification' as 'the denial of an identity given by another, given by the ruling

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[51] Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', p. 62 (emphasis in original).

order of policy',[52] owing to one's perception of a 'difference between [one's] voice and [one's] body'.[53] By claiming inarticulacy, Spivak's students attest to a similar difference, a disjuncture between either their consciousness or their intentions and their constitution as 'speaking' subjects. This disjuncture may well provoke 'a degree of rage against the history' that has constituted them as 'speaking' subjects, but only as long as they cannot reconstitute themselves in a manner that enables them to 'speak' in other ways. Moreover, this 'rage' will persist as long as others fail to recognise them as whatever they might try to reconstitute themselves as. For if articulate speech is recognisable speech,[54] then as long as 'bourgeois white males' are 'heard' as nothing other than 'bourgeois white males', they will be unable to 'speak' as anything else, even if they tried to do so. Hence my above question: after having disclosed 'what it is that silences' them, what will Spivak's 'bourgeois white male' students 'have earned the right to [...] be heard' *as*?

In short, it remains unclear whether Spivak believes that the students are indeed capable of 'speaking' as anything other than a 'bourgeois white male', of claiming anything other than a 'script' that they find inadequately articulates their consciousness, experience, and intentions, maybe even their practices. By suggesting that they enumerate all the ways in which this 'script' 'silences' them, Spivak acknowledges how these students are more than just 'bourgeois white males', and that claiming otherwise is to identify them synecdochally. This enumeration, then, casts doubt on the students' statement that 'I am *only* a bourgeois white male, I can't speak'.[55] The statement is clearly nonsensical, since the students can clearly 'speak', albeit as 'bourgeois white males'. Thus, a more accurate claim would be that the students 'can't speak' as anything else, as anything other than a 'bourgeois white male'. These 'bourgeois white males' are 'silenced' because they are *more* than 'bourgeois white males' – because the second 'I' in the statement is

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[52] Ranciere, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', in *October*, 61, 'The Identity in Question' (1992), p. 62.

[53] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

[54] For a brief discussion of articulacy and recognisable speech in Gramsci, Rancière, and Laclau and Mouffe, see Chapter 2, note 162, page 162.

[55] Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', p. 60 (my emphasis).

not quite the same as the first. In Rancière's terms, the students have somehow 'arrive[d] as a supplement' to an otherwise 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions, and competencies', a 'partition of the sensible' that 'defines which places are inside and which are outside, which bodies are in the right place and which in the wrong one, which names fit those places and bodies and which do not.'[56] The statement 'I am only a bourgeois white male, I cannot speak' conveys how the category of 'bourgeois white male' no longer adequately describes the students' subject-positions, the sum total of their consciousness, experience, practice and – most importantly – their intentions.

Either way, if we find the statement 'I am only a bourgeois white male, I can't speak' to be nonsensical, then it is only because it breaks with what Rancière calls our 'commonsense', our 'topography of the common, determining what objects are given as common objects, what spaces are visible as spaces for discussion about common objects, what subjects are counted as able to perceive those objects and to make statements and decisions about them.'[57] The statement suggests – however unfairly – that Spivak's seminars unfold according to a 'commonsense' that – at least according to the students – does not 'count' 'bourgeois white males' as being anything other than 'bourgeois white males'. Spivak's response initially appears to contest this assumption, given her proposal of one way in which 'bourgeois white males' can demonstrate the category's inadequacy to the task of fully articulating their subjectivities. I find, though, that according to this proposal, the students can only participate by enumerating the ways in which they cannot 'speak' as long as they participate as 'bourgeois white males' – that is, the ways in which this 'commonsense' 'counts' 'bourgeois white males' as nothing else. Spivak's proposal, then, does little more to redress a lack that had already been registered when the students initially claimed that they were unable to 'speak' – namely, the lack of an alternative to the category of 'bourgeois white male', one that would distinguish those 'bourgeois white males' whose consciousness or intentions exceed that

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[56] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

[57] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561; this 'topography' is roughly equivalent to what Rancière refers to elsewhere as 'the partition of the sensible', 'the police' and 'consensus'.

category from anyone who exhibits no such excess, and who is therefore '*only* a bourgeois white male'.[58]

In this respect, the discrepancy between the statement's two 'I's – the first of which speaks 'only [as a] bourgeois white male', while the second 'can't speak' at all – suggests that the second 'I' signifies 'a position without identity', insofar as even the students seem unable to recognise it as something distinct from the position signified by the first 'I'. Again, in Rancière's terms, the students occupy an 'interval between identities', a 'gap' that exists 'between names, identities, cultures, and so on.'[59] In short, the students have 'dis-identified' themselves from that identity which has been given to them 'by another, given by the ruling order of policy'. Rancière is unclear over whether this denial is always prompted by the adoption of another identity, one that is somehow more 'right' than that which is provided by 'the ruling order of policy'. For according to Rancière, '"right" names' are always 'names that pin people down to their place and work',[60] and so they always proceed from a 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions, and competencies' that 'wants everybody to be in his or her place, with the occupation suited to his or her place and the name fitting that occupation.'[61] Thus, one can only adopt another identity if one exists elsewhere, in another 'partition of the sensible' that has incorporated what has proven to be an 'unassimilable excess' for 'the ruling order of policy'.

As such, wherever it entails adopting an existing alternative identity, 'dis-identification' gives rise to the first of Rancière's two definitions of 'politics' outlined above – that is, 'politics' as 'a conflict between one sensible order and another',[62] an 'opposition between logics that count the parties and parts of the

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[58] Of course, if group categories and identities are always unable to *exhaustively* apprehend individual consciousness and will – as I argue throughout this thesis – then no one can ever be '*only* a bourgeois white male'.

[59] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

[60] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

[61] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

[62] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560.

community in different ways.'[63] Thus, if no such alternative identity exists, then 'dis-identification' cannot occur as a double moment, as *both* 'the simple assertion of an identity' *and*, 'at the same time, the denial of an identity given […] by the ruling order of policy.' This unnamed or unnamable excess, then, gives rise to the second of Rancière's two definitions of 'politics', as a mere 'displacement or a break in a given set of places and identities' that is irresolvable as long as 'we don't know how to designate what we see', as long as we are unable to find a name that 'suits the thing or the character that it names, etc.'[64] Wherever no such name exists, 'dis-identification' gives rise to something that is nonsensical, not just within the 'ruling order of policy', but within all existing 'partitions of the sensible' or 'commonsenses', including those that supposedly incorporate the so-called 'part of those without part',[65] those 'parties and parts of the community'[66] that exceed the 'count' of the 'ruling order of policy'. It is in this sense that the statement 'I am only a bourgeois white male, I can't speak' is nonsensical. For the statement 'I am *only* a bourgeois white male' denotes the total absence of a name that suitably distinguishes 'bourgeois white males' who more than just 'bourgeois white males' from those who are just 'bourgeois white males'.

Of course, just because one might be more than just a 'bourgeois white male', should not distract one from how one is still in many respects a 'bourgeois white male', even if they had recourse to another recognised identity. Providing such alternatives, then, cannot allow these students to completely disavow their status as 'bourgeois white males'. Without alternative identities, though, we subscribe to a self-corroborating, circular logic that cannot accommodate any variance of consciousness, intention, or practice among 'bourgeois white males' that might induce them to 'dis-identify' themselves from that identity. 'Bourgeois white males' are just 'bourgeois white males', just as for Memmi 'colonizers' are just 'colonizers'. For anyone who wishes to 'disclose the construction of the signifying

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[63] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 35.

[64] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560 (my emphasis).

[65] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 33.

[66] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 35.

system [whether it be patriarchy or colonial discourse] and thereby deprive it of its mandate to rule',[67] subscribing to such tautologies can only be counterproductive, insofar as it risks affirming aspects of that very system. Memmi may well be correct when claiming that 'the colonizer who accepts', 'who agrees to be a colonizer' evinces 'a more logical attitude, materially more coherent than the tormented dance of the colonizer who refuses and continues to live in a colony.'[68] However, to conclude on this basis that 'to be a colonialist is the natural vocation of a colonizer' – 'colonialist' here meaning 'a colonizer who agrees to be a colonizer'[69] – is to submit to that 'failure of vision' that Gordimer observes in Memmi's bleak account of 'the colonizer who refuses'. To some extent, Spivak avoids a similar 'failure' when encouraging her students to think of their 'silence' in terms of how they are constituted as 'speaking' subjects – that is, in a way that does not naturalise the category of the 'bourgeois white male' and thus succumb to what she calls, 'somewhat derisively, chromatism: basing everything on skin colour – "I am white, I can't speak" – and genitalism: depending on what kind of genitals you have, you can or cannot speak in certain situations.'[70]

Nevertheless, if the students are to participate by enumerating all the ways in which they cannot participate – on account of their being 'bourgeois white males' – then this exercise merely establishes how the category of 'bourgeois white male'

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[67] Parry, Benita, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 26.

[68] Memmi, p. 89.

[69] Memmi, p. 89; Memmi's taxonomy of 'the colonizer' is complex, partly because he articulates various figures only to assert that they effectively do not exist. The two most obvious such figures are 'the colonizer who refuses' and 'the colonial', the 'European living in a colony but having no privileges, whose living conditions are not higher than those of a colonized person of equivalent economic and social status', and who 'is a benevolent European who does not have the colonizer's attitude toward the colonized' (Memmi, p. 54). Quite literally as soon as Memmi outlines this latter figure, he immediately states that, 'despite the apparently drastic nature of the statement: a colonial so defined does not exist, for all European in the colonies are privileged' (Memmi, p. 54). As a result of these various negations, Memmi outlines a 'convenient terminology' that distinguishes between disparate sub-demographics among the colonisers themselves, only to collapse all such distinctions as he gradually establishes that all Europeans living in colonies equally participate in the exploitation of the native populations.

[70] Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', p. 62.

cannot exhaustively articulate their consciousness or intentions. Moreover, if this is the only way they can participate, then doing so simply registers the 'topography of the common' that prevails over Spivak's classroom lacks more adequate, recognised alternative ways of identifying themselves. If the students are to resolve their inarticulacy, they must be able to pursue something other than the identity of a 'bourgeois white male'. If succumbing to 'chromatism' or 'genitalism' amounts to 'the kind of breast-beating which stops the possibility of social change',[71] then viable alternatives to statements like 'I am only a bourgeois white male, I can't speak' are clearly necessary if social change is to remain possible. Spivak does not describe what effect her response to this statement has upon her 'bourgeois white male' students, and so it remains unclear how effective the response is at enabling them to pursue a different 'script'. Indeed, I wonder whether the response even encourages the students to pursue alternative 'scripts', or whether Spivak finds that any such exercise would be pointless, out of a belief that 'bourgeois white males' are simply unable to claim any other 'script'.

I find it unlikely that Spivak would maintain any such belief, given how she has extended her claim elsewhere that '[o]ne must be vigilant against simple notions of identity'[72] to apply equally to conventionally privileged, dominant, hegemonic, or 'central' identities – like 'bourgeois', 'white', and 'male' – as to identities like 'worker', 'woman', 'Indian', or 'Third World'. Hence her contention that 'the moment you say, "This is a white position", again you are homogenizing',[73] collapsing all distinctions between individual whites – in a word, *totalising* whites. Yet simply enumerating all the ways in which one's constitution as a 'bourgeois white male' prevents one from 'speaking' seems to me inadequate as a response to such homogenising tendencies. At most, this enumeration enables one to affirm that one is by no means '*only* a bourgeois white male'; that they are something else as well; and that if they wish to affirm this excess, then they must pursue an identity that more adequately articulates their individual consciousness, experience, intentions, and – where applicable – their practices. This enumeration, then, is not an

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[71] Spivak, 'The *Intervention* Interview', in Harasym ed., p. 121.

[72] Spivak, 'Strategy, Identity, Writing', p. 38.

[73] Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', p. 60.

end in itself, but rather a starting point, one that leads to or enables something else: the pursuit of a more adequate identity for oneself. However, we risk foreclosing this pursuit wherever we maintain that 'bourgeois white males' are incapable of reconstituting themselves as anything else. In turn, if we are unable to allow for this capability, then we foreclose the possibility of 'dis-identifying' from the structures that underpin the privilege of 'bourgeois white males', and thus 'depriv[ing]' those structures of their 'mandate to rule'. Simply put, the capacity of 'bourgeois white males' to 'speak' as anything else and in any other way, depends as much on our willingness to acknowledge in them that capacity.

Of course, if we are to sustain 'the possibility of social change', then we cannot simply recognise this capacity as a potential, since we would risk providing an alibi for any 'bourgeois white males' who do not actively seek to fulfil it. I will address this complacency more fully in my next chapter. However, I believe it is important that we do not assume that such complacency is inevitable – that 'bourgeois white males' are incapable of aligning their practices, including how they 'speak', with their professed intentions, should those intentions depart from those which are typical of 'bourgeois white males'. We cannot deny that all privileged individuals who 'dis-identify' from the structures that underpin their privilege invariably assume an 'illogical', 'materially incoherent' position. Nonetheless, neither should we conclude that this 'tormented dance' can only ever indicate a lack of integrity or even authenticity. If we are unable to recognise the privileged as being capable of 'dis-identifying' from the structures that underpin their privilege, then we subscribe to a circular, tautological, self-corroborating, totalist logic that forecloses any possibility of challenging the hegemonic integrity of those structures, by hampering any endeavour to encourage 'dis-identification' among those whose consent to these structures renders them hegemonic.

3.2 Identity and privilege in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*

Kincaid's *A Small Place* is notorious for its mode of directly addressing the reader in the second person, as an accomplice in the tourist industry's impoverishment of Antiguan society and corruption of its public institutions. Ostensibly, this mode of address subscribes to reductive stereotype, 'simple notions of identity' that homogenise 'white positions', and which Spivak warns against above. Thus, as

Frederick notes, unless they 'are Antiguan (or of Antiguan descent),' Kincaid's readers '*have* to be "incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed" people; Kincaid does not allow them any other option.'[74] Unsurprisingly, Frederick, Aegerter, and other critics writing on *A Small Place* have described how their 'mainstream students'[75] generally 'dis-identify' themselves from this reader-tourist persona, dissociating themselves from the touristic attitudes Kincaid critiques, along with their implication in the forces that subject Antigua to poverty, corruption, and dependency. Thus, Aegerter describes how '[w]hen power enters the playing field', her students' 'desires for a common humanity often give way to something else. Irritation. Impatience. A wish that "they'd just get over it" so that everyone could just get on with their lives, not having to bother with trying to work out where they fit in this overwhelming picture of global oppressions.'[76] *A Small Place*, therefore, provides a useful counterpoint to the case of Spivak's 'bourgeois white male' students, whose claims to being unable to 'speak' reflects a desire to 'speak' as something other than 'bourgeois white males'. For whereas Spivak's students still identify themselves as that which they otherwise 'dis-identify' from, Aegerter's students do not identify in any way with Kincaid's tourist-reader.

According to Frederick, Kincaid anticipates, even encourages this initial response, as part of a didactic strategy not only to conscientise her reader to their implication in Antigua's social and political dysfunction, but also to redress that implication by dissuading them from ever wishing to become tourists again. This latter effort depends on 'dis-identification', but can only be effective if Kincaid's reader first identifies with her unflattering portrait of selfish, ignorant, complacent white tourists. Frederick, therefore, critiques how Aegerter responds to her students' initial hostility to *A Small Place*, how she draws her students' attention to moments where Kincaid looks towards points of contact and identification between herself, Antiguan 'natives', and her vile, 'ugly' tourist addressee. In effect, Aegerter mitigates her students' resistance by accommodating their anxiety to 'dis-identify'

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[74] Frederick, p. 6 (emphasis in original).

[75] Aegerter, Lindsay Pentolfe, 'A Pedagogy of Postcolonial Literature', in *College Literature*, 24.2 (1997), p. 142.

[76] Aegerter, p. 142.

from the figure of Kincaid's tourist. Yet as Frederick notes, 'Kincaid's writing *prevents* readers from distancing themselves from the text and her criticisms', and so 'actively works against a strategy that encourages students to find "points of identification["]'.[77] Frederick finds that, by attending solely to points of identification, Aegerter allows her students to avoid 'an analysis of power',[78] or the task of 'work[ing] out where they fit in this overwhelming picture of global oppressions.'

If anything, by allowing her students to 'dis-identify' from the abject figure of Kincaid's tourist, Aegerter reinforces existing power structures that allow her students to dictate the political priorities of postcolonial literature. For Aegerter's emphasis on points of identification recasts *A Small Place* as something that satisfies her students' desire for 'benign celebrations of racial and cultural diversity' that nonetheless affirm a 'common humanity' undercutting 'all racial, economic, and cultural boundaries'.[79] In turn, this manoeuvre only compounds her students' hostility towards 'harsh and quite scathing indictments of the kind of pernicious inequalities that characterize the institutions and processes of slavery, apartheid, and colonization', as well as their dismissal of '[r]esistance to racism, and rage and resentment expressed over past and present oppressions' as 'examples of "reverse racism."'[80] Frederick agrees with Aegerter that, to an extent, *A Small Place* attests to points of identification and convergence between 'native' and 'tourist'. For example, Kincaid readily acknowledges how

> every native of every place is a potential tourist, and every tourist is a native of somewhere. Every native everywhere lives a life of overwhelming and crushing banality and boredom and desperation and depression [...] Every native would like to find a way out, every native would like a rest, every native would like a tour.[81]

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[77] Frederick, pp. 6-7.

[78] Frederick, p. 2.

[79] Aegerter, p. 142.

[80] Aegerter, p. 142.

[81] Kincaid, p. 18.

Frederick, though, insists on the importance of recognising how these moments accentuate – rather than mitigate – the obvious differences between tourists and Antiguan 'natives'. Thus, Kincaid immediately undercuts this particular commonality by pointing out how 'some natives – most natives – cannot go anywhere. [...] They are too poor to escape the reality of their lives [...] they envy you, they envy your ability to leave your own banality and boredom'.[82] United in their common desire to escape their comparable ennui as 'natives', tourists are nonetheless distinguished from native Antiguans by their 'privileged place of power (white-skin privilege, class privilege, and "first world" privilege)'.[83] To emphasise their commonalities, therefore, is to detract from how Kincaid's anger towards the reader's 'unexamined role in oppressive relationships' is a '*legitimate* anger'.[84]

Moreover, to expunge *A Small Place* of this anger is to rob it of its agency: after all, that this anger makes students feel uncomfortable reflects how 'Kincaid-the-author is the agent to whom students/readers must respond',[85] contrary to how Aegerter's students would prefer it. Frederick remarks that Kincaid's agency – along with her readers' discomfort – derives from 'her ability to destabilize readers' established ways of knowing themselves.'[86] Frederick contrasts Kincaid's direct, second-person mode of addressing her reader as an 'incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed' tourist, with Terry McMillan's third-person portrait of Stella, a tourist who visits Jamaica solely for the purpose of 'get[ting] her "groove" back' – that is, sleeping with as many black Jamaican men with 'big flapping dicks' as she can find, perpetuating in the process racist stereotypes and perceptions of the Caribbean as nothing more than a tourist resort that allows middle-class holidaymakers to indulge in exoticised sexual fantasies.[87] As Frederick notes, by presenting this unsavoury portrait of touristic excess in the third person, McMillan

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[82] Kincaid, pp. 18-19.

[83] Frederick, p. 10.

[84] Frederick, p. 10 (emphasis in original).

[85] Frederick, p. 11.

[86] Frederick, p. 6.

[87] Frederick, p. 14; interestingly, whereas Kincaid's tourist-reader is emphatically white, Stella is African-American.

makes it easier for her readers to distinguish themselves from Stella, and so avoid exploring what complacent attitudes, prejudices, and desires they share with her, no matter how unwittingly. In contrast, 'where McMillan provides a character on which readers can heap criticisms, Kincaid offers "you"'; and so by '[r]emoving the mediating character, Kincaid makes it difficult [...] for readers to shift responsibility.'[88] Kincaid's antagonistic mode of addressing her reader is a claim on agency, and so the extent of her reader's discomfort or outright hostility is a direct measure of the success of that claim. After all, by refusing to absolve Aegerter's students of culpability for Antigua's social deprivation – or at least sidestep this issue – Kincaid sets the terms in which they enter into dialogue with her, and so the students' resistance reflects an anxiety over losing the power to set those terms entirely by themselves.

This mode of address, though, goes beyond a mere claim to, and subsequent exertion of agency. As Frederick notes, 'Kincaid is not solely interested in attacking white people or otherwise making them "feel bad."'[89] Having so forcefully caricatured the selfish, complacent ignorance of tourists – especially white tourists from North America and, 'worse',[90] Europe – Kincaid nonetheless anticipates charges of 'reverse racism', and acknowledges how her mode of addressing her reader is synecdochal; how a tourist is never just a tourist, precisely because one *becomes* a tourist. For Kincaid, 'you' the tourist are an 'ugly human being',[91] but only insofar as 'you' are a 'tourist'. Otherwise, Kincaid attests that 'you are not an ugly person ordinarily'[92] – that is, when 'you' are not a tourist. Instead, 'ordinarily, you are a nice person, an attractive person, a person capable of drawing to yourself the affection of other people (people just like you), a person at home in your own skin', although 'you' are also prone to a sense of 'dismay and puzzlement [that is]

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[88] Frederick, p. 16.

[89] Frederick, p. 7.

[90] Kincaid, p. 4.

[91] Kincaid, p. 14.

[92] Kincaid, p. 14.

natural to you, because people like you just seem to be like that'.[93] It is this 'awful feeling of displacedness', coupled with 'your' inability 'to look too far inward and set yourself aright, because being ordinary is already so taxing,' that prompts 'you' to become 'a person visiting heaps of death and ruin and feeling alive and inspired at the sight of it; to being a person lying on some faraway beach, your stilled body stinking and glistening in the sand'[94] – in short, that 'ugly human being', a tourist.

This distinction, though, is no mere concession to avoid being accused of reactionary stereotyping. As Frederick notes, by claiming that tourists are never just tourists, Kincaid envisions the possibility of discouraging her reader from compounding the disadvantages of native Antiguans – or indeed the natives of any tourist hotspot, anywhere in the world – by indulging themselves in the exotic mythos, promoted by the tourist industry, that portrays Antigua as an untainted tropical paradise. Kincaid makes much of how, 'since you are on holiday, since you are a tourist, the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought', along with poverty, political corruption, and enforced servitude bordering on modern-day slavery, '*must* never cross your mind.'[95] The imperative here indicates a fervent desire to sustain that mythos as outlined in tourist brochures, even when encountering a 'real' Antigua that does not entirely correspond to that impossibly idealised image. What is notable, though, is how the imperative 'must' implies its own failure – how the tourist cannot help but notice the drought, poverty, corruption, and servitude bordering on slavery. Otherwise, Kincaid would have claimed that these issues '*don't* ever cross your mind' instead.

Kincaid states that 'North American and English peoples abandon complex selves and complex lives to become, simply, tourists', and that, as a result, '"tourists" often are not "whole"', insofar as 'they do not want to be reminded of the home – and problems – they left behind. In fact, they attempt to escape into Antigua's paradisiacal "reality."'[96] It remains unclear, though, how completely these

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[93] Kincaid, p. 16.

[94] Kincaid, p. 16.

[95] Kincaid, p. 4 (my emphasis).

[96] Frederick, p. 8.

people manage to abandon the complexity of their 'whole' selves, given how often they notice the real Antigua failing to live up to that escapist fantasy. Despite their efforts to assume such a simplistic persona, tourists evince a consciousness whose complexity continues to exceed that persona, and which therefore interrupts their attempts to live out the tourist brochure fantasy described above. Indeed, given this consciousness, it is not only Antigua that fails to live up to that fantasy, but also the tourist themselves. Frederick argues that, having been made to confront 'thoughtless (unthinking) behavior and [...] the connections between individual experience and social, economic, and political issues', '[r]eaders of *A Small Place* cannot merely "go on vacation" without acknowledging the contexts in which they circulate.'[97] If this disregard for such connections is what makes one a 'tourist', then anyone who reads *A Small Place* arguably cannot ever be a tourist afterwards. After reading *A Small Place*, one can never be a tourist, even if one goes on holiday to somewhere like Antigua, for after reading *A Small Place*, one cannot help but be aware of how the simple act of going on holiday in Antigua implicates one in the island's social dysfunction.

A Small Place, therefore, does not necessarily present the tourist-reader with an entirely unfamiliar portrait of Antigua, even though this portrait does not correspond to that found in travel brochures. Despite themselves, the tourist-reader already sees what the brochures omit, without even having to read *A Small Place*. Moreover, Kincaid suggests that the tourist-reader also suspects their implication in what they see, given 'that slightly funny feeling you have from time to time about exploitation, oppression, domination', a feeling that 'you' struggle to repress by allowing 'yourself' to be convinced that 'the West got rich not from the free (in this case meaning got-for-nothing) and then undervalued labour, for generations, of the people like me you see walking around you in Antigua but from the ingenuity of small shopkeepers in Sheffield and Yorkshire and Lancashire, or wherever'.[98] Similarly, it might never occur to 'you' the tourist-reader that the native Antiguans do not like 'you', yet '[s]till, you feel a little uneasy. Still, you feel a little foolish.

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[97] Frederick, p. 16.

[98] Kincaid, p. 10.

Still, you feel a little out of place.'[99] Even though they mostly go unacknowledged, it is these anxieties that prompt 'you' to regurgitate a familiar narrative of how native Antiguans

> are not responsible for what you have; you owe them nothing; in fact, you did them a big favour, and you can provide one hundred examples [...] If it were not for you, they would not have Government House, and Prime Minister's Office, and Parliament Building and embassy of powerful country.[100]

Kincaid's 'you' becomes equivocal here, as it shifts from addressing the reader as an 'ugly' tourist to addressing them as the subject of a narrative that insists on the generally beneficial nature of European colonial rule for those who were made to endure it. This shift denotes Kincaid's anticipation of her reader's 'dis-identification' from her unsavoury portrait of white tourists, and so the equivocality of 'you' here denotes the reader's suspension between two identities – their occupation of an 'interval between identities'[101] – which for Rancière is the very nature of 'dis-identification'. As such, this equivocality reflects a battle between two identities: Kincaid's 'ugly', selfish, complacent tourist that compounds the sorry lot of 'native' Antiguans; and the noble European, whose selfless benevolence is plain to see in Antigua's modern public institutions. Yet Kincaid's repeated reversion to this narrative throughout *A Small Place* suggests that that battle never ends; that this narrative never manages to dispel that 'slightly funny feeling [...] about exploitation, oppression, domination' entirely. Instead, this narrative becomes a mantra whose repetition betrays its failure to convince even the tourist themselves. All this narrative accomplishes is displacing alternative narratives that not only acknowledge Antigua's social deprivation, but also the tourist's implication in it. Yet no such alternative narrative is required for the tourist to register – albeit unconsciously – the possibility of their implication.

Life as a tourist, therefore, is invariably much more complicated than 'you' want it to be, such is the effort of either ignoring all the ways in which the real Antigua departs from the brochure fantasy, or of disavowing 'your' implication in

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[99] Kincaid, p. 18.

[100] Kincaid, p. 10-11.

[101] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

that reality. As a result, Kincaid asks if it is 'any wonder, then, that on your return home you feel the need of a long rest, so that you can recover from your life as a tourist?'[102] No tourist ever manages to fully become a 'tourist'. Indeed, 'being' a 'tourist' entails constantly, actively reconstituting oneself according to the terms of the 'tourist' role – that is, taking 'the part that seems to agree' with that role 'to stand for the whole [...] put[ting] aside the surplus of [one's] subjectivity and metonymis[ing] [one]self', identifying all of oneself solely according to that part that corresponds to the role of the 'tourist'.[103] That surplus, though, constantly returns, as that irrepressible, 'slightly funny feeling [...] about exploitation, oppression, domination'. Whereas the above, placatory narratives of European imperial benevolence attempt to dispel this suspicion, *A Small Place* affirms it instead. Kincaid, though, goes further, as if to recognise how simply establishing the hollowness of those placatory narratives cannot by itself mitigate their appeal. Although it encompasses that disavowed surplus – that 'ugliness' that the tourist suspects of themselves, but never admits to – Kincaid seems aware of how this affirmation comes at the cost of a further disavowal. For the hostility among Aegerter and Frederick's students to Kincaid's abject portrait of 'ugly' white tourists, may well be provoked by a sense that she allows for no capacity in white tourists – or, indeed, whites in general – to respond in a progressive manner to the grim realities of Antiguan society and its tourist industry.

Hence the conditional tone in which Kincaid attests that '*[i]f* you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see.'[104] As Larkin notes, by 'denaturaliz[ing] tourism as *the* mode of travel to Antigua' this opening tone implies 'that what you will see depends upon the role in which you travel,' which in turn 'leaves open the possibility that readers might take up an alternative role and an alternative interpretive practice.'[105] Larkin observes how, towards the end of *A Small Place*, Kincaid hints towards one such alternative role and practice. Having

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[102] Kincaid, p. 18.

[103] Spivak, 'Scattered speculations on the subaltern and the popular', p. 480.

[104] Kincaid, p. 3.

[105] Larkin, Lesley, 'Reading and being Read: Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* as Literary Agent', in *Callaloo*, 35.1 (Winter 2012), p. 207.

noted parallels between slavery and modern tourism, between the slave-master and the white tourist, Kincaid claims that,

> once you cease to be a master, once you throw off your master's yoke, you are no longer human rubbish, you are just a human being, and all the things that adds up to. So, too, with the slaves. Once they are no longer slaves, once they are free, they are no longer noble and exalted; they are just human beings.[106]

Larkin notes that this is 'a dangerous way to end *A Small Place*. It appears to offer readers an escape from the relentless identification with tourism, racism, imperialism, and slavery Kincaid has thrust upon them, no doubt renewing the faith of some readers in the anthem of multiculturalist universalism'.[107] At the very end, Kincaid risks curtailing the radical agency of her polemic by appearing to satisfy the demand among Aegerter's students, for a narrative that celebrates a 'common humanity' that transcends 'all racial, economic, and cultural boundaries'. Kincaid, though, makes it very clear here that this common humanity can never exist as long as there are 'masters' and 'slaves', 'tourists' and 'natives'. Moreover, one cannot simply disavow one's status as a 'master' or a 'tourist' and expect the 'slaves' and the 'natives' to recognise one as a 'human'. For by doing so, one dictates the terms in which one is recognised by others, an arrangement that renders one a 'master'. Kincaid's reader can be something other than her 'ugly' tourist, but – paradoxically – only if they first agree that they are in fact 'ugly' tourists. After all, this recognition cedes to Kincaid equal agency within the dialogue between reader and writer, tourist and native, master and slave, white and black. To refuse this gesture is to simply revert to an unequal dialogue between these interlocutors, in which case one remains a 'master'.

How effectively *A Small Place* encourages this readerly response, though, is unclear. For the fact that Aegerter and Frederick must find ways of leading their students beyond their initial hostility, suggests that Kincaid's antagonistic manner of addressing her reader risks eclipsing her far more subtle affirmation of their capacity for a progressive response to that address, and to the grim realities of post-independence Antigua. Clearly, *A Small Place* demands 'active reading [...] making

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[106] Kincaid, p. 81.

[107] Larkin, p. 207.

the point that effective reading is neither passive nor private.'[108] Moreover, *A Small Place* does not offer its reader an opportunity to simply 'go on vacation', in the sense of suspending a complex mode of existence for the relatively simple one of being a 'tourist'. *A Small Place* constantly confronts the reader not only with the 'real' Antigua, but also with the reader's own complexities and – by extension – their own capacity for a different attitude towards Antigua, perhaps even towards tourism in general. Nonetheless, compared with her aggressive interpellation of her reader as an 'ugly' tourist, Kincaid's affirmation of their complexity is incredibly subtle, and so is easily overlooked. Indeed, this subtlety replicates how the realities of Antigua haunt the edges of the tourist's consciousness, as that 'slightly funny feeling [...] about exploitation, oppression, domination' described above. If disavowing that shadowy awareness equally entails 'put[ting] aside the surplus of [their] subjectivity', then the subtlety with which Kincaid affirms the existence of that surplus mirrors the structure of the tourist's own subjectivity. For Kincaid may well affirm the existence of this surplus, and so indicate the synecdochal manner in which she addresses her reader as a 'tourist'. Yet wherever it eclipses those fleeting moments in which Kincaid indicates that no tourist is ever just a 'tourist', this synecdochal address risks mirroring, and thus corroborating, the tourist's own 'self-metonymisation'.

Of course, any such eclipse is due to careless reading. As such, *A Small Place* has as much to say about readers as it does about tourists. Moreover, I do not mean to blame Kincaid for the hostile responses to *A Small Place* described by Aegerter and Frederick. Instead, I am concerned merely with establishing how the text could provoke these responses, despite both anticipating and working to redress them. On a careless reading, *A Small Place* acknowledges little possibility of productively intervening in the consciousness, intentions, and practices of anyone who becomes, or wishes to become a tourist. Their experience of Antigua *in situ* might diverge from the Antigua they encounter in tourist brochures. Yet Kincaid suggests that those placatory narratives of European imperial benevolence, and the superiority of 'Western civilisation', provide tourists with an appealing way of both acknowledging the hardships facing native Antiguans, and disavowing their own

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[108] Larkin, p. 206.

role in sustaining the structures that give rise to those hardships. On a careless reading, therefore, *A Small Place* leaves one with a choice between these placatory narratives and Kincaid's alternative narrative; between the benevolent European bequeathing civilisation upon the Antiguans, and Kincaid's 'ugly', selfish, ignorant, complacent, obnoxious white tourist. On a careless reading, *A Small Place* offers no third alternative, having exposed the hollowness of the first identity, and having challenged the reader to prove themselves to be unworthy of the second.

The careless reader, therefore, is suspended in the 'interval' between the identities of the 'master' and the 'tourist', both of which Kincaid renders abject. This schematic offers no way for the reader to be recognised as something other than either of these figures. As we have seen, this refusal is intentional, insofar as any reader who does not identify themselves as Kincaid's 'master' cannot reconstitute themselves as anything else. Yet without the interventions of an Aegerter or a Frederick – in order to highlight how Kincaid looks beyond this choice between 'master' and 'tourist' – it is easy to see how a reader who 'dis-identifies' from what appear to be all available identities might respond with 'irritation', 'impatience', even hostility to *A Small Place*, no matter how unfairly. The subtlety with which Kincaid affirms the reader's capacity to be something other than a 'master' or a 'tourist', suggests a relative absence of a third identity that would acknowledge a variance of purpose among those who are 'masters' on account of their privileged position within global political-economic structures, such as by recognising those 'masters' who do not identify with the political priorities that sustain those structures. As Larkin reminds us, 'the political persuasion of a reader (her anticolonialism or antiracism) [...] [cannot] absolve her from material and social responsibility', and Kincaid's antagonistic manner of addressing her privileged tourist-reader does not 'indict only the subject of the neo-colonial narrative but, also, the material relations that enable it, relations within which all readers read.'[109] Kincaid's 'you' encompasses not just those who identify themselves with Larkin's 'subject of the neo-colonial narrative', but also those who '*dis*-identify' from it, since this distancing can all too easily become a disavowal of one's implication in systemic injustices that one otherwise objects to. Again, one can become something

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[109] Larkin, p. 208.

other than a 'master' only after one acknowledges how one is a 'master', despite oneself. Given the subtlety with which she conveys this idea, wherever it is overlooked, Kincaid's habit of addressing her reader solely as a 'master' might appear to disregard the possibility that her addressee is more than a 'master', leaving them with no way of registering their divergent intentions, and thus frustrating Kincaid's otherwise hopeful endeavours in *A Small Place*.

3.3 'Dissensus' and 'dis-identification' in George Orwell's Burmese non-fiction

A Small Place leaves Kincaid's more careless readers feeling uncomfortable because she seemingly refuses to acknowledge any variance of intention among anyone who is, or who is likely to become, a tourist visiting somewhere like Antigua. Having 'destabilize[d] [their] established ways of knowing themselves', Kincaid – again, on a careless reading – seems unable to imagine that those of her readers who 'dis-identify' themselves from her touristic 'you' could ever find any such stability again, such as by finding a way of having Kincaid recognise them as something other than this 'you'. *A Small Place* leaves its more careless readers suspended in a state that resembles the second of Rancière's two definitions of 'politics' outlined above. Given their 'dis-identification' from Kincaid's touristic 'you', her reader is not entirely in their allotted place within the 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies'[110] that informs *A Small Place*. Yet because Kincaid deprives us of a more appropriate way of identifying her 'dis-identified' reader, we find ourselves in a position where 'we don't know how to designate what we see'.[111] The 'name' of 'tourist' as defined by Kincaid – 'incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed' – 'no longer suits the thing or the character that it names', yet we have no other way of 'naming' the addressee of Kincaid's 'you'. To reiterate, Kincaid's readers '*have* to be "incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed" people; Kincaid does not allow them any other option.' Yet whatever hostile responses *A Small Place* provokes from its readers is precisely due to this apparent refusal of another option.

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[110] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

[111] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560.

A similar refusal is what prompts Gordimer to accuse Memmi of succumbing to a 'failure of vision',[112] and what prompts Memmi himself to conclude that 'the colonizer who refuses' cannot ever hope to 'find a solution for his anguish in revolt', given that his will always be 'a position of ambiguity'. Similarly, although she does not exactly 'refuse' them other options, their absence is what prompts Spivak's 'bourgeois white male' students to claim that they 'can't speak'. My next three readings will demonstrate how Orwell, Naipaul, and Courtemanche portray the 'anguish' of a 'colonizer who refuses' as deriving from this lack – which in Naipaul's case becomes a refusal – of alternatives to being a 'colonizer who accepts'. Having established how for Kincaid such alternatives are possible because 'tourists' and 'masters' and never just 'tourists' and 'masters', I will explore how Orwell, Naipaul, and Courtemanche echo this claim that variances of consciousness, experience, intention, and sometimes practice obtains among those who benefit most from today's uneven global conjuncture. In each case these beneficiaries are white citizens of either the imperial 'metropolis' or Lazarus's 'core capitalist nation-states'.[113] These beneficiaries readily acknowledge how the suffering they witness in the colonial and postcolonial worlds is a product of the same structures that also give rise to their own privileges and mobility. Moreover, they object to these structures, although they struggle with how their implication in what they object to puts them in that 'position of ambiguity' that so thoroughly disables Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses'. Orwell, Naipaul, and Courtemanche, therefore, all portray a white beneficiary of injustice agonising over their integrity as objectors to injustice. For reasons that I will explore here, the three writers differ over whether these beneficiaries can ever get beyond this impasse and oppose injustice with any form of integrity. Yet in all three cases, this impasse prevents the beneficiaries in question from aligning their practices with their professed intentions, such as by actively pursuing an end to injustice.

In his essay on British colonial rule in Burma, 'Shooting and Elephant', Orwell describes his own experience of being caught in this impasse. Moreover,

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[112] Gordimer, p. 38.

[113] Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 32.

Orwell's recollection of this impasse emphasises his frustration over his own inability to identify himself as anything other than an executor of British colonial authority. As the title suggests, the essay recounts a generally rather mundane incident in which Orwell – who at the time was sub-divisional police officer of Moulmein, a town in lower Burma – shot dead a rampaging elephant that had killed local livestock and a Dravidian coolie. Orwell introduces the account with a general overview of the growing antipathy among Burma's native population towards not only British rule, but Europeans in general, including Orwell. Thus, Orwell describes how '[a]s a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman [sic] tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once.'[114] Orwell recalls a personal response that was equivocal. On one hand, he found this baiting to be 'perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing [...] Theoretically – and secretly, of course – I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British.'[115] Moreover, given his role in upholding British imperial authority over Burma, Orwell claims to have felt 'oppressed [...] with an intolerable sense of guilt.'[116]

On the other hand, though, Orwell's daily, petty humiliations by the Burmese, 'the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves.'[117] Despite 'theoretically' siding with the Burmese, Orwell nonetheless admits to having 'thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts',[118] given how the priests tormented him more than anyone else. Orwell describes how his 'whole life, every white man's life in the East, was

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[114] Orwell, George, *Shooting an Elephant* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 31.

[115] Orwell, pp. 31-32.

[116] Orwell, p. 32.

[117] Orwell, p. 31.

[118] Orwell, p. 32.

one long struggle not to be laughed at',[119] one long struggle to retain a shred of dignity and self-respect. When confronting the elephant, Orwell remarks that his greatest fear was not of being 'pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse' like the Dravidian coolie.[120] As much as he feared being killed in this manner, what would have been worse was meeting this end before two thousand Burmese natives who had come to watch him kill the elephant, and who would have laughed at the sight of his untimely, undignified demise. 'That would never do', Orwell flatly declares.[121]

Indeed, Orwell claims to having felt compelled against his will to shoot the elephant by his desire to 'avoid looking like a fool' in the eyes of his native audience.[122] Initially, given how its 'attack of 'must' was already passing off',[123] Orwell hoped to simply watch over the elephant until its Burmese mahout came to retrieve it. Yet because they 'had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant', Orwell quickly realised that his native audience now 'expected it of me and I had got to do it'.[124] Orwell therefore noticed how there had been an ironic inversion of power. For in this moment, Orwell resembled 'the conventionalized figure of a sahib',[125] a 'white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd', and so we might expect that he had been 'the leading actor of the piece',[126] his authority conveyed by – and acknowledged by the Burmese as – all the typical signs of British superiority. Instead, Orwell found himself to be 'an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces

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[119] Orwell, p. 37.

[120] Orwell, p. 38.

[121] Orwell, p. 38.

[122] Orwell, p. 40.

[123] Orwell, p. 35.

[124] Orwell, p. 35-36.

[125] Orwell, p. 36.

[126] Orwell, p. 36.

behind.'[127] Like every Englishman in the colonies, he had become 'a sort of hollow, posing dummy',[128] his authority derived from a clichéd spectacle of embodying 'the conventionalized figure of a sahib'. No doubt this figure corresponds to that which Memmi describes: 'the colonizer as a tall man, bronzed by the sun, wearing Wellington boots, proudly leaning on a shovel [...] laboring selflessly for mankind, attending the sick, and spreading culture to the nonliterate [...] a noble adventurer, a righteous pioneer.'[129] According to Memmi, this image was nothing more than a myth that never 'correspond[ed] to reality', and which – moreover – served to obscure that reality, by concealing the purely economic motives of colonialism under the guise of the 'colonizer's' 'cultural and moral mission'.[130]

In short, this 'conventionalized image of a sahib' originally served to consolidate European authority over colonised peoples by rendering it benign, by reinscribing colonialism as both a natural consequence of Europeans' inherent superiority over non-European peoples, and a benevolent, selfless, charitable 'moral mission'. Yet what Orwell realises is that, insofar as his authority was derived from a 'conventionalized' spectacle of European stature, he was unable to then exert that authority in ways that departed from the spectacle, such as by sparing the elephant's life. For the European colonialist's authority depended on his colonial subjects acknowledging him as a figure of authority, which he solicited by fashioning himself into a *recognisable* figure of authority. Here the colonialist's power over the colonised native becomes less absolute than it might appear. For in order to be recognised by the native as a figure of authority, the colonialist must conform to what Homi K. Bhabha calls 'the rules of recognition',[131] the signs that the colonised take to signify colonial authority. Wherever a colonialist does not conform to these rules, their authority goes unrecognised among the colonised, who as a result neither

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[127] Orwell, p. 36.

[128] Orwell, p. 36.

[129] Memmi, p. 47.

[130] Memmi, p. 47.

[131] Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 157.

acknowledge nor comply with it. Contrary to his own desire, therefore, the European colonialist did not enjoy absolute, unconditional authority over the colonised native: instead, he was required to

> spend his life in trying to impress the 'natives,' and so in every crisis he has got to do what the 'natives' expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things.[132]

Just as for Kincaid one becomes a 'tourist', so for Orwell one becomes a 'sahib', by conforming to a predetermined role. In both cases, the adopted identity is synecdochal: it does not exhaustively represent the consciousness, experience, or intentions of those who adopt it. Wherever they heckle him, the Burmese address Orwell as a British imperialist, and in this incident with the elephant, they expect to see a British 'sahib' deal with the situation as they would expect a British 'sahib' to do so. Orwell, though, would rather not resolve the problem like a British 'sahib', for much the same reason as he finds it 'perplexing and upsetting' to be heckled by the Burmese as an imperialist. In both cases, it becomes clear that Orwell is neither just a 'sahib' nor is he just an imperialist; moreover, the Burmese address him as a representative of an imperial order that he has by now 'dis-identified' himself from.

Again, this mode of address is comparable with how Kincaid addresses her reader, and so Orwell finds it 'perplexing and upsetting' for precisely the same reason that provokes Kincaid's reader to respond to her mode of address with impatience, irritation, and hostility. For in both cases, this mode of address does not acknowledge a variance of purpose between the addressee and that which they are being addressed as, whether a rapacious imperial order or a no less rapacious tourist industry. What distinguishes Orwell from Kincaid's touristic 'you', though, is how his 'intolerable sense of guilt' conveys a readiness to examine his 'role in oppressive relationships', and to acknowledge his own, 'privileged place of power' in an 'overwhelming picture of global oppressions'. Unlike Kincaid's 'you', Orwell confronts his own 'slightly funny feeling [...] about exploitation, oppression, domination', rather than bury it deep within him. Hence his refusal to respond to the Burmese by trying to convince himself of the benignity of the imperial venture he

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[132] Orwell, p. 36.

represents, unlike Kincaid's 'you'. And yet despite this refusal; despite having already concluded that 'imperialism was an evil thing', and that the 'conventionalized image of a sahib' was nothing but a fraud, Orwell continued to derive a sense of personal dignity from the extent to which the Burmese respected his authority as a 'sahib', even to the point of valuing his dignity more than the life and wellbeing of an elephant. Ironically, despite being disgruntled with how the Burmese natives refused to acknowledge how his intentions diverged from those of British imperialism, Orwell nonetheless responded to this refusal by acting as if there were no such divergence. In the process, Orwell repeated what he claims was their metonymisation of him, as if to corroborate it.

It becomes unclear, then, why Orwell should have turned back to this fraudulent, 'conventionalized image of a sahib'; why he should have sought solace from the heckles of the Burmese natives in the very thing that they identified him as, and which he allegedly 'dis-identified' himself from. Part of the answer may well lie in the very fact that the Burmese refused to acknowledge any possibility that his intentions diverged from those of British imperialism, coupled with the fact that Orwell himself 'could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East.'[133] Here we have yet another 'dis-identified beneficiary' claiming to be silenced in his predicament, unable to articulate or make coherent his position as an objector to the suffering of others who nonetheless benefits from it. As a 'sahib', as a colonial police officer, Orwell was clearly anything but silenced, except insofar as he could 'speak' as an opponent of imperialism, including through his actions. Clearly, this silence is no less 'imposed' on him by the Burmese, who refuse to acknowledge any possibility that he might be anything more than a European imperialist. Orwell, then, is caught in 'a conflict between one sensible order and another',[134] an 'opposition between logics that count the parties and parts of the community in different ways.'[135] On one hand is the 'sensible order' of British imperialism, according to which Orwell represents the benign intentions of

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[133] Orwell, p. 32.

[134] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560.

[135] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 35.

an imperial order whose ascendancy derives not from the despotic violence of colonial dominion, but rather from the natural superiority of white Europeans, including Orwell. On the other hand is Burmese 'anti-European feeling',[136] according to which Orwell represents an unwelcome foreign presence that has so far failed to secure the natives' total, unconditional obedience. Unlike Kincaid's reader-tourist – at least according to Kincaid – Orwell does not respond to the latter by convincing himself of the former. Neither does he entirely align himself with the latter, though, given its refusal to acknowledge Orwell's own refusal to convince himself of the former.

As a result, both 'sensible orders' give us no way of identifying Orwell, and we are left unable 'to designate what we see'.[137] Simultaneously, that Orwell himself 'could get nothing into perspective' suggests an absence of other 'sensible orders' that could articulate his growing doubts over the legitimacy of Britain's imperial venture.   As we have seen, for Kincaid a 'master' cannot become anything else until they identify themselves as a 'master', and so it is necessary to initially address a 'master' as if they were nothing else, in order to encourage this self-identification. Just as for Kincaid this mode of address is a claim to agency, so for the Burmese their heckling and harassment of Europeans living in Burma were small exertions of agency. Subsequently, just as the discomfort of Kincaid's reader is a barometer of her agency, so too is Orwell's perplexity a measure of the Burmese people's ability to challenge the colonial order, albeit at a microscopic, quotidian level. One effect of these small acts of resistance was to compound Orwell's equivocality regarding imperialism and his role in it, to the point where he became a 'colonizer who refuses'. It is debatable whether Orwell ultimately found himself unable to get beyond the paralysis that so thoroughly entraps Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses'. Yet in 'Shooting an Elephant' Orwell suggests that the Burmese mode of addressing him as an imperialist did not immediately compel him to openly declare his opposition to imperialism, or at least to respond in a way that more clearly conveyed the departure between his professed intentions and those of imperialism. Again, as with Kincaid, I do not mean to blame the Burmese themselves for this outcome.

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[136] Orwell, p. 31.

[137] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560.

Indeed, their manner of addressing Orwell as a thoroughgoing imperialist was an absolutely necessary way of both interrupting the colonial order – by claiming agency for themselves – and putting pressure on Orwell to find ways of redressing his complicity in that order, to align his practice with his professed opposition to it.

As a result, if I am to 'blame' anything, then it is Orwell's own inability to 'get [any]thing into perspective', to make enough sense of his ambiguous position as a 'colonizer who refuses' as to find ways of aligning his actions with his professed intentions. This inability may well have been compounded by the absence of a 'sensible order' that registered multiple intentions and ambivalent perspectives on the legitimacy of British imperial rule – or even the possibility of such variances – among those whose role it was to maintain it, or in whose name it was maintained. As I have already claimed, a similar absence is what prompts Spivak's 'bourgeois white male' students to declare that they 'can't speak'. Just as Spivak's students can only identify themselves positively as 'bourgeois white males', so Orwell can only identify himself positively as a 'sahib', at least within his immediate circumstances. No doubt there is a case against Orwell of a latent attachment to the colonial order: hence his desire to take out his anger and confusion on the Buddhist priests who taunt him, to punish the colonised for his inability to resolve the contradiction he faces as a 'colonizer who refuses and continues to live in a colony.'[138] Nonetheless, such attachments may well be a symptom of that contradiction, coupled with the absence of a 'sensible order' that could reconcile the inconsistency of opposing something one benefits from, and one's implacable opposition to it. As it stands, Orwell's response to the Burmese seemingly corroborates Memmi's claim that all 'colonizers who refuse' eventually resign themselves to the colonial order, thus becoming 'colonizers who accept'. And yet unlike Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses', and unlike Kincaid's touristic 'you', Orwell resigns himself to 'act[ing] like a sahib' knowing full well how fraudulent the act is. Whereas it troubles Kincaid's 'you' as little more than a 'slightly funny feeling [...] about exploitation, oppression, domination', this knowledge 'oppresses' Orwell 'with an intolerable sense of guilt.' Moreover, whereas Kincaid's 'you' strives to metonymise

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[138] Memmi, p. 89.

themselves by assuming a touristic persona, Orwell 'act[s] like a sahib' knowing full well that this persona is at odds with his individual consciousness and intentions.

3.4 Pessimism and the limits of 'self-metonymisation' in V.S. Naipaul's *Guerrillas*

It remains, though, that Orwell's 'dis-identification' does not lead him beyond the 'tormented dance' of Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses'. Orwell, therefore, might well share Memmi's pessimism towards the prospect of a 'dis-identified beneficiary' ever actively, effectively contributing to the dissolution of whatever they 'dis-identify' themselves from. A careless reader might say the same about Kincaid, given how her subtle suggestions that tourists and 'masters' are never just tourists and 'masters' are easily eclipsed by the contrary implication of her antagonistic, deliberately reductive mode of addressing her reader. In this respect, a careless reader might misconstrue *A Small Place* as presenting a cynical, disenchanted, and doubtful perspective on the capacity of 'masters' becoming something else, comparable to that which marks much of Naipaul's writing. Contrary to Frederick and Larkin, St Lucian poet Jane King finds that *A Small Place* offers the Caribbean 'anger and insult and little else', and that Kincaid is therefore no less guilty than Naipaul of the 'sin' of 'despair, offering no hope to the Caribbean.'[139] King has little objection to this appraisal of Naipaul, given her impression that *The Middle Passage* – Naipaul's travelogue of his 1961 tour of the Caribbean – is 'written in the tradition of a particular – mostly English – genre of travel writing [...] Its general tone is a wry, dry, humorous one which is perhaps more typical of the British Isles than of the Caribbean.'[140] As such, King can see how 'in describing Caribbean shame in the tones of its former imperial master [Naipaul] must be seen as having gone over to the enemy';[141] as having 'allowed himself quite consciously to be turned into a

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[139] King, Jane, 'A Small Place Writes Back', in *Callaloo*, 25.3 (Summer 2002), p. 907.

[140] J. King, pp. 900-01.

[141] J. King, p. 901.

witness for the Western prosecution', condemning 'non-Whites [as] the cause of all our problems, not the overly maligned imperialists'".[142]

Naipaul's politics have always been widely debated, his 'writings and their idiomatic inflections [...] simultaneously celebrated and castigated with descriptions that range between "objective" or "ahistorical," "unsentimental" or "culturally ignorant," "unafraid" or "hysterical."'[143] In response to those who dismiss him as 'a despicable lackey of neo-colonialism' who, 'with brahminical disdain, has consistently sought to preserve himself from "the corruption of causes"',[144] Naipaul's defenders have emphasised his equal disdain towards revolutionary demagogues and the old imperial powers, along with the subsequent 'anger at injustice, irresponsibility and irrationality' that his 'seemingly detached understatement' belies.[145] All too often, Naipaul's fierce criticism of postcolonial regimes, coupled with his enthusiasm for secular modernity, is taken as evidence of his 'kowtowing to the West'[146] in ways that completely disregard how he traces the failures of these regimes to the consequences of European colonial rule, including the postcolonial world's continuing, forcible subordination by the former colonial powers and the U.S.A.[147] A symptom of this subordinacy is the persistence of 'white liberals interfering in, and romanticizing, other societies, about which they know little and from which they can safely flee the consequences of their interference.'[148] Given their ignorance, self-interest, and mobility, Naipaul's white liberals are

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[142] Said, 'Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World', in *Salmagundi*, 70-71 (Spring/Summer 1986), p. 53.

[143] Mustafa, Fawzia, *V.S. Naipaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1-2.

[144] Neill, Michael, 'Guerillas and Gangs: Frantz Fanon and V.S. Naipaul', in *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 13.4 (October 1982), p. 21.

[145] King, Bruce, *V.S. Naipaul* (Basingstoke, London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 10.

[146] Huggan, Graham, 'V.S. Naipaul and the political correctness debate', in College Literature, 21:3 (1994), p. 202.

[147] Bruce King does claim, though, that for Naipaul '[i]mperialism can be desirable if it brings order, peace, security and knowledge and raises people to a larger, more tolerant view of the world beyond their petty local conflicts and limited vision' (B. King, p. 10).

[148] B. King, p. 10.

comparable to Kincaid's white tourists in *A Small Place*, even though the former's intentions are avowedly very different to the latter's. Naipaul's liberals enter the Third World hoping to do good by helping others, while Kincaid's tourists travel to the Caribbean simply to escape the complexities, challenges, and disappointments of their own lives. Underlying this difference, though, is a comparable desire for personal fulfilment, and a common assumption that 'other' locales will accommodate that desire.

Hence Naipaul's derisive portrait of white social justice warriors in *Guerrillas*, a novel that revolves around three figures who avowedly commit themselves to redressing the chronic poverty and corruption of an unnamed[149] Caribbean island, in apparent contrast to the duplicities and self-preservation of everyone around them. Jimmy Ahmed leads an agricultural commune that is secretly a front for anti-government guerrillas lurking in the hinterland. Of African and Chinese descent, Jimmy first gained prominence as a Black Power figurehead in England where he was educated, before being deported back home amid allegations of rape, although his public prominence had also attracted unwanted attention among the far right. Jimmy's commune is funded by various multinational corporations, including Sablich's, a firm that originated from the slave trade. In its efforts to improve its image, Sablich's also hire Peter Roche, an activist who was tortured and deported by the South African government for his involvement in the anti-Apartheid struggle. Roche has published a memoir of his experiences in custody, which is what attracted Jane to him, who joins him soon after he arrives on the island. A young, middle-class Englishwoman, Jane initially sees in Roche a figure that will be at the epicentre of a global upheaval that will sweep away the existing world order, a convulsion that Jane has anticipated for years, but which has yet to occur.

As we have seen, Kincaid's tourist-reader absolves themselves of any implication in the grim realities of Antiguan society, by recasting their privilege as a happy consequence of 'Western' cultural superiority, rather than of the exploitation of 'non-Western' peoples. Naipaul's white liberals in *Guerrillas* are more

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[149] Several critics have suggested that Naipaul models the island on his native Trinidad, given the parallels between the political crisis that engulfs the island towards the end of *Guerrillas*, and the failed Black Power uprising in Trinidad in 1970 (B. King, p. 100).

comparable to Orwell, then, insofar as they readily acknowledge how their privilege comes at the expense of other people's suffering. Thus, whereas Kincaid must remind her reader that their ability to leave the drudgery of their daily lives – however temporarily – comes at the cost of denying that ability to someone else, Jane is already aware of 'how lucky she was to be able to decide to leave. Not many people had that freedom: to decide, and then to do. It was part of her luck; in moments like this she always consoled herself with thoughts of her luck. She was privileged'.[150] Like Orwell, though, Naipaul suggests that this awareness cannot by itself induce a more effective, unconditional commitment to dissolving the structures that underpin one's privilege. Yet unlike Orwell, Naipaul sees absolutely no sincerity in the 'tormented dance' of 'the colonizer who refuses'. For in Jane's case her awareness of her privilege brings comfort: she constantly puts herself at ease by reminding herself of how she can escape from the island, and so avoid getting swept away in the coming crisis. Moreover, this ability to leave absolves Jane of 'mak[ing] a whole of her attitudes or actions',[151] of outlining 'a complete and coherent personality'[152] or political philosophy for herself. Free of this obligation, Jane is able to disregard the 'contradiction between what she d[oes] and sa[ys] and what she fe[els]', between her 'knowledge of her own security and her vision of decay, of a world running down', a world in which 'she move[s] from one crisis to another',[153] but which will eventually be undone by what she believes is an all-encompassing, unavoidable crisis.

This apocalyptic vision drives Jane to attach herself to men whom she believes will be at the centre of this global convulsion. What initially attracted Jane to Roche was her sense that he had 'a vision, like hers, of her own world about to be smashed, and that [...] it was to some new and as yet unsuspected centre of world-

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[150] Naipaul, pp. 49-50; note, though, that whether Jane is able to leave is unclear, since when she arrives on the island she passes through airport security without having her passport stamped. As a result, there is no official record of her arriving, something that Roche suspects might become a problem later on (Naipaul, p. 40).

[151] Naipaul, p. 94.

[152] Naipaul, p. 94.

[153] Naipaul, p. 51.

disturbance that he was going'.[154] Hoping she would find herself at 'the centre of the world', at the flashpoint of this disturbance, Jane joins Roche on the island after he has established himself there. Upon arrival, though, she quickly notices how Roche has been absorbed into the comfortable yet complacent, self-interested lifestyle of the Ridge, an affluent suburb of the island's capital city – perhaps its only city – situated high above the loud and dirty streets, and ringed by police checkpoints. Jane is dismayed to find that on the Ridge 'the talk was of departure, of papers being fixed for Canada and the United States'.[155] She soon realises that in fact she has 'come to a place at the end of the world, to a place that ha[s] exhausted its possibilities',[156] and whose troubles will not spill out and pitch the wider world into the crisis she has anticipated. Jane had left London out of frustration with everyone around her who 'spoke of crisis [but who] were themselves placid, content with their functions, existing within their functions, trapped, part of what they railed against.'[157] She is disappointed, therefore, to find that Roche is no less trapped by that which he opposes, 'a refugee on the island [...] an employee of his firm; he belonged to a place like the Ridge; he was half colonial.'[158]

Jane is not alone in suspecting Roche's political integrity. After the island is briefly engulfed in political crisis, Roche agrees to be interviewed on a radio show hosted by his friend Meredith Herbert, a conniving politician who never bothers to hide his cynicism. The interview quickly descends into an interrogation of Roche's political integrity, given his decision to return to England, since '[r]ecent events have made [him] feel like a stranger.'[159] Meredith avowedly understands Roche's frustration with the situation on the island, especially with how that situation has prevented him from doing 'creative work'.[160] Yet Meredith expresses this

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[154] Naipaul, pp. 43-44.

[155] Naipaul, p. 44.

[156] Naipaul, p. 44.

[157] Naipaul, p. 42.

[158] Naipaul, p. 45.

[159] Naipaul, p. 205.

[160] Naipaul, p. 205.

understanding with wryness bordering on contemptuous sarcasm, remarking that 'you're washing your hands of us. I feel we've let you down. I feel you haven't enjoyed your time with us.'[161] Meredith addresses Roche here as if dutifully responding to a customer services complaint. Roche's experience on the island has not lived up to his expectations, and his disappointment is comparable to that of the tourist whose holiday is ruined by rain in *A Small Place*.[162] In both cases, the reality has not lived up to the promised product: in response, Meredith sarcastically offers his regrets on behalf of everyone on the island who has let Roche down.

Having conceded that the island has failed to enable Roche to fulfil a personal fantasy, Meredith turns the tables on him by considering whether this failure equally stems from Roche's own lack of any coherent 'framework of political belief'.[163] Again, this lack initially attracted Jane to Roche, insofar as he

> appeared to her as a doer [...] He talked little; he had no system to expound; but simply by being what he was he enlarged her vision of the world. He seemed to make accessible that remote world, of real events and real action, whose existence she had half divined; and through him she felt she was being given a new idea of human possibility.[164]

Yet Meredith exposes the crippling consequence of this lack when suggesting that for Roche 'work is important. You aren't too concerned about results.'[165] Hence the minimal impact of his guerrilla activities in South Africa, '[t]earing up a railway, bombing a power-station', which ultimately came to little more than a 'gesture'.[166] Meredith is astonished at how Roche could have 'risked so much for so little',[167] and Roche himself claims to be 'amazed now at the things we tried to do. I suppose we

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[161] Naipaul, p. 211.

[162] Kincaid, p. 4.

[163] Naipaul, pp. 212-13.

[164] Naipaul, p. 43.

[165] Naipaul, p. 216.

[166] Naipaul, p. 213.

[167] Naipaul, pp. 212-13.

led too sheltered lives. We exaggerated the effect of a bomb.'[168] Yet if Roche has failed to achieve a sense of personal fulfilment on the island, then Meredith finds that this frustration is due to his continuing naïveté, his indifference to the consequences of his actions, given his belief that 'gestures' alone will vouch for his integrity. This indifference allows Roche to disregard how Jimmy exaggerates the effect of his commune, even as he claims that he never shared Jimmy's belief in a 'revolution based on land', which he suspected was 'anti-historical', given how '[a]ll over the world people are leaving the land to go to the cities' instead.[169] Equally, Roche's indifference towards 'results' allows him to justify his association with Sablich's, despite their obvious investment in the current regime. Roche justifies himself here on a realist basis, claiming that '[i]f you start probing too much and you look for absolute purity, you can end up doing nothing at all';[170] that '[y]ou have to work with what is there.'[171] Better to work towards social justice under the aegis of the former colonial 'master', than to do no such work at all. Hence Roche's objection against any claim that he 'had to keep to a straiter [sic] path than anybody else. I'm not on display. I don't know why people here should think that.'[172] Similarly, Roche asks why anyone 'should want me to hold out hope'[173] for the prospect of meaningful change: in response, Meredith states that '[w]e have a special attitude to people who take up our cause. It is unfair, but we tend to look up to them.'[174]

Gradually, Meredith exposes how Roche has sought 'a kind of personal peace'[175] on the island with little regard for the consequences of his involvement in Jimmy's commune for the islanders; how for Roche the islanders themselves are

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[168] Naipaul, p. 213.

[169] Naipaul, pp. 206-07.

[170] Naipaul, p. 206.

[171] Naipaul, p. 88.

[172] Naipaul, p. 206.

[173] Naipaul, p. 214.

[174] Naipaul, p. 206.

[175] Naipaul, p. 214.

inconsequential, compared with his desire for personal fulfilment. This disregard shows in Roche's indifference to whether the islanders might look to him for hope, as well as his decision to leave the island having failed to find that fulfilment. Previously, Roche had scornfully noted how Jane's ability to leave the island absolved her of having to fashion for herself 'a complete and coherent personality'. Under Meredith's interrogation, though, Roche grudgingly admits that he is no less capable of escaping the consequences of his actions by leaving, and that this ability to 'drop out' compromises his own political integrity. After all, '[o]nly very rich people in very rich countries drop out. You can't drop out if you're poor.'[176] Like Jane, Roche seems to be aware of the privilege that Kincaid's tourist-reader is apparently ignorant of: the privilege of being able to extract oneself from the troubles of one's immediate circumstances. As we have seen, for Kincaid redressing this ignorance opens up the possibility of encouraging 'masters' and 'tourists' to become something else. In contrast, Naipaul's white liberals are very much aware of this privilege; moreover, they 'dis-identify' themselves from such 'master' figures as Meredith, Ridge residents Harry de Tunja and Mrs Grandlieu, and Sablich, the slaver and plantation owner whose legacy Sablich's never manage to shake off, despite supporting Jimmy's commune and hiring Roche. Yet Naipaul continually undercuts this 'dis-identification' by demonstrating how Jane and Roche are no less self-interested than these figures. Both are conscious of how their privileges compromise their political integrity, how they are both caught in a 'contradiction between what [they do] and sa[y] and what [they feel]', yet for Naipaul this 'slightly funny feeling' offers neither Jane nor Roche any hope of becoming anything other than the 'masters' that they are, and that they wish they weren't.

As a result, *Guerrillas* corroborates those charges against Naipaul of 'offering no hope to the Caribbean'.[177] Indeed, Roche's indifference to anyone who looks to him as a source of hope suggests that in fact Naipaul is well aware of how denying hope has 'a real force in the world',[178] and real consequences for those whose lot might otherwise appear to be hopeless. In this respect, Meredith's

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[176] Naipaul, p. 207.

[177] J. King, p. 907.

[178] J. King, p. 907.

interrogation of Roche might well articulate a 'slightly funny feeling' of Naipaul's own, one that troubles his fatalistic belief that 'secure white European liberals'[179] cannot ever hope to become anything other than the 'masters' they despise. For if Roche's indifference to the hope of others renders him complacent, then surely Naipaul's conviction that white liberals cannot hope to redress their complacency renders him just as complacent as Roche. Indeed, surely then Naipaul's more general doubt over the prospect of achieving a fully independent, stable, prosperous, egalitarian, and liberal Third World only further suggests that he is just as guilty of the complacency that marks both Roche and Jane. According to Bruce King, Naipaul 'has often implied that his perspective is not that of a secure white European liberal preoccupied by historical guilt',[180] a claim that seems corroborated by his evident 'dislike of white liberals interfering in, and romanticizing, other societies, about which they know little and from which they can safely flee the consequences of their interference.'[181] Naipaul is certainly not ignorant of the societies he writes about, and he hardly romanticises or interferes in them, unless we consider his damning appraisals of how postcolonial nation-states have fared since formal decolonisation to be a form of interference. After all, insofar as they offer no hope to these nations, these appraisals have no less of 'a real force in the world', and real consequences for those who are subjected to the 'injustice, irresponsibility and irrationality'[182] that they document. Moreover, given that he documents these nations as a visitor from elsewhere, Naipaul is just as 'lucky' as Jane and Roche in his ability to leave, and so to avoid whatever consequences his refusal of hope might have for the people whose misery he so viscerally captures.

In many ways, it is no doubt unfair to compare Naipaul to the 'secure white European liberals' whose complacency he critiques. Yet Naipaul himself invites this comparison through the various parallels between himself and his white liberal

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[179] B. King, p. 10.

[180] B. King, p. 10.

[181] B. King, p. 10.

[182] B. King, p. 10: King attributes much of this detachment to Naipaul's upbringing in a Hindu community that never enjoyed as much intimacy as that which existed between Trinidad's African and white communities (B. King, pp. 10-12).

characters in *Guerrillas*, particularly Jane. For one thing, Naipaul's pessimism towards the prospect of achieving a fully independent, stable, and prosperous Third World is often attributed to a 'philosophy of life'[183] whose fatalism is comparable to Jane's 'casual nihilism', her millenarian vision of 'the coming crash and the disintegration of systems'.[184] Hence Serafin Roldan-Santiago's claim that, rather than his 'disgust towards the people and situations in the Caribbean that [he] wants to document', the disdainful tone of *The Middle Passage* instead reflects Naipaul's 'philosophical assumption on the underlying premises of life in general.'[185] This personal philosophy amounts to

> a vision of the futility of life, especially in the post-colonial world. Lost colonials roaming across the post-colonial landscape, searching for a sense of identity, lost in a world that marginalizes them; their final destiny being desolation and dereliction. This Naipaulian philosoph[y] [...] constructs a deep pessimism about the world and its inhabitants who are viewed as totally absorbed in futility. Man is striving to understand his existence, trying to grasp it and find its rationale, but is failing at it. [...] It is not Naipaul's bad intentions and meanness; it is the existential pessimism and nothingness, this driving, psychic force that permeates his writings.'[186]

Naipaul's writing often expresses a panic-stricken, nauseous vision of the world as beset by 'decay and all that it can gather: dissolution, futility, corruption, and demise.'[187] His 'unforgiving [...] relentlessly cruel, misogynist, [and] damning'[188] portrait of Jane, therefore, becomes ironic, given how similar this vision of decay is to Jane's own vision of a world that is sliding into crisis and decline. Moreover, according to Roldan-Santiago, Naipaul attributes the futility of a fully independent, stable, and prosperous Third World not to '["]the oppressors of mankind. The enemy

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[183] B. King, p. 15.

[184] Naipaul, p. 95.

[185] Roldan-Santiago, Serafin, 'Pessimism and Existentialism in V.S. Naipaul', in *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, 5.2 (Spring 2008), p. 158.

[186] Roldan-Santiago, p. 153.

[187] Roldan-Santiago, p. 153.

[188] Gajarawala, Toral Jatin, 'Fictional Murder and Other Descriptive Deaths: V.S. Naipaul's *Guerrillas* and the Problem of Postcolonial Description', in *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory*, 42.3 (Fall 2012), p. 302.

is not simply slavery or colonialism; it is life itself, mankind itself' [...] It is the existential condition of humanity',[189] an immutable law of life that undercuts history itself. Similarly, the reassurance Jane finds in her ability to leave the island whenever she wants, to return to London, is undercut by her belief that, although she 'would be safe in London [...] she would be safe in the midst of decay.'[190] Given her initial belief that the island would be 'the setting of action that would undo the world',[191] Jane sees between the island's instability and London's decline a common, global dynamic. As such, even if she manages to escape the island's troubles, there is no escaping this wider, irreversible crisis.

In short, Jane's belief in a global dynamic of decay that affects everywhere, is comparable to Naipaul's conviction in 'decay [...] dissolution, futility, corruption, and demise' as an all-encompassing, 'existential condition of humanity'. As Roche wryly notes, underlying Jane's apocalyptic vision is the security of 'the certainties, of class and money, of which, in London, she had seemed so ignorant.'[192] Again, Naipaul is by no means ignorant of how he enjoys a similar security, at least compared with most people living in the Third World. Yet the parallel between his pessimism and Jane's millenarianism imputes that Naipaul's political integrity is no less questionable than Jane's. As a result, another parallel emerges between Naipaul and Jane. For just as Jane's questionable integrity undercuts her 'dis-identification' of herself from the vapid, selfish Ridge mentality, the parallels discussed so far between Jane and Naipaul undercut's Naipaul's own 'dis-identification' of himself from 'secure white European liberals' like Jane. As a result, *Guerrillas* may well present 'a cast of characters confused by their missions and arrogant in their ignorance'; unable 'to grasp anything but their own misplaced vanities', they may well be 'earnest but vapid and sometimes dangerously deluded' in their 'pietistic political and "moral" self-righteousness', often to the point of 'caus[ing] more

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[189] Roldan-Santiago, p. 154.

[190] Naipaul, p. 50.

[191] Naipaul, p. 48.

[192] Naipaul, p. 97.

damage than anything else'.[193] Yet underlying this damning verdict on white liberals and black revolutionaries in the postcolonial Caribbean, is a nagging uncertainty on Naipaul's part over his own political integrity, owing to a sense that he has more in common with these characters than he would care to admit. Naipaul's 'dis-identification' from liberals like Jane and Roche is troubled by a 'slightly funny feeling' that he is no better than they are, and that he is hardly in a position, therefore, to judge them so severely.

Like Kincaid and Orwell, Naipaul suggests that 'masters' can be subject to forms of consciousness and intention other than those that define them as 'masters'. Unlike Kincaid, though, Naipaul maintains that 'masters' cannot ever be anything other than 'masters', even if they want to be something else entirely. Yet although this pessimism resembles Orwell's, Naipaul's is much more deterministic: Orwell does not address the prospect of 'masters' becoming something else, and although he does not explicitly affirm its possibility, neither does he explicitly claim otherwise, like Naipaul does. And yet, given how in many ways he is a 'master', Naipaul himself seems unsettled by his own determinism, just as Orwell finds the heckling of the Burmese 'perplexing and upsetting'. For Naipaul's disdain towards complacent white liberals like Jane and Roche suggests that he himself exceeds the terms in which he defines the 'master', even if that excess only consists of his awareness that pessimism is something '[o]nly very rich people in very rich countries' get to enjoy; that only the privileged can afford 'to be cynical about the future, about the politicians and the politics.'[194] This awareness would suggest that Naipaul is too quick to conclude that 'masters' can only ever be 'masters', and that Naipaul himself suspects as much. This tension persists throughout *Guerrillas*, arguably because Naipaul's pessimism prevents even him from reconstituting himself as something other than a 'master'. As a result, Naipaul deprives himself of any hope that his own 'dis-identification' from his own 'master' figure might lead to something more productive than his deterministic belief, in the futility of pursuing the goal of a truly independent, stable, and prosperous Third World. No wonder, then, that so many critics claim that 'in describing Caribbean shame in the tones of

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[193] Mustafa, pp. 125-26.

[194] Naipaul, p. 47.

its former imperial master [Naipaul] must be seen as having gone over to the enemy'.[195] Nonetheless, such claims arguably overlook Naipaul's equivocality over his own status as a 'master', just as a careless reading of *A Small Place* overlooks those subtle moments where Kincaid attests that tourists are never just 'tourists', and that they are therefore capable of becoming something else entirely. Naipaul himself is not just a 'master' as he defines the category, and so he himself testifies to the possibility that 'masters' are never just 'masters', contrary to his own claims.

3.5 Disputing a 'master's' identity in Gil Courtemanche's *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*

A similar equivocality troubles Bernard Valcourt, protagonist of Gil Courtemanche's novelised memoir of the Rwandan genocide, *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*. A disenchanted Quebecois journalist, Valcourt lives in Kigali's Hôtel des Milles-Collines, a haven for European and North American expatriates from the poverty, violence, and disease that chokes the surrounding streets, much like the Ridge in *Guerrillas*. Valcourt is openly disdainful towards most of his fellow expatriates, who gladly co-operate with the country's Hutu Power regime, even as they learn of the imminent genocide. Those expats who do not compete in golf tournaments with corrupt politicians spend their time unwinding in the hotel bar before taking a prostitute back to their room. Valcourt resists the prostitutes' advances – although he occasionally sleeps with their madam, Agathe – and generally keeps himself to himself, 'observ[ing] these things and not[ing] them down, muttering as he does so, sometimes angrily, sometimes with tenderness, but always audibly. For all anyone knows or imagines, he's writing about them'.[196] As with Jane in *Guerrillas*, the thought of returning to Canada does occur to Valcourt, and many of his Rwandan friends advise, even urge him to leave rather than risk becoming embroiled in the brewing violence. Having grown fond of Rwanda, though, Valcourt insists on staying, especially after he becomes romantically involved with Gentille, a young waiter famous around the hotel for her beauty.

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[195] J. King, pp. 900-01.

[196] Courtemanche, Gil, *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*, trans. by Patricia Claxton (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2003), p. 4.

Although officially classified as a Hutu, Valcourt confesses that '[i]f an anthropologist needed a photograph to illustrate the archetype of the Tutsi woman, he would have shown him Gentille's.'[197] In fact, Gentille is both, her Hutu great-great-grandfather having arranged for his children to marry Tutsis, given how the Tutsis enjoyed considerable social advantages over the Hutus under German, then Belgian colonial rule in Rwanda. Valcourt initially resists Gentille's advances out of astonishment that she could ever be attracted to a jaded, cynical white man roughly thirty years her senior. Her attraction, though, derives from the fact that Valcourt has never 'touched her on the sly, or as if by accident'; neither has he 'done what all the other customers did when signing their chits, saying, "I'll be in my room all evening," showing her their key to make sure she memorized the room number',[198] even though she is not a prostitute. Gentille is just as famous for turning down all such advances as she is for her beauty, provoking the ire of the many patrons she rejects. Valcourt, therefore, is 'firmly convinced that if he did have a chance to lift Gentille's blue skirt up to her navel, it was because he was not like the others who never hid the way they ate her up'.[199] It remains, though, that '[l]ike all the others she mistrusted and avoided, he was undressing her, fucking her every time he looked at her.'[200] As a result, despite being 'the only White who's never asked [her]...to...you know what I mean', Valcourt admits to Gentille that he is 'not completely different from the customers around the pool. I...I want...I want you too, you know.'[201]

Gentille and Valcourt's initially hesitant courtship captures Valcourt's efforts to distinguish himself from his fellow debauched expatriates, to establish how he is 'not like the others'. In doing so, though, Valcourt readily acknowledges how he *is* like the others, echoing Kincaid's claim that 'masters' cannot be anything else until they at least identify themselves as 'masters'. Thus, Valcourt is dismayed when

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[197] Courtemanche, pp. 32-33.

[198] Courtemanche, pp. 33-34.

[199] Courtemanche, p. 34.

[200] Courtemanche, p. 34.

[201] Courtemanche, pp. 33-34.

Gentille tells him that 'I'd like to be loved by a nice White like you', suspecting that what she means is 'a White like any other. A promise of wealth, maybe a visa for somewhere else; and if the blessed Holy Virgin answered her prayer, marriage with a White and a house in a cold country, a clean one.'[202] In response, he tells her that 'I don't want to be a White who gives gifts. If you want to leave, I can help you get a visa, but you don't need to sleep with me.'[203] Such responses leave Gentille bemused as to how '[h]e hadn't understood at all'[204] what she was trying to tell him. Valcourt continues to allow his awareness of his comparative wealth and advantage to get between them, and Gentille becomes increasingly frustrated by his apparent inability to 'understand anything because you complicate everything. You think, you take notes [...] You talk and you argue. When the others laugh out loud and shout in fun, you just smile. When you laugh you don't make any noise, or hardly. When you get drunk, you do it alone in your room.'[205] She tries once again to reassure him that her attraction is founded on how 'you'd always been polite and nice, nothing else, just polite and nice.'[206] 'And White...and rich', Valcourt responds, prompting Gentille to wonder once again at his failure to 'understand what seemed so simple to her'.[207]

In contrast to Kincaid's tourist-reader, Valcourt readily identifies himself as a 'master', which for him is the figure of the debauched, complacent white expatriate for whom Rwanda offers itself in much the same way as Antigua and Naipaul's island offer themselves to white tourists and liberals respectively: as a space that exists solely for one's personal fulfilment or wellbeing, and where the consequences of one's actions for the 'locals' are of little concern. In many respects, though, Valcourt is not a 'master' so defined. Indeed, he identifies himself as a 'master' precisely in order to avoid succumbing to a common habit among the other

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[202] Courtemanche, p. 35.

[203] Courtemanche, p. 35.

[204] Courtemanche, p. 38.

[205] Courtemanche, p. 70.

[206] Courtemanche, p. 71.

[207] Courtemanche, p. 71.

'masters', who court Rwandan women by offering – often insincerely – to take them away from the country's endemic poverty, corruption, violence, and disease. In short, by identifying himself as a 'master' in order – paradoxically – to avoid succumbing to the practices of 'masters', Valcourt establishes that he is in fact something more than a 'master', that his consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices are not reducible to the 'master' type. What frustrates Gentille, then, is that her attraction to Valcourt is founded on her perception that he is not just a 'master', and that he resists her efforts to identify him – and thus to prompt him to identify himself – as something else. By downplaying his 'dis-identification' from his fellow expatriates, Valcourt prevents it from leading to something more productive than this agonising over his integrity, in much the same way as Naipaul is left in a cul-de-sac of self-doubt by disavowing his own 'dis-identification' from 'secure white European liberals' who are 'confused by their missions and arrogant in their ignorance'.

As with Orwell, though, we cannot allow Valcourt's professed 'dis-identification' to distract us from all the ways in which he remains a 'master', even if his 'dis-identification' entails acknowledging precisely as much. Indeed, Makau Mutua finds that Valcourt and Gentille's courtship follows a disturbing, racialised sexual politics, in which 'African men are savage beasts who commit genocide, and rape and infect women with AIDS, while the white in the story is the epitome of tenderness, loving caresses, and sexual ecstasy. If that is not the epitome of racism, then I do not understand the word.'[208] Certainly, in his efforts to convey how Valcourt is 'not like the others', Courtemanche often strays into the implausible, such as when Valcourt manages to bring Gentille to orgasm simply by telling her he loves her.[209] Moreover, Gentile distinguishes Valcourt not only from the other white expatriates, but also from black Rwandans, who have generally taken advantage of her solely for sex. What she asks of Valcourt is 'to be loved like a White woman, like in movies where all you see are caresses and long kisses, bouquets of flowers

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[208] Mutua, Makau, 'Review of: James Dawes, *That the World May Know: Bearing Witness to Atrocity*', in *Biography*, 31.4 (Fall 2008), p. 750.

[209] Courtemanche, pp. 88-89.

and men suffering from broken hearts.'[210] Yet the novel's distinction between 'black' sex and 'the White people's love'[211] is more complicated than Mutua allows, given how brutally the expatriates treat the hotel's prostitutes, who describe how the Belgians are 'coarse and brutal', how they 'insult us while they shoot their wad and tell us we don't deserve any better, that we're all sluts', while the French 'rape and take. They don't talk and when they pay they fling the money on the bed contemptuously.'[212] Indeed, straight after Gentille asks Valcourt to teach her 'the White people's love', they witness a Belgian diplomat in the next room throwing a Tutsi prostitute from his fourth-floor balcony, much to the indifference of those expats swimming in the pool below. 'Do you still want me to teach you the White people's love?' Valcourt asks Gentille.

An obvious rejoinder here is that by treating Rwandan women so brutally, the expats effectively indulge in what for Courtemanche is still primarily black' sex. Indeed, Valcourt himself subscribes to something like Mutua's binary logic, when responding to Gentille's request to teach her 'white' love, by telling her that 'I can only teach you my own, and sometimes it's pretty black.'[213] Courtemanche himself may well subscribe to this binary logic, which then becomes a symptom of his 'master' status, of which he may well be painfully aware.[214] Even so, the expats' indulgence in 'black' sex accentuates their wider collusion in Rwanda's gradual, painful disintegration under the strain of the AIDS epidemic, ethnic violence, and structural adjustment programmes. Courtemanche makes it very clear that Rwandan men are 'savage beats who commit genocide' insofar as the international community allows them to be: so too with their habit of 'rap[ing] and infect[ing] women with

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[210] Courtemanche, p. 73.

[211] Courtemanche, p. 72.

[212] Courtemanche, p. 172.

[213] Courtemanche, p. 72.

[214] Courtemanche signposts this awareness wherever Valcourt reflects on all the ways in which he is 'trapped, part of what [he] rail[s] against' in Rwanda. For example, although he rejects 'racist theories that claimed to deduce a person's origin from the shape of a nose or a forehead, or the slenderness of a body', Valcourt's initial scepticism towards Gentille's claims to being a Hutu demonstrate how he is nonetheless 'unwittingly a prisoner of these stereotypes himself' (Courtemanche, p. 31).

AIDS'. Valcourt's proficiency in 'the White people's love', therefore, primarily serves to distinguish him from his fellow expats rather than Rwandan men, in exactly the same way as his outraged documentation of their co-operation with the Rwandan government. 'Black' sex is just another symptom not only of Rwandan social deprivation, but also of the complacent hypocrisy of the various powerful nations who count themselves as Rwanda's 'friends', but who turn a blind eye to its deprivation, even as they congratulate themselves as paragons of freedom, democracy, and human rights, including women's rights. Valcourt's refusal to sleep with prostitutes, then – even to the point of rebuffing Gentille – goes hand in hand with his efforts to avoid becoming complicit in the forces that sustain Rwanda's more general social ills.

Mutua's point, though, still stands: as a portrait of African men, *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* remains open to charges of racism. As a result, if Courtemanche is guilty of complacency, it is because he establishes Valcourt's integrity solely in relational terms. Valcourt is a man of integrity because he is 'not like the others', even if what distinguishes him is his ready acceptance that in many ways he is in fact no different. Courtemanche's emphasis on this difference, though, risks eclipsing how Valcourt's integrity is otherwise undermined by his comparability with those whom he so strongly 'dis-identifies' himself from. Nonetheless, Courtemanche seems aware of this risk from the very beginning. The opening chapter of *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* presents a tableau that sets the scene in which the events leading to the genocide will unfold. The tableau outlines key factors leading to the genocide, including government corruption, Hutu extremism, and the complacency of Rwanda's expatriate community, including the United Nations, international development groups, diplomats, and European missionaries. As it unfolds, the scene continually draws attention to Valcourt himself, who sits at the bar and 'scribbles feverishly. He describes the scene with indignation, adding some notes about the outrageousness of African corruption, but he does not stir.'[215] The extent of Valcourt's implication in what he describes shifts continually. Towards the end of the chapter, Courtemanche notes how '[t]he vaguely surrealistic play being acted out at the pool day after day ceased to interest [Valcourt] some time

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[215] Courtemanche, pp. 5-6.

ago. The plot is heavy-handed and the characters behave as predictably as in a TV soap opera.'[216] The televisual conceit here separates Valcourt from the scene around him, rendering him a distant, passive, uninvolved spectator. Yet earlier in the chapter, Courtemanche describes how at six o'clock, 'around the pool all the actors in the daily cocktail-hour ritual will have taken their places on stage in the same production as yesterday. And Valcourt will play his role, like all the others.'[217] Either Courtemanche cannot decide whether or not Valcourt is part of the 'vaguely surrealistic play' he observes, or he questions the subtext of Valcourt's claim to spectator status – that spectators are removed from the scene – by incorporating the spectator's 'role' into the play.

According to Michael Keren, *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* forcefully conveys the ambiguous position of the bystander, who 'cannot escape a degree of responsibility' for events like a genocide, no matter '[w]hether [they] have full information about [it] or just scattered information, whether it occurs close to home or in some remote country, whether [they] have the will to intervene but not the power, or the power and not the will'.[218] Moreover, Keren contends that this responsibility is universal, since everyone is a bystander. After all, given today's 'almost instant global communications [...] "we are all co-presenters witnessing, even if only through the media, the genocides, ethnic cleansing and other manifestations of extreme racism that besmirch the contemporary world"'.[219] Genocides have never occurred '"out there," on a different planet inhabited by devils'.[220] Yet the impression that they do is one that absolves one of that universal responsibility, and so such atrocities will keep occurring until 'we' all accept that they do so within 'our own political reality'.[221] No doubt Courtemanche's critique of

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[216] Courtemanche, p. 14.

[217] Courtemanche, p. 7.

[218] Keren, Michael, 'The Bystander's Tale: Gil Courtemanche's *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* and the Rwandan Genocide', in *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en literature Canadienne*, 34.2 (2009), p. 22.

[219] Keren, p. 37.

[220] Keren, p. 24.

[221] Keren, p. 36.

the international community in the novel supports Keren's argument, along with his emphasis on how the 'vaguely surrealistic play being acted out by the pool day after day' encompasses Valcourt, the outraged spectator. Courtemanche asserts that Valcourt's 'powerlessness did not make him an accomplice; his presence here did not indicate his approval or even his indifference. Much as he might like to be a general, he was only a solitary onlooker, and he could act only as such, a man alone.'[222] Yet neither Valcourt's disapproval nor his inability to avert the genocide singlehandedly, can possibly exonerate him of his implication in the circumstances that lead Rwanda into genocide. As a Rwandan friend says to him, '[y]ou watch us, you take notes, you write reports, you write articles. While we die with you watching us all the time, you live, you thrive. I like you […] but don't you get a feeling sometimes, that you're living off our death?'[223]

Such statements prompt Valcourt to reflect on his previous experience as a foreign correspondent, 'earn[ing] his bread and butter from wars, massacres and famines.'[224] In particular, Valcourt compares his present circumstances with his memories of returning to Montreal from Ethiopia, where he had been reporting on the famine of 1983-85. Valcourt recalls that, upon his return, 'nothing was the way it had been before.'[225] Struggling to articulate what had changed, Valcourt had found that

> [a] small, thinking mine [had] exploded in his brain, muddling the right and left hemispheres, scattering the neurons of reason and feeling, transforming an efficient old order into a kind of boiling magma that mixed up everything […] He wanted to shout out loud all he had seen, experienced, discovered, but had only half said because he'd been sticking to the cautious language of journalism […] He tried to make a few people uncomfortable and had some success. Without realizing, and especially without wishing to, he'd fixed himself on the fringe of society that matters and does not forgive those that leave it. He discovered this little by little, one

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[222] Courtemanche, p. 107.

[223] Courtemanche, p. 180.

[224] Courtemanche, p. 182.

[225] Courtemanche, p. 151.

> disappointment after another, one rebuff after another, then, what was worse, one evidence of indifference after another.[226]

Valcourt's previous efforts to document human suffering had little success in redressing the public and official indifference that led to the failures of the international community to prevent it. Yet in Rwanda Valcourt mostly continues trying to make everyone around him feel uncomfortable, and although he often manages to do so, his efforts achieve little else. Unfazed, Valcourt ploughs on, if only because 'he could not lose all hope. No death, no massacre had ever made him lose hope for man […] in the name of something he had not managed to define, […] he had to carry on. And carrying on meant looking straight ahead and walking, walking.'[227] Again, this determination is what attracts Gentille to Valcourt, who 'live[s] like an animal guided by instinct. As if your eyes are closed and your ears are blocked, but there's a secret compass inside you that always directs you to the small and forgotten, or impossible loves, like ours. You know you can't do anything, that your being here won't change a thing, but you keep going anyway.'[228]

Valcourt's refusal to resign himself to pessimism and hopelessness is admirable, just as Naipaul's failure to offer hope to the Third World invites critique. Yet we see here how 'knowing' that he cannot prevent the genocide from happening risks becoming an alibi that allows Valcourt to simply carry on 'play[ing] his role' of 'the solitary onlooker', in that 'vaguely surrealistic play being acted out at the pool day after day', without compromising his integrity. For as much as his eyes are closed and his ears are blocked to government lies, the fact that Valcourt continues playing this part suggests that equally his eyes are closed and ears blocked to his own failure to interrupt the play, and even to the fact that the play has somehow incorporated its 'interruption' into itself. By accepting that he cannot possibly divert Rwanda from its descent into genocidal violence, Valcourt has no reason to look for more effective ways of doing so, including more effective ways of interrupting the expatriates' 'vaguely surrealistic play' by making them acknowledge 'the fire and

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[226] Courtemanche, p. 151.

[227] Courtemanche,p. 211.

[228] Courtemanche, p. 211.

screams rising from the hell they had created'[229] in the streets below. Just like Roche in *Guerrillas* – at least according to Meredith – Valcourt has 'allowed [him]self to become the conscience of [his] society',[230] whether that society is Rwanda's white expat community, or the wider international community.

Valcourt, then, resembles Roche and Jane insofar as he 'sp[eaks] of crisis', while ultimately seeming 'placid, content with [his] functions, existing within [his] functions, trapped, part of what [he] rail[s] against.'[231] Hence his readiness to identify himself as a 'master'. Yet this self-identification paradoxically indicates that Valcourt is not just a 'master', given how readily he acknowledges his implication in the forces that inflict so much suffering on the Rwandan people. In contrast, the other white expatriate 'masters' are indifferent towards this suffering, not to mention their responsibility for causing it. Nonetheless, Valcourt's astonishment at this indifference is significant here, given how it implies a firm conviction that the expats are indifferent, not ignorant. Whenever the serenity of a Kigali evening is broken by the sound of gunfire or – more commonly – an exploding grenade, Valcourt is convinced that everyone around him hears it, even though they barely flinch. Similarly, the 'play' that unfolds every day around the hotel pool is 'vaguely surreal' because Valcourt refuses to believe that everyone involved knows nothing of the violence, poverty, and disease that surrounds them, or even of how their activities in Rwanda have contributed to it all. The play is 'surreal' because it defies reality and beggars belief that it somehow continues uninterrupted, despite 'the fire and screams rising from the hell [the expats] had created' in the streets below. Moreover, Valcourt's efforts to interrupt the play depend on the assumption that those involved do in fact see the fire and hear the screams, along with the gunfire, the exploding grenades, and – eventually – the piles of bodies that choke Kigali's streets. In short, if Valcourt manages to make anyone around him feel uncomfortable, he does so by provoking in them a 'slightly funny feeling [...] about exploitation, oppression, domination' that they otherwise bury deep within them, but

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[229] Courtemanche, p. 202.

[230] Naipaul, p. 214.

[231] Naipaul, p. 42.

which constantly lurks at the edges of their consciousness as an irrepressible experience.

What distinguishes Valcourt from the other expats, then, is his refusal to disavow this 'slightly funny feeling'. As such, Valcourt testifies to a variance of purpose among the white expatriate 'masters' in Kigali, along with their capacity to see beyond what a 'master' typically sees, and what they claim to see. Just as Naipaul himself puts pressure on the veracity of his own, pessimistic claim that a variance of purpose among 'masters' cannot lead to a corresponding variance of practice, so Valcourt's refusal to overlook the suffering around him indicates that he is more than the 'master' that he identifies himself as, when initially rebuffing Gentille. Moreover, given his incredulous response to the indifference around him, Valcourt is clearly convinced that he is by no means the only white expat in Kigali who can see the malign consequences of the international community's activities in Rwanda. The task, therefore, of redressing the complacency that prevents Rwanda's expatriate community from intervening in the genocide, demands encouraging a similar refusal among them. Valcourt's own efforts to do so largely fail, no doubt because he is unable to singlehandedly overcome the considerable factors that allow the expats to disavow their role in letting the genocide happen. It remains unclear whether Courtemanche can imagine ever overcoming these factors, whether he shares Naipaul's pessimistic belief that these factors are simply too big for anyone to challenge them successfully. *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* offers no answer here: at most, the novel asserts that 'masters' see more than they would if they were nothing more than 'masters', and that they are therefore never just 'masters', even if they desire to be nothing else.

Whether Courtemanche believes that white expatriates can become anything else is equally unclear, and this uncertainty might well explain why Valcourt never manages to identify himself positively except as a 'master', which as we have seen is a misnomer, given that in the very act of identifying himself as such, Valcourt establishes that he is not just a 'master'. Moreover, this uncertainty might well explain why Valcourt does little more than document the injustice, corruption, and complacency around him and make everyone else feel uncomfortable. Even if he is 'trapped, part of what [he] rail[s] against', Valcourt's 'placid[ity]' by no means indicates that he is 'content' with his role in the 'vaguely surreal play' unfolding by the pool. Instead, Valcourt 'does not stir' because his sense of integrity is based

almost entirely on the fact that he is 'not like the others'. All Valcourt needs to do to establish his integrity is to distinguish himself from his fellow expats, and for Courtemanche he manages to do so simply by refusing to overlook the injustice around him, along with his implication in the forces that give rise to it. Courtemanche's emphasis, therefore, is on how Valcourt is 'not like the others', to the extent of distracting from how this difference is undercut by affinities, including Valcourt's Eurocentric association of sexual brutality and licentiousness with distinctly African forms of masculinity. Even when Courtemanche has Valcourt acknowledge how he is indeed 'like the others', such gestures are meant primarily to demonstrate how he is in fact '*not* like the others', given that 'the others' are unlikely to admit to participating in the unsavoury tendencies of the hotel's white patrons.

Valcourt's integrity, then, is deduced solely in terms of his difference from that which he 'dis-identifies' himself from, but without a clear notion of what he identifies himself as instead, his own complacency largely escapes scrutiny in the novel itself. As long as he is not compelled to identify himself positively, Valcourt is under no pressure to redress his own contradictions. At most, his 'dis-identification' amounts to 'the denial of an identity given by another, given by the ruling order of policy', without entailing a simultaneous 'assertion of an[other] identity' in its place. As a result, we are no more able to 'name' Valcourt as we are Orwell or Naipaul, other than as the 'master' that he identifies himself as, even though in so doing he renders it a misnomer. If there is any 'conflict between one sensible order and another' in this novel, then it is between the Rwandan government's lies and the testimonies of those few expatriates who refuse to overlook the atrocities those lies provoke. Unlike Orwell, therefore, Valcourt is not caught between two 'sensible orders' that 'give' him two different identities, but neither of which he identifies himself with. Yet just as Orwell's lack of action stems from the absence of a 'sensible order' that registers multiple intentions even among imperialism's representatives and beneficiaries, Valcourt's passivity reflects the absence of a 'sensible order' that encourages anything other than reaction, 'dis-identification', and a relational sense of integrity. My point, then, is not that Valcourt could not have done anything else to intervene more effectively in the events that led to the genocide. Instead, I mean to understand why he did not pursue any such

intervention; why he resigned himself to his 'role' in the expatriates' 'vaguely surrealistic play', documenting those events without doing much else to stop them.

Here, then, is where the danger lies in the subtlety with which Kincaid affirms that her manner of addressing her reader is reductive and synecdochal. It may well be necessary for a 'master' to identify themselves as a 'master' if they are to become anything else. Moreover, it is undoubtedly necessary to address a 'master' as nothing but a 'master' in order to encourage this identification. Yet to do so in a way that refuses to recognise the possibility that variances of consciousness, purpose, and practice obtain among 'masters' risks becoming counterproductive. For in the process this mode of address refuses to recognise any distinction between the addressee and Kincaid's 'master' figure, and so the addressee's efforts to distinguish themselves might well detract from a serious engagement with how they are indeed a 'master'. Hence the hostility of Aegerter and Frederick's students to Kincaid's mode of addressing them as her readers in *A Small Place*, whose efforts to register their 'dis-identification' from Kincaid's touristic 'you' distract them from seriously engaging with their 'privileged place of power (white-skin privilege, class privilege, and "first world" privilege)'.[232] Indeed, these responses exemplify how addressing 'masters' as if they were nothing else becomes self-corroborating. For the students' impatience with Kincaid's 'legitimate anger' derives from her refusal to cater to their desire for affirmations of a 'common humanity' – that is, from Kincaid's wresting from her privileged audience the power to determine her agenda. Kincaid's readers respond like 'masters' to being addressed as 'masters', a cycle that is broken only by the interventions outlined by teachers like Aegerter and Frederick.

For both Orwell and Courtemanche, variances of consciousness and purpose are possible among 'masters', even if there is little or no corresponding variance of practice. Moreover, it remains uncertain whether both of these writers believe that these variances of consciousness and purpose can ever lead to corresponding variances of practice among 'masters'. This uncertainty, though, leaves open this possibility, in contrast to Naipaul's pessimistic belief that, although they might evince variances of consciousness and purpose, ultimately 'masters' are just 'masters'. Yet as I demonstrate above, even Naipaul seems uncertain in this belief,

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[232] Frederick, p. 10.

given how his own 'master' status, coupled with his 'dis-identification' of himself from other 'masters' – especially 'secure white European liberals' like Jane and Roche – registers a variance of consciousness, intention, and to some extent practice among 'masters'. Moreover, Naipaul's pessimism is self-perpetuating: if all previous attempts at 'system-toppling upheaval'[233] failed to achieve lasting social justice, then he sees little point in continuing to fight for such comprehensive change. This conclusion, though, discourages anyone from trying to change anything, which in turn compounds Naipaul's pessimistic belief that 'the world is what it is', and what it always will be. In *Guerrillas*, Naipaul seems aware of how as a 'master' he can afford to be nihilistic, and how his unflattering portrait of 'masters' like Jane, therefore, is equally one of himself. Naipaul's consciousness exceeds his own deterministic portrait of 'masters'. As a result, he is troubled by a nagging uncertainty over where he himself fits within the 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions, and competencies' outlined by his own understanding of the world. Naipaul's deterministic, pessimistic portrait of 'masters' deprives him of the means of identifying himself positively, just like Valcourt's insistence on identifying himself as a complacent white expat frustrates Gentille's efforts to identify him as something else. It is significant, therefore, that in both cases a variance of consciousness gives rise to no corresponding variance of practice. As with Naipaul and Valcourt, so with Orwell and Kincaid's touristic 'you': refusing to recognise even the possibility that 'masters' are never just 'masters' risks foreclosing any effort to encourage them to act and think as something other than a 'master'. Indeed, this foreclosure would in turn corroborate the initial refusal, inducing a circular, self-perpetuating logic that risks 'stop[ing] the possibility of social change'.[234]

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[233] Spencer, Robert, 'Edward Said and the War in Iraq', in *New Formations*, 59 (Autumn 2006), p. 53.

[234] Spivak, 'The *Intervention* Interview', p. 121.

3.6 Articulating the 'unassimilable excess' in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*

In order to avoid this logic, we should not assume that we can ever exhaustively apprehend the consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices of 'masters'; or that 'masters' are only ever just 'masters'. These assumptions can prompt us to either overlook evidence that 'masters' are something else besides, or to interpret that evidence as somehow demonstrating the contrary. Both habits abound throughout the critical literature on Ellis's third novel *American Psycho*, given the tendency of most critics to approach the novel's narrator-protagonist Patrick Bateman as 'Everyyuppie', as the epitome of the 'yuppie' stereotype. Although, in many respects this is the case, my reading of this novel will demonstrate how this approach either ignores many aspects of Patrick's character that are not 'typical' of yuppies, or reduces them to that stereotype, often in untenable ways. The term 'yuppie' has almost always referenced a stereotype. Moreover, the considerable media attention to 'young urban professionals' or 'young and upwardly-mobiles' indicates a drawn-out dispute over their merits, over whether they are to be lauded as entrepreneurs or derided as selfish, ruthless spendthrifts. The term was popularised by Chicago columnist Bob Greene as a way of distinguishing yuppies from 'yippies' – members of the Youth International Party of the 1960s – albeit with the implication that the latter had grown up to become the former.[235] Indeed, many media commentators found it ironic how many yuppies had once been hippies, given how the former's characteristic selfishness and materialism contrasted with the latter's emphasis on social and political activism.

Not everyone was surprised by this connection, though. In a special report declaring 1984 to have been 'the Year of the Yuppie', *Newsweek* described how '[m]uch of the energy and optimism and passion of the '60s seems to have been turned inward, on lives, careers, apartments and dinners.' Similarly, the often ferocious personal ambition of yuppies derived from the hard-headed, single-minded determination of hippies to change the world. As one interviewee observed –

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[235] Greene claimed to have actually overheard someone else coining the term in a bar in 1980, when remarking on how Jerry Rubin, 'who once marched at the head of the Yippies', was now 'vying to become the spokesman for the Yuppies – the young urban professionals' (Adler, Jerry et. al, 'The Year of the Yuppie', in *Newsweek*, December 31st 1984, p. 14).

referring to student protests against the Vietnam war – 'We were upper-middle-class white kids who were used to getting what we wanted [...] I really felt strongly about the strength of our will – that if we wanted the bombing stopped it would stop.' The report's authors comment on how this statement 'pretty much sums up the way another upper-middle class white kid, Carrie Cook of Boston, feels about getting rich.' What had prompted these former hippies to 'turn inward', to start 'vot[ing] on [their] wallets' rather than 'on [their] consciences', was debated throughout the press. According to a Harvard alumnus quoted in a 1986 article, hippies 'who once attacked the "establishment" [were] now part of it' because 'the world we found was the only one there was.'[236] So much for the 'strength of will' of 'upper-middle-class white kids' who, having 'ended a war (more on this in a second), brought down two presidents (Johnson and Nixon) and founded the women's movement',[237] suddenly felt unable to go much further. For those who still 'want[ed] to make a difference', business now appeared to be the best place to do so. Moreover, unlike public service, in business you could make a difference and get rich in the process.[238]

The *Newsweek* report lauded this new professional caste for 'challenging ossified corporate structures, just as they once challenged the sacred traditions of academia, forcing them into more imaginative solutions'.[239] Yuppies could be ruthlessly ambitious, but this made them hardworking, enterprising, creative, and resourceful, even if they flaunted their personal success in often outlandish and tastelessly extravagant fashion. Even as it extolled the virtues of 'yuppiedom', the *Newsweek* report described the more surreal aspects of an emerging 'yuppie' consumer profile. One interviewee explained how she decided to pursue a yuppie lifestyle after first eating Brie cheese and pita bread, which she described as 'my

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[236] Anon., 'Harvard Class of '71 leads the yuppies', *United Press International*, June 7th 1986.

[237] Ephon, Delia, 'Bash a Yuppie and Feel Better', in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 4, 1988, p. 9.

[238] One interviewee featured in the 1984 *Newsweek* report describes how she had initially 'embarked on her longstanding dream of being a social worker, and found herself in the cheerless confines of a state home for severely retarded elderly men.' However, she quickly decided to pursue a yuppie lifestyle after receiving her first paycheck, and realising that 'I would have to make a commitment to being poor to be a social worker' ('The Year of the Yuppie', p. 14).

[239] 'The Year of the Yuppie', p. 14.

first exposure to the expanded experiences of the planet.' An obsession with Brie and other imported cheeses quickly became a staple ingredient of the yuppie stereotype as it developed in the U.S. press. So too the yuppies' fondness for imported cars, especially BMWs and Porsches; renovated brownstones in gentrified Manhattan neighbourhoods; designer clothing; Adidas running shoes; portable CD players; pocket calculators; portable telephones; yellow 'power' ties; arugula; and bespoke kitchens, fully equipped with food processors, espresso machines, and cooking magazines, even though many yuppies almost never cooked for themselves. Typically, yuppies bought something as a status symbol, rather than for its use-value. As a result, yuppie trends could be arbitrary, if not bizarre. Hence the image with which the *Newsweek* report opens, of a yuppie 'with $1,200 worth of pots and pans in her kitchen who eats every meal in a restaurant'.

Even in this early portrait, therefore, there is something absurd about yuppies. Despite admiring their go-getting mentality, the *Newsweek* report parodies the inflated grandiosity with which the above interviewee describes first eating brie, when remarking that

> [w]hat Yuppies have discovered is nothing less than a new plane of consciousness, a state of Transcendental Acquisition, in which the perfection of their possessions enables them to rise above the messy turmoil of their emotional lives. They know that Beauty Is Truth, and Truth is Beauty, which is why their most eloquent symbol is the Rolex watch, which has both.[240]

The hyperbolic tone invites us to be sceptical towards the notion that yuppies had managed to transcend 'the messy turmoil of their emotional lives' through materialism. Indeed, several months after the *Newsweek* report, a Washington-based psychologist publicly claimed that 'the compromises and trade-offs yuppies make in pursuing a career are taking a psychic toll'.[241] As a result, yuppies who 'get caught up in materialism and want all the perks of a successful career' found that, in the process of 'molding themselves to the attitudes and values needed for success in many organizations [...] they have betrayed themselves.' The psychologist – Dr Douglas LaBier – contended that much of this disillusionment was a 'legacy of the '60s', a hangover from his clients' hippie days, given it reflected a desire for 'more

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[240] 'The Year of the Yuppie', p. 14.

[241] Anon., 'Being a yuppie takes its toll', in *United Press International*, April 21, 1985.

personal fulfilment from their work and private lives' than they had so far managed to find. Contrary to other commentators, LaBier found that many yuppies had not quite shaken off the hippie mentality altogether.

Indeed, as the term 'yuppie' became increasingly pejorative, and the stereotype increasingly negative, many self-identified yuppies objected to the stereotype by emphasising their own, continued involvement in social causes.[242] Such protests, though, did little to stop the term from gradually becoming an insult. Having initially been an amusing curiosity, yuppie materialism quickly became a morbid symptom. Writing in 1986, *Washington Post* columnist Bob Levey described yuppies as being so 'self-centered and skin-deep' that they 'honestly think you can tell all you need to know about The Inner Man or woman by the brands he or she chooses.'[243] Conceding that he was 'about to generalize dangerously here', Levey nonetheless maintained that yuppies could not

> easily see past their own pleasure and comfort. They are incessantly preoccupied with their beautiful bodies and their beautiful bank accounts. But do you ever see a Yuppie making sandwiches in a shelter for the homeless? Or serving on a volunteer committee? Or giving anything to anyone that won't produce a tax deduction?

Three weeks later, Levey summarised some of the responses to the piece sent in by readers, many of which objected to his 'generalizations – or, to use the word Melanie A. Scott of Arlington chose, "caricatures."' One response – from a woman who claimed to donate freshly-baked bread to the homeless every morning, and old clothes to the House of Ruth[244] without claiming any tax reductions – prompted Levey to acknowledge that not all yuppies were reducible to his earlier, unsavoury stereotype. Indeed, it became increasingly unclear how many yuppies there actually were in the U.S.A. as characterised by the media, or even whether they existed at all, beyond the pages of newspapers and magazines. In 1985, Christopher Reed reported

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[242] See, for example, Iris Krasnow, 'Yuppies thumb their noses at namecalling', in *United Press International*, July 2nd 1985. Krasnow's interviewees all identified themselves as yuppies despite hating the term, given how its emphasis on 'wretched excess takes away from their human sides'. In response they described their involvement in such social initiatives as foster homes, women's causes, and charity fundraising, along with their commitment to family values.

[243] Levey, Bob, 'Is 'Yuppie' Spelled I-N-S-U-L-T?', in *The Washington Post*, May 29, 1986.

[244] A Washington-based charity established in 1976, providing support for homeless women, children, and families.

in the *Guardian* that 'market analysis by SRI International, the California think-tank that produced the Values and Lifestyles profiles of US consumers, has serious doubts about the value of the yuppies market.'[245] At most, analysts found that 'strict interpretation of the type produces no more than 1.2 million' American yuppies, 'which rises to two million by discarding the 'urban' requirement to include 'yumpies,' young, upwardly-mobile professionals who are permitted to live in the country.' Reed describes how '[t]he marketing and ad people [...] haven't had such fun for years', as they sought to tap into this new and – it seemed – highly lucrative market. Yet given how small the demographic actually seemed to be, the possibility arose that 'the media and a self-interested advertising industry ha[d] been fooling themselves', stoking a media sensation that was hardly borne out in reality.

Such doubts, though, did not dissuade commentators like Levey from continuing to critique yuppies as if they actually existed, and those who did identify themselves as yuppies continued to object to how such commentators characterised them. It seems that no one could talk about yuppies without succumbing to exaggeration and sensationalism. No wonder, then, that when the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell by 22% on October 19th 1987 – thereafter known in Europe and North America as 'Black Monday' – a crowd gathered in Wall Street chanting 'Down with Yuppies'. The crash had originated in Hong Kong before spreading westwards, yet the media's response placed most of the blame with the yuppies' characteristic selfishness, greed, and careless risk-taking. Three days later, one article declared that the 'yuppies' last rites [were being] readied',[246] and soon afterwards Elizabeth Kolbert remarked that 'it is open season on yuppies in New York City', given how 'yuppie-bashing is apparently in'.[247] Schadenfreude quickly set in, with gleeful reports of ruined yuppies signing for bedsits in Brooklyn rather than buying condominiums in Manhattan; of newly-popular jokes about yuppie penury; and of the sudden reluctance of brands and advertising agencies to court the yuppie market. By the 1990s, the yuppie had been declared 'dead' many times

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[245] Reed, Christopher, 'Hype fosters the myth of the lush yuppie / Purchasing power of Young Urban Professionals in the US', in *The Guardian*, May 21, 1985.

[246] Meislin, Richard J., 'The Market Turmoil: A Far-Ranging Impact; Yuppies' Last Rites Readied', in *The New York Times*, October 21, 1987, p. 14.

[247] Kolbert, Elizabeth, 'Honing the Rapier to Skewer Yuppies', in *The New York Times*, November 2, 1987, p. 4.

over.[248] Black Monday appeared to have settled the debate over whether the cons of yuppie culture outweighed the pros. Subsequently, the term became largely pejorative.

However much they were actually to blame for the crash, yuppies had long ago become an easy target for the American moral vanguard.[249] They spent extravagantly and flaunted their success, preaching to others the virtues of hard work, tenacity, creativity, and prioritising oneself. In return, their critics reminded yuppies of the virtues of family life, living for others, and investing oneself in something for any other reason than a financial return. For most critics, *American Psycho* added to this critical discourse, further exposing the faults of yuppie culture, in what Elizabeth Young described as 'an old-fashioned, straightforwardly moralistic reading'[250] of U.S. society under the Reagan administration. *American Psycho* has largely been read as a 'not-so-subtle satire'[251] of disparate yet overlapping aspects of Manhattan's social conjuncture during the late 1980s. For

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[248] Although not dead enough, it seemed, given how Tom McGrath declared their death again in 2009, in the aftermath of the financial crisis the previous year ('The Death of the Yuppie. (Finally.)', in *Philadelphia Magazine*, February 2009).

[249] In January 1987, Diana L. Schaller wrote to *Industry Week* objecting to 'the president of a firm who observed that "despite their financial competence and expertise – many of the so-called Yuppies are seriously lacking in basic business ethics and morality"' ('Unethical conduct', in *Industry Week*, January 26, 1987). Schaller found this comment to be telling, for it overlooked how 'Yuppies are in many cases only following the example of tenured colleagues. The fact that Yuppies are the ones being caught is evidence only that they have not yet learned the fine art of cover-up.' Moreover, Schaller claimed that '[u]pon entering the business world, Yuppies have seen what is "accepted" business practice'. Indeed, Schaller goes further by claiming that yuppies 'have also seen what happens when an ethical Yuppie refuses to follow status quo in an unethical matter. The Yuppie is perhaps not fired ont he spot, but it isn't long before the Yuppie has every detail or honest mistake painfully scrutinized and magnified out of proportion, has any responsibility taken away; and should a Yuppie seek more compatible employment, the references are somehow tainted.' Far from defending anyone accused of unethical business practices – including yuppies – Schaller contended that blaming yuppies for such practices protected their superiors, along with a more general culture of business that dictated 'acceptable' practice. A less obvious benefit yuppies brought to a corporation was their vulnerability to blame and scapegoating.

[250] E. Young, p. 120.

[251] Storey, Mark, '"And as things fell apart": The Crisis of Postmodern Masculinity in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* and Dennis Cooper's *Frisk*', in *Critique*, 47.1 (Fall 2005), p. 68

Elizabeth Young, the novel is more than 'a classic of the 1980s. In a sense it *is* the 1980s. It embodies the decade and all the clichés of the decade in the West – the rampant self-serving greed, relentless aggression and one-upmanship; the manic consumer overdrive, exhaustion, wipe-out and terror.'[252] As a result, Young was unsurprised at the media sensation that greeted the novel's publication in 1991. Journalists and interest groups mostly focused on the novel's numerous, graphic accounts of the torture of women. Young describes how

> Tammy Bruce of NOW [specifically, head of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Organization for Women] said it was "a how-to manual on the torture and dismemberment of women" and called for a national boycott of the book. Gloria Steinem suggested that Ellis would have to take responsibility for any women tortured and killed in the same manner as described in the novel.[253]

The British media echoed these objections, with some critics imputing that 'the novel [was] virtually autobiographical. It was said that Ellis "chose to sit in his apartment month after month imagining unoriginal ways of torturing women (not to mention dogs, gays and homeless people)"'.[254] Indeed, '[f]eminist groups again behaved as though this were not fiction but a manifesto, a statement of intent.'[255] For Young, all this controversy was deeply telling, and she found it

> hardly surprising that a novel which unequivocally condemned a way of life to which many people had sacrificed their youth and energy was tepidly received; journalists were as much at the mercy of the status-driven conspicuous consumption of the eighties as anyone else and the froth over the book's alleged violence may have concealed a hideous disquiet that the leotards and Agnès B. leggings, the enormous mortgages and obscene restaurant bills were...just...not...worth it.[256]

Journalists who themselbes were still swept up in the 'furious, doomed drive towards success and perfection [that] was still dominant' in the early 1990s, felt deeply uncomfortable about the novel's narrator-protagonist Patrick Bateman,

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[252] E. Young, p. 88 (emphasis in original).

[253] E. Young, p. 86.

[254] E. Young, p. 87.

[255] E. Young, p. 87.

[256] E. Young, p. 89.

whom Young describes as 'a spirit; the *Zeitgeist*, all-yuppie, all-corrupt.'[257] The reaction Young documents here is comparable to how McMillan's reader 'dis-identifies' themselves from Stella, according to Frederick. The hysteria with which the media responded to *American Psycho* might well have been stoked by a 'slightly funny feeling' that those who condemned the novel had more in common with Patrick and his loathsome peers then they would have liked to admit. They may not have been disembowelling prostitutes, socialites, and street dwellers, but many of these journalists were still caught up in the same materialistic rat race that the novel eviscerates.

Given all this hysteria, it is unsurprising that of all of Ellis's oeuvre, it is *American Psycho* that has attracted by far the most scholarly attention. As Eldridge notes 'the hostile reception itself inevitably marked *American Psycho* as a text in need of rehabilitation', and although he attends primarily to how this was achieved through Mary Harron's 2000 film adaptation of the novel, Eldridge maintains that academics – Young especially – have largely led the way.[258] Yet I find that in the process, most of the subsequent scholarship on *American Psycho* appears to have 'sacrificed' Patrick in order to 'save' Ellis from the regrettable fate of popular and intellectual indifference. Patrick's apparent lack of subtlety as a satirical device renders him vulnerable to simplification. Hence Young's repeated claim that Patrick is 'a cipher, rather than a "character". He is "Everyyuppie"',[259] a two-dimensional archetype that lacks the depth or complexity of what Young vaguely describes as 'character in the traditional sense'.[260] There is nothing about Patrick that exceeds the consumer discourse that he pores over, memorises, and regurgitates verbatim. Young does not quite establish why Patrick is therefore 'an impossibility',[261] why an 'ultimate consumer, someone who is composed entirely of inauthentic commodity-

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257 E. Young, p. 118.

258 Eldridge, p. 19.

259 E. Young, p. 103.

260 E. Young, p. 103.

261 E. Young, p. 119.

related desires *cannot* exist as a person.'[262] Indeed, since much of one's subjectivity is constituted in language and discourse,[263] I am sceptical towards Young's claim here that someone like Patrick cannot exist whatsoever beyond fiction. Given his desire only for what is 'newest, brightest, best, most expensive and most fashionable',[264] Patrick might well choose not to navigate through the eclectic and often nonsensical combinations of products and cultural codes promoted by *GQ* magazine.[265] Yet for someone like Catherine Belsey, Patrick's inconsistency would hardly be exceptional, given her claim that 'the displacement of subjectivity across a range of discourses implies a range of positions from which the subject grasps itself with the real, and these positions may be incompatible and contradictory.'[266] All that distinguishes Belsey's subject from Patrick is the former's active pursuit of 'new, non-contradictory subject-positions'[267] amidst all these contradictions. Someone like Patrick, therefore – as defined by Young above – might well exist: they just would not respond to their 'displacement' across a range of 'incompatible and contradictory' discourses by actively seeking out less contradictory subject-positions for themselves.

Perhaps, then, what Young means when claiming that Patrick 'cannot exist' relates to her claim that Patrick is 'a cipher, rather than a "character"'. As an archetype of the yuppie stereotype, Patrick cannot exist, because archetypes are aggregates of the characteristics that mark individuals as belonging to a particular group. As we have seen, Spivak's notion of 'self-metonymisation' suggests that an individual's subject-position always exceeds any and all groups they are regarded as belonging to, whether by themselves or by others. Patrick, therefore, cannot exist

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[262] E. Young, p. 121 (emphasis in original).

[263] Belsey, Catherine, 'Constructing the Subject, Deconstructing the Text', in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Robyn Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 597.

[264] E. Young, p. 103.

[265] An associate even tells Patrick that he's '*total GQ*', and Patrick admits to himself that although 'I can't tell if he's being sarcastic [...] it makes me feel proud in a way' (Ellis, p. 90).

[266] Belsey, 597 (Quoted in Hall, 99).

[267] Belsey, 597 (Quoted in Hall, 100).

insofar as he is nothing more than a yuppie, insofar as the sum total of his consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices are reducible to the yuppie stereotype defined by the media above. I have mentioned above how as early as 1985, market analysts were suggesting that the yuppie phenomenon had been over-exaggerated in the media, to such an extent that they wondered if yuppies existed at all beyond newspapers and magazines. Those who complained about how the media portrayed young urban professionals made a similar claim, that this portrait was mostly unfounded and unwarranted caricature, and that many 'real' yuppies were charitable and family-oriented. Insofar as he does not exceed the yuppie stereotype, then, Patrick indeed does not 'exist' beyond the pages of books, journals, newspapers, and magazines. As Young observes, Ellis explicitly draws attention to 'the fact that Patrick's only "existence" is within fiction', given how

> [h]e is the big brother of Sean Bateman in *The Rules of Attraction* and has already made an appearance in that book. He works at Pierce and Pierce which was Sherman McCoy's investment firm in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. He knows people from other "brat-pack" novels; Stash could be the person of the same name in *Slaves of New York*. Patrick tells of a chilling encounter with Alison Poole, heroine of Jay McInernay's *Story of My Life*.[268]

Of course, that Patrick exists only within fiction is largely a moot point. *American Psycho* is after all a work of fiction, albeit one that is based on Ellis's own impressions of New York's yuppie culture, along with his father's own experiences of living and working in the city.[269] If, however, Patrick is nothing more than a

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[268] Young, p. 109; in *American Psycho*, Stash is an unkempt, socally-inept liberal arts student who spends the first chapter in a drug-induced stupor, much to Patrick's disgust.

[269] In a 1999 interview, Ellis described Patrick as '[p]artly guys I met on Wall Street, partly myself, and partly my father' (Clarke, Jaime, 'Interview with Bret Easton Ellis', in *Mississippi Review*, 27.3 (Spring-Summer 1999), p. 81). While researching the novel, Ellis spent 'two exhausting weeks of hanging out with' Wall Street financiers and other New York young professionals, after which he concluded that 'it just seemed logical that one of these guys would be driven so nuts by how status-obsessed everyone is that it would incite him into becoming a murderer' (Clarke, pp. 74-5). Ellis admits that after having moved to New York, he himself initially 'got sucked up into this whole yuppie-mania that was going on at the time', and that *American Psycho* was in part 'my way of fighting against myself slipping into a certain kind of lifestyle' (Clarke, p. 81). Equally, though, the novel 'was a criticism of the way [Ellis's] father lived his life, because he did slip into that void. He was the ultimate consumer' (Clarke, p. 82). This connection between Patrick and Ellis's father would provide the basis for his surreal 2005 fictional

stereotypical yuppie, then Ellis purposely draws attention to his fictionality in order to suggest that no such person can possibly exist *beyond* fiction; that no one can 'exist' as nothing more than a stereotypical yuppie.

Just like Kincaid's *A Small Place*, then, *American Psycho* peddles in reductive stereotype, presenting us with an image of excess, boorishness, selfishness, and intellectual, moral, and emotional bankruptcy that is recognisably 'yuppie'. Equally, though, just like *A Small Place*, *American Psycho* tests the limits of reductive stereotype, by having Patrick exceed the terms of the yuppie type as defined both in the media and by Ellis. The most obvious aspect of Patrick that exceeds this stereotype is his claim to being a serial killer. Trawling through the media discourse on yuppies during the 1980s, I have come across no indication that anyone seriously believed that yuppies had a penchant for homicide. We might argue, of course, that Patrick's violence merely allegorises a psychopathic tendency that was regarded as being typical of yuppies, even if no one claimed that this tendency often led to the kind of violence depicted in *American Psycho*.[270] Indeed, critics have mostly followed Young's lead in finding that Patrick's homicidal activities reinforce the fact that he is nothing more than a yuppie. I have already mentioned David Eldridge's observation – comparable to Young's – that Patrick's opinions and desires amount to 'a mixture of *GQ* and *Stereo Review* and *Vanity Fair* and *Fangoria*'.[271] As Eldridge notes, Patrick's violence is just as 'secondhand',[272]

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autobiography *Lunar Park*, towards the end of which Ellis repudiates his prior claim that his father was a fictional version of Patrick.

[270] John Conley claims that in a scene where Patrick kills an African-American street dweller, Ellis 'condenses, figures, and dramatizes the complexities of gentrification and "revanchist" city policy into a murderous urban allegory' ('The Poverty of Bret Easton Ellis', in *Arizona Quarterly*, 65.3 (Autumn 2009), p. 131). Yet Conley also points out the chilling fact that this scene is by no means exclusively allegorical, given how 'every year hundreds of homeless people are murdered in [the] United Stated. Supposedly random acts of violence against the homeless are not the stuff of fiction; on the contrary, while Ellis was writing *American Psycho*, it was not uncommon to read such stories in the *New York Times*' (Conley, p. 131). Conley notes how such stories were especially common following the clearances of homeless shanty towns in the Lower East Side and Tompkins Square Park by the Dinkins mayoral administration between 1988-89, after which shanty towns – or 'Dinkinsvilles' – began appearing throughout Manhattan. The grim realities of urban poverty and gross structural inequality continually manage to punch through the veneer of allegory and textual self-consciousness, through which Ellis otherwise 'deconstruct[s] and disentangle[es] the implicit agreements that lie behind fictive "realism"' (E. Young, p. 109).

[271] Eldridge, p. 27.

insofar as he largely imitates the modus operandi of historical and fictional serial killers. Hence the manner in which the novel's painfully graphic murder scenes entail, 'on the authorial level, specific interjections from other texts – Ellis drew upon the FBI case files of real serial killers in providing the horrific level of detail'.[273] Moreover, Patrick 'tells us directly that his reading matter consists of the biographies of real-life serial killers (Ted Bundy, Ed Gein and so on), and that he compulsively watches "video nasties"'.[274] Patrick's 'secret' identity, then, only reinforces how '[a]lmost everything [he] has to say is a "recycling" of such texts',[275] and how he subsequently 'has no identity beyond that which he consumes.'[276]

Critics addressing *American Psycho*'s gender dynamics approach Patrick's 'secret' identity in much the same way as Young and Eldridge, by demonstrating how it subscribes to an extreme form of heteronormative hypermasculinity that informs the yuppie mentality, as depicted in the novel itself.[277] Echoing Young's claim that Patrick 'cannot exist', Mark Storey suggests that Patrick 'exists only as an exemplar of traditionally male language systems (violence, pornography, the media, fashion, commerce) taken to their extremes', and that he is nothing more than 'a representation of representations in which he is in the center as the negative space.'[278] Moreover, Storey draws attention to how Patrick's modus operandi as a serial killer 'singles out' '[w]omen in particular, but also homosexuals, blacks, and other ethnic minorities'.[279] Noting how these are 'the groups who, in a postmodern

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[272] Eldridge, p. 28.

[273] Eldridge, p. 28.

[274] Eldridge, p. 27.

[275] Eldridge, p. 27.

[276] Eldridge, p. 27.

[277] How heteronormative yuppie culture really was is unclear. For one thing, the subcategory of 'guppy' (gay urban professional) was recognised in the media as early as 1986, and had even been mentioned in the *Yuppie Handbook*, a tongue-in-cheek yuppie version of the *Preppy Handbook* that first appeared in 1983 (Porter, Henry, 'The Great Quest for...', in *The Sunday Times*, October 12 1986).

[278] Storey, p. 58.

[279] Storey, p. 64.

society, find their place in the margins being brought into the center', Storey finds that Patrick's habit of targeting these groups in particular suggests that, '[t]o [Patrick], the rise of the marginalized threatens his central position as hegemonic male; to protect that position, he lashes out, attempting to eliminate the threat.'[280] Here, Patrick's alter ego functions in much the same way as Rancière's 'police'. For if this 'rise of the marginalized' entails groups like women and homosexuals stepping 'out of place' – out of 'the margins' into 'the center' – and thus 'arriv[ing] as a supplement to the social distribution', then Patrick's 'elimination' of this 'threat' amounts to the 'dismiss[al or] exp[ulsion of] surplus subjects'[281] that 'cannot be identified as a part of the police order'[282] that sustains the existing 'patriarchal hierarchy'.

More recent scholarship continues to emphasise how Patrick's violence accentuates his epitomisation of 'yuppiedom', even as critical attention following the 2008 financial crisis shifts to how *American Psycho* engages with the cultural logic of finance capital. Echoing Storey's claim that Patrick is 'a representation of representations', Leigh Claire la Berghe illustrates how Patrick's homicidal exploits parody what la Berghe calls 'financial print culture',[283] the standard tropes in which finance capital was represented by the media during the 1980s, and in which it often represented itself. Patrick's brutal murders literalise these tropes, which were often violent, sexualised, and militaristic. 1980s financiers articulated themselves as a collective 'masculine financial subject'[284] that was engaged in 'making a killing' or

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[280] Storey, p. 64; we ought to note, though, that Ellis portrays only the first two groups – women and homosexuals – as possessing any significant economic power in the Manhattan social hierarchy, given how every yuppie in *American Psycho* is white, with no exception. In contrast, almost all of the novel's street dwellers are non-Caucasian, and all other non-whites mentioned in the novel exist at the lower end of the Manhattan economy, such as Patrick's house cleaner and the proprietors of his local Laundromat, who in both cases are Chinese.

[281] Rancière, 'Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?', p. 71.

[282] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

[283] La Berge, Leigh Claire, 'The Men Who Make the Killings: American Psycho, Financial Masculinity, and 1980s Financial Print Culture', in *Studies in American Fiction*, 37.2 (Fall 2010), p. 273.

[284] La Berge, p. 274.

'taking America'.[285] In a notably selective reading of *American Psycho*, Thomas Heise claims that Patrick's violent escapades impose a neoliberal order onto the abject bodies of the Manhattan poor, 'efficiently dispos[ing] of surplus populations that strain limited resources. Where the welfare state is slow and rehabilitative, Bateman is swift, delivering punishment as deserved. He is the "invisible hand" of the market, wielding a knife concealed in a designer jacket.'[286] Heise's argument, though, derives from a reading of just one of the many murder scenes in *American Psycho*, the only one in which Patrick kills a street dweller. Otherwise, as Young notes, 'Patrick is a thoroughly democratic killer and by the end of the book the body-count, by my reckoning stands at thirty-three and covers the entire cross-section of race, class, age and gender in New York society.'[287] In particular, Heise would be hard pressed to explain how Patrick's murder of his yuppie colleague Paul Owen fits into his central role in Ellis's 'neoliberal revenge satire'.[288]

What I find more questionable, though, is Heise's interpretation of this novel as if it were not a novel at all, but some treatise on neoliberal political economics instead, albeit presented in allegorical form. As Storey and la Berghe both demonstrate, if *American Psycho* analyses anything, then it is the manner in which yuppie culture and finance capital in general are represented. Indeed, as la Berghe puts it, insofar as it 'is a satire of a range of financial texts', the novel is 'ultimately [...] a satire of itself'.[289] For the novel itself is no less a part of a discourse that gives rise to 'the grandiose though ultimately uncertain and phantasmatic masculinity of the financier', even if Ellis 'takes the most widely distributed metaphor of 1980s financial print culture – the violent financier – and then [...] tries to "kill" that very metaphor',[290] by literalising it to the point of absurdity. No doubt the 'financial

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[285] La Berge, p. 278.

[286] Heise, Thomas, '*American Psycho*: Neoliberal Fantasies and the Death of Downtown', in *Arizona Quarterly*, 67.1 (Spring 2011), p. 154.

[287] E. Young, pp. 113-14.

[288] Heise, p. 135.

[289] La Berghe, p. 293.

[290] La Berghe, p. 293.

order' created by Wall Street is one whose 'social violence' is 'all too real and simultaneously obfuscated'.[291] Given such obfuscations, literalising this violence and – more to the point – the financier's direct responsibility for it in the form of a serial killer stockbroker, serves much the same purpose as Kincaid's manner of conflating white tourists with slavers and plantation owners, despite the several hundred years between the two. Yet allegory is surely no substitute for rigorous, thorough analysis, as Doug Henwood acknowledges when introducing his 1997 book *Wall Street: How It Works and for Whom* with the following personal anecdote:

> One morning, riding the elevator up to work, I noticed a cop standing next to me, a gun on his hip. I realized in an instant that all the sophisticated machinations that went on upstairs and around the whole Wall Street neighborhood rested ultimately on force. Financial power, too, grows out of the barrel of a gun. Of course a serious analysis of the political economy of finance has to delve into all those sophisticated machinations, but the image of that gun should be kept firmly in mind.[292]

Henwood objects to how theorists of postmodernity like Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson postulate that capital has now become '"weightless," "astral," or able to "launch itself into orbit"'[293] – in short, decoupled from any material basis, such as the production of goods. For Henwood, these formulations lead these thinkers into 'a second- or even third-order fetishism' that leaves them 'unable to decode the real relations of power behind the apparently disembodied ecstasies of computerized trading.'[294] Yet Henwood rounds off the above anecdote by acknowledging how metaphorising the systemic violence of finance capital in the form of a gun is itself a kind of fetishism, especially when it allows one to bypass the daunting task of working through the dizzyingly complex inner working of the financial industries.

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[291] La Berghe, p. 293.

[292] Henwood, Doug, *Wall Street: How It Works and for Whom* (London, New York: Verso, 1997), p. 1.

[293] Shonkwiler, Alison, 'Don DeLillo's Financial Sublime', in *Contemporary Literature*, 51, 2 (Summer 2010), p. 246.

[294] Henwood, p. 2.

I find that Ellis has a very similar point to make in *American Psycho*, presenting a deliberately 'not-so-subtle' critique of finance capital that roots its violent excesses in those of a yuppie, a demographic that by 1991 had become everyone's favourite scapegoat, regardless of whether or not they actually existed as characterised in the media. If 'the media and a self-interested advertising industry ha[d] been fooling themselves' in their obsession with yuppies during the 1980s, Ellis's portrayal of Patrick explores the ironic possibility that the critics of yuppies directed their moral outrage towards a media mirage. Yuppies might well have existed, but the extent to which they resembled that mirage remained uncertain. As such, commentators like Bob Levey were critiquing this mirage, more so than actually-existing yuppies, even after the latter objected to his reductive stereotyping of them. As I will shortly demonstrate, Ellis finds this stereotype to be reductive as well. For unlike Young, Eldridge, Storey, and Heise, I find that Ellis portrays Patrick as being more than a yuppie, just as Kincaid articulates her touristic 'you' as being more than a tourist. I take my cue here from David Roche, who as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is perhaps the only critic of *American Psycho* to have read Patrick's claim to being a serial killer *against* what Roche calls 'his social self, his public appearance'[295] – that is, the yuppie persona that is all that Patrick's friends, colleagues, and associates know him as. Like Young, Eldridge, Storey, and Heise, Roche does ultimately draw parallels between this public persona and Patrick's 'second identity'. Echoing Eldridge's claim – outlined above – that this 'second identity' is no less 'secondhand' than his yuppie persona, Roche concludes that even if it is meant 'to set him apart from the other yuppies [...] this differentiation is compromised because the figure of transgression he constitutes himself as is just borrowed from another set of pop culture texts.'[296] In failing to assert a monadic sense of self, Patrick comes to realise that '"being" or "representing" a psychopath or a yuppie comes down to the same thing; the true self and the false, social or performing self are one and the same, or rather, there is no true self; identity, [...] is a discursive construct.'[297]

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[295] Roche, p. 124.

[296] Roche, pp. 135-36.

[297] Roche, p. 136.

As with Eldridge, so for Roche, Patrick is ultimately unable to fashion an identity for himself out of anything other than 'that which he consumes.'[298] And yet by claiming that Patrick pursues a 'second identity' for himself 'as a reaction *against*' the yuppie mentality, Roche appears to disagree with Eldridge that Patrick 'has *no* identity beyond that which he consumes', that nothing about him exceeds whatever his consumption habits tell us about him. At the very least, then, Patrick's 'second identity' articulates a consciousness and intention that exceeds the yuppie stereotype. For Roche, this excess is Patrick's troubling awareness that the constant, petty one-upmanship between himself and his peers 'point[s] at the impossibility to perfectly conform to the etiquette, something which often fills Patrick with "nameless dread" [...] an expression he uses eight times.'[299] The 'slight variations' that distinguish the novel's yuppies from one another indicate their failure to achieve the etiquette's impossibly idealised image of the perfect yuppie – peerless in one's professional and social status, including one's financial assets, one's professional seniority and contacts, one's physical appearance, one's fashion sense, and one's sexual prowess. For all the bragging and one-upmanship that pervades *American Psycho*, there is always someone who is doing better than everyone else. And yet everyone continues trying to outdo everyone else, Patrick included. Nonetheless, whereas everyone else seems[300] oblivious to the futility of their efforts, Patrick's awareness of it haunts him as a 'slightly funny feeling', one that compounds his sense of his own imperfection by further distinguishing him from his apparently oblivious peers.

According to Berthold Schoene, Patrick's modus operandi – in particular, his physical annihilation of his victims, whether by dismembering them, eating them, or dissolving them in acid – subscribes to a logic of abjection as defined by Calvin

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[298] Eldridge, p. 27.

[299] Roche, p. 125.

[300] It is a subtle yet important detail to note here, that because we only ever encounter Patrick's peers through his first-person narrative, we can never be sure of whether Patrick is alone in claiming to be a serial killer, or at least anything other than a yuppie. This uncertainty is compounded by the fact that Patrick appears to be so successful at concealing his homicidal activities, which raises the question of whether his peers are equally successful – whether all he knows of them is their own 'false, social or performing' selves, their own 'mask[s] of sanity' (Ellis, 279) that might one day slip, revealing other serial killers.

Thomas, as 'the excrementalization of *alterity*', 'the mode by which others become shit'.[301] Within Patrick's 'sensible order', to be anything other than the yuppie etiquette's impossible image of perfection – white; male; heterosexual; able-bodied; good-looking; snappy-dressing; rich; and professionally, socially, and sexually more successful than everyone else – is not to be different, but rather *imperfect*. Patrick's 'second identity', then, is an effort to make sense of his own difference to this image as something other than imperfection. Ellis conveys the standard yuppie response to such difference via Patrick's scorn towards his colleague Luis Carruthers. Luis is continually mocked behind his back by everyone around him for his terrible dress sense and bumbling incompetence when it comes to keeping up with the latest consumer trends. Indeed, Patrick's first disclosure of his 'second identity' to his reader makes it very clear that his alter ego functions precisely in order to distinguish his own transgression of the etiquette from Luis's. This initial disclosure occurs after Patrick describes attending a dinner party hosted by his fiancée Evelyn, a stereotypically insipid yuppie who has spent the entire evening flirting with Tim Price, Patrick's colleague and apparently his closest friend. Patrick has repeatedly been the butt of this verbal foreplay.[302] Thus, at one point, Tim calls Patrick a 'dufus',[303] and before Patrick can respond, Evelyn comes to his apparent defence, telling Tim to 'leave Patrick alone […] He's the boy next door. That's Patrick. You're not a dufus, are you, honey?' [304] Rather than respond, Patrick here simply remarks to himself that 'Evelyn is on Mars' while moving off in search of a drink. Evelyn continues to counter Tim's jibes with this label throughout the evening. Only once does Patrick openly respond:

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[301] Thomas, Calvin, *Male Matters: Masculinity, Anxiety, and the Male Body on the Line* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), pp. 64-65 (quoted in Schoene, p. 391).

[302] Quite literally, given how Evelyn at one point takes Tim upstairs, ostensibly to find him a lint brush. When they reappear – 'Tim glar[ing] at me as he takes the seat next to mine' – Patrick observes that Evelyn 'looks only slightly flushed' (Ellis, p. 12). After the party is over, and as he struggles to send a drunken Tim home, Patrick privately admits that 'I am fairly sure that Timothy and Evelyn are having an affair' (Ellis, p. 22). After Tim finally leaves, Patrick asks Evelyn whether she would ever consider 'just go[ing] for Price': Evelyn's response – 'Why Price? *Price*?' – only compounds Patrick's suspicions that 'she has had sex with him' (Ellis, p. 23).

[303] Ellis, p. 11.

[304] Ellis, p. 11.

> "Leave Patrick alone. He's the boy next door," Evelyn says [...]
> "You're not an extraterrestrial, are you honey?"
> "Should I even dignify that question with an answer?" I sigh.
> "Oh baby." She pouts into the mirror, looking at me in its reflection. "*I* know you're not an extraterrestrial."
> "Relief," I mutter to myself.[305]

Even here, Patrick allows Evelyn to have the last word, keeping his second retort strictly to himself. It is largely irrelevant what Patrick might think he is, because *Evelyn* knows well enough what he is. Moments later, Evelyn comes to Patrick's 'defence' for a third time, insisting that 'Patrick is *not* a cynic, Timothy. He's the boy next door, aren't you honey?'[306] Patrick once again responds only to himself, yet in a manner that contests his appellation as Evelyn's endearing yet unremarkable 'boy next door': '"No I'm not," I whisper to myself. "I'm a fucking evil psychopath."'[307] This particular invocation of his 'second identity' encapsulates how it functions for Patrick as a way of refuting how others characterise him as – for example – 'the boy next door', a 'dufus', or 'a brown-nosing goody-goody' who 'could barely *pick up* an escort girl, let alone...what was it you said he did to her? [...] Oh yes, 'chop her up''.[308]

Nowhere does Patrick's assertion of this 'second identity' function so clearly as 'the denial of an identity given by another, given by the ruling order of policy.'[309] For Patrick here asserts that he is 'a fucking evil psychopath' specifically in order to contest Evelyn's assertion that he is 'the boy next door', as well as Tim's various claims that he is a 'dufus' and an 'extraterrestrial'. In this respect, Patrick's claim here effects 'a displacement or a break in a given set of places and identities',[310]

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[305] Ellis, p. 18.

[306] Ellis, p. 20.

[307] Ellis, p. 20.

[308] Ellis, pp. 387-88; this particular description of Patrick comes from Harold Carnes during the scene in which Patrick confronts him about the confession he left on Harold's voicemail (See note 44, p. 171 above). Given how Harold mistakes Patrick for someone else during this scene, it appears that he unknowingly describes someone else here, although Ellis leaves this ambiguous.

[309] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

[310] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560.

insofar as, by claiming to be 'a fucking evil psychopath', Patrick implicitly concedes that he is not just a 'yuppie', and yet he also asserts that – despite this apparent defect – neither is he a 'dufus' like Luis. For there is already a place within the etiquette's 'given set of places and identities' for anyone who is not just a 'yuppie', a place that Tim in this opening chapter refers to as that of the 'dufus'. As such, Patrick's claim to being 'a fucking evil psychopath' breaks with that 'given set of places and identities' by denying all such existing, abject identities. In the process, Patrick steps 'out of place',[311] and so from this moment he 'arrives as a supplement to the social distribution, since [he] cannot be identified as a part of the police order.'[312] In this respect, it is immaterial whether or not Patrick's 'second identity' is any more 'real' than his yuppie persona. As 'the denial of an identity given by another,' this alter ego articulates a consciousness and will, rather expressing than an essence.

However, in denying this 'identity [...] given by the ruling order of policy', Patrick hardly denies the 'ruling order of policy' itself, as defined by the yuppie etiquette. For in many ways this 'second identity' is an effort to reconcile a conflict that the etiquette otherwise appears incapable of resolving. This is the conflict between his desire to be accepted among his yuppie peers – among whom he so desperately 'want[s]…to…fit…in'[313] – and that growing awareness of his inability to 'perfectly conform to the etiquette', something that Patrick fears will become apparent to his peers, who will then ostracise him, just as they shun Luis. This alter ego, therefore, attempts to resolve this tension by articulating this inability to achieve yuppie perfection in terms that somehow conform to the etiquette, and which therefore distinguish Patrick's transgression of the etiquette from that of Luis and other hapless 'dufuses'. As Schoene notes, Patrick's 'ultraviolent outbursts, or fantasizing about such outbursts, [are] acts of manly self-assertion compensating for a perceived lack in masculine stature',[314] an anxiety that Patrick's peers – Tim

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[311] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 559.

[312] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

[313] Ellis, p. 237.

[314] Schoene, p. 381.

especially – compound whenever they belittle him as a 'dufus' or even a 'faggot'.[315] If Patrick responds to this lack of stature by pursuing an extreme form of 'masculinity with the volume turned up',[316] Luis responds to his own imperfection in a very different manner. Midway through *American Psycho*, Luis mistakes Patrick's attempt to throttle him in a restaurant bathroom as an advance, and so he coyly comes out to Patrick, revealing how 'I've seen you looking at me', how 'I've noticed your [...] hot body', how '[y]ou don't know how long I've wanted it.'[317] Patrick lets Luis live – most likely because he is simply overwhelmed by shock – only to find himself running into Luis throughout Manhattan and having to fend off his increasingly desperate advances.

Both Luis and Patrick, then, embrace their imperfection, their difference – however negligible – from the yuppie etiquette's image of the ideal yuppie. Yet whereas in doing so Luis consciously breaks with that image – given how it is resolutely heterosexual – the hypermasculinity of Patrick's 'second identity' denotes a conformist response to Patrick's realisation that he is an 'unassimilable excess'. Thus, Patrick's unease around Luis – even before Luis comes on to him – as well as around male homosexuals in general, has less to do with 'a perceived lack in masculine stature' per se, than with how the etiquette articulates imperfection precisely in terms of this lack. For if the etiquette's definition of yuppie perfection is heteronormative, then any indication of imperfection is equally one of homosexuality or – perhaps more accurately – effeminacy, which for Patrick's peers amounts to the same thing. Hence Luis's treatment by yuppie society, which makes it clear that homosexuality is imperfection, but also that imperfection can easily prompt suspicions of homosexuality. Luis does appear to confirm those suspicions as they pertain to him, when coming on to Patrick midway through the novel. Ellis, though, leaves it unclear whether Luis's sexual orientation is common knowledge

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[315] As much as I find the term 'faggot' distasteful, I use it here in distinction to 'homosexual', so as to differentiate between homosexuality as mere sexual orientation and as a pejorative way of articulating imperfection as defined in the yuppie etiquette.

[316] Storey, p. 61.

[317] Ellis, p. 159.

among his social circles,[318] and most of his colleagues and peers simply deride him for being a 'dufus', rather than a 'faggot'. However, if yuppie perfection is a heterosexual male, then one is a 'dufus' as long as one is a 'faggot'.

It is unsurprising, therefore, to find that after having called him a 'dufus' throughout the opening chapter, Tim soon afterwards accuses Patrick of being a homosexual. The accusation arises when Tim points out a British intern in a bar whom he claims is a 'faggot'.[319] Patrick and another colleague – David Van Patten – both ask Tim how he could possibly know this, to which Tim responds that 'I saw him fuck Bateman up the ass in the men's room at Morgan Stanley'.[320] As Schoene notes, such 'bullying' most likely has no ill intentions,[321] and Patrick appears to take the insult in relatively good humour, shrugging off Tim's juvenile impertinence with an impatient 'sigh'. Indeed, shortly afterwards, Patrick manages to give as good as he gets, telling Tim to ask his girlfriend Meredith 'if I'm a homosexual. That is, if she'll take the time to pull my dick out of her mouth.'[322] At no other point does Patrick indicate that he is sleeping with Meredith behind Tim's back, just like Patrick suspects Tim of sleeping with Evelyn behind his back, and just like Patrick himself claims to be sleeping with Courtney Lawrence behind Luis's back. Nonetheless, the retort serves to reject Tim's characterisation of Patrick as a 'faggot' – even though Tim responds by claiming that 'Meredith's a *fag hag* [...] that's why I'm dumping her'[323] – by asserting an aggressively heterosexual, sexually promiscuous, and thus unimpeachable, *perfect* masculinity in its place.

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[318] Again, if all we know of Patrick's peers is their 'false, social or performing' selves, then it remains uncertain whether anyone else knows for sure that Luis is a homosexual. After all, Patrick does not appear to tell anyone about Luis coming on to him – doubtless because doing so would raise suspicions regarding his own sexual orientation – which raises the possibility that Luis has come on to other male yuppies, who in turn are keeping it strictly to themselves.

[319] Ellis, p. 36.

[320] Ellis, p. 36.

[321] Schoene, p. 381.

[322] Ellis, p. 37.

[323] Ellis, p. 37.

As he recounts this scene, Patrick does not invoke his homicidal 'second identity'. However, insofar as it amounts to a form of 'masculinity with the volume turned up', this alter ego contests this accusation of homosexuality in precisely the same way as it contested Tim's prior characterisation of Patrick as a 'dufus'. This secret identity, then, conveys no less of a desire to achieve yuppie perfection as his yuppie persona does. Instead, if Patrick's claim to being 'a fucking evil psychopath' registers a 'difference between the voice and the body, [an] interval between identities',[324] then the 'interval' obtains between Patrick and Luis, between two figures who do not resemble the yuppie etiquette's image of perfection, but only one of whom – Luis – is imperfect. Indeed, this alter ego equally serves to distinguish Patrick from Tim, given how Tim in many respects is no less of a 'dufus' than Patrick is. For both Patrick and Tim encounter several peers whose superiority over both of them neither can deny. One such peer is their aforementioned colleague Paul Owen, who is by far the nearest of Patrick's 'victims' to resemble him.[325] Paul, though, 'handles' the mysterious 'Fisher account',[326] a responsibility that provokes a simmering, unabated jealousy in everyone around him, not least of all Tim and Patrick. Paul is even able to reserve seats at Dorsia, Manhattan's trendiest restaurant, a feat that even Patrick repeatedly proves himself incapable of. If Patrick mostly preys upon 'the groups who, in a postmodern society, find their place in the margins being brought into the center' – as Storey claims – then Paul is an anomaly, given how little distinguishes him from Patrick except for the professional success implied by his association with the Fisher account. Indeed, we might consider Patrick's grisly disposal of him – by burying an axe in his face – as an extreme response to Patrick's inability to outdo him professionally, and therefore socially.

In short, Paul is closer than both Patrick and Tim to achieving yuppie perfection, and so he is living proof of their failure to 'perfectly conform to the [yuppie] etiquette', and thus of their imperfection. Tim reacts to Paul's success with

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[324] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

[325] Given Patrick's claim that Paul 'is exactly my age' – that even Paul's voice, 'to someone hearing it over the phone[, sounds] probably identical' to his own – Schoene finds that Paul is Patrick's 'insufferably career-driven and professionally successful *alter ego*' (Schoene, p. 383 (emphasis in original)).

[326] Ellis, p. 5.

a sullen, grudging envy that implicitly concedes his inability to even hope to compete with Paul, professionally and socially. In the process, this envy renders Tim's bravado rather pathetic. Having bombastically declared on the first page of *American Psycho* that 'society can*not* afford to lose me. I'm an *asset*',[327] Tim's animosity towards Paul denotes a resentful awareness that, no matter how highly he values himself, he is not nearly as valuable as Paul is. Thus, by murdering Paul, Patrick distinguishes himself from Tim in precisely the same way as his 'second identity' more generally strives to distinguish him from 'dufus-faggots' like Luis. For on one hand, Paul's murder is invariably a concession that Patrick does not fully embody the yuppie etiquette's image of perfection. Yet on the other hand, Patrick articulates this concession in a manner that distinguishes him from Tim, who can only watch on with morose envy as Paul ascends through the ranks of Manhattan society, leaving him and Patrick far, far behind. Paul's murder, therefore, reinforces the sense that Patrick would rather be 'a fucking evil psychopath' than a hapless yuppie wannabe who can only ever dream of achieving perfection.[328]

Once again, though, if it is meant to distinguish him from 'dufuses' like Tim and 'faggots' like Luis, then Patrick's alter ego renders him 'a supplement to the social distribution, since [he] cannot be identified as a part of the police order.'[329] In short, within the etiquette's 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies', there is no 'place' for anyone who is imperfect, but who is somehow neither a 'dufus' not a 'faggot'. By claiming such a place for himself, Patrick

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[327] Ellis, p. 3.

[328] On at least one occasion, Patrick and Tim encounter yuppies who are even more successful than Paul. Scott Montgomery, for example, is purportedly worth $800 million, is two years younger than Patrick – who is the same age as Tim and Paul – and makes a point of his superiority when ordering Patrick, Tim and their colleagues a complimentary bottle of *non*vintage champagne (Ellis, p. 50). To add insult to injury, Tim cannot help but notice how Scott's small stature – that is, his *physical* imperfection – hardly keeps him from outdoing Tim in terms of achieving yuppie perfection, given how much more successful he has been *professionally* (Ellis, p. 43). In short, Tim is incredulous towards the fact that, although this 'dwarf' (Ellis, p. 43) is so obviously unable to 'perfectly conform to the etiquette', he nevertheless outstrips Tim's own efforts to do so in practically every other way. As if to confirm this added insult, Scott's date is an anorexic, alcoholic, 'uptight' French model whom Tim nonetheless 'grudgingly' agrees is 'hot' (Ellis, p. 43).

[329] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

effectively claims 'a position without identity'. Patrick's homicidal alter ego may well be a conformist effort to 'fit in', to find a place within the etiquette's 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies'. As such, we might argue that his intentions do no exceed that 'social distribution'. What exceeds that distribution, therefore, is Patrick's consciousness and experience, along with his inability to disavow the ways in which they exceed the etiquette's strictures. Apprehending Patrick as 'Everyyuppie', therefore; assuming that every aspect of Ellis's portrayal of Patrick – including his 'second identity' – is reducible to how Ellis defines the yuppie stereotype, risks overlooking or even disavowing how the practice of claiming to be a serial killer reflects a consciousness that exceeds the terms of that stereotype. Indeed, I find Patrick's apprehension as 'Everyyuppie' by critics like Young, Eldridge, Storey, and Heise rather ironic, given how Patrick himself arguably does *not* disavow this excess, even as he attempts to reconcile it with his persistent, conformist desire to achieve the etiquette's image of yuppie perfection.

In short, to claim that Patrick is nothing more than a yuppie is to metonymise him, to identify the whole of him according to those aspects of his character that correspond to the yuppie stereotype. Thus, Young is right to claim that as 'Everyyuppie', Patrick 'cannot exist', but only insofar as he is indeed a 'cipher', rather than a 'character in the traditional sense'. What I have argued here is that Patrick is *not* just 'Everyyuppie'; that as much as he epitomises the petty greed, self-interest, and intellectual, moral, and emotional bankruptcy of his yuppie peers, Patrick also exhibits a self-awareness that no one else appears to possess, and which is therefore atypical of yuppies as they are characterised in the novel itself. Subsequently, Patrick's continuing desire to be 'Everyyuppie' suggests that, within the novel itself, Patrick can think of no other way of articulating his sense of a disjuncture between himself and his peers, other than how the yuppie etiquette itself articulates such 'gaps' – as something that renders one a 'dufus', or even a 'faggot'. In much the same way, wherever they contend that Patrick is 'Everyyuppie', critics like Young read *American Psycho* within a 'sensible order' in which yuppies are never more than yuppies. Patrick's 'second identity', then, renders him 'a supplement' not only to 'the social distribution' that is the yuppie etiquette *within* the novel, but also to these critical 'sensible orders'. Critics who identify Patrick

only as a yuppie ignore how his characterisation exceeds that identity, and so they recognise him as what he strives to be recognised as, responding to his 'self-metonymisation' with a corresponding synecdochal address.

I have argued here that Patrick's alter ego registers a 'difference between the voice and the body, [an] interval between identities', or rather several such 'intervals': between Patrick and the figure of 'Everyyuppie'; between Patrick and Luis; and between Patrick and Tim. If critics like Young, Eldridge, Storey and Schoene have overlooked all such 'intervals' that obtain in *American Psycho*, then we might argue that this alter ego gives form to something that as yet remains 'a position without identity'. What I mean here is not that Patrick is 'removed from all lines of social mobility',[330] for as a young, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, affluent, professional, male urbanite, Patrick quite clearly possesses considerable social power and mobility. Instead, my reading of *American Psycho* has sought to illustrate the need to distinguish the notion of occupying 'a position without identity' from this 'reasonable and rarefied definition of the word subaltern'.[331] For what Patrick's 'second identity' conveys is the absence of an alternative to how the yuppie etiquette articulates difference, in terms of imperfection or even abjection. Patrick's alter ego might well attempt to articulate his own difference in more palatable, less abject terms. Yet if this alter ego paradoxically subscribes to the etiquette, then so much only reinforces the sense that the only non-abject image available to Patrick is the etiquette's own image of the perfect yuppie, something that Patrick cannot ever emulate. I am not arguing that Ellis's Manhattan is completely devoid of any alternative to a 'sensible order' that empowers white, heterosexual, able-bodied, male yuppies like Patrick at the expense of the rights or agency of others, including women and homosexuals. After all, we see another such order at work – namely, Storey's postmodernity – whenever a horrified Patrick describes an encounter with affluent homosexuals or professional women around Manhattan.

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[330] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 475.

[331] Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular', p. 475.

Nonetheless, if Patrick is unable to imagine women, homosexuals, and racial and ethnic minorities – not to mention street dwellers and prostitutes – as being in any way his equals, neither can anyone within the novel who subscribes to something other than Patrick's yuppie-centric 'symbolic order' imagine Patrick as being anything more than a yuppie. On the rare occasion that Patrick uses the term 'yuppie', it only ever seems to be pejorative. For example, when he inadvertently finds himself in a nightclub playing rap music, rather than join his fellow 'Wall Street guys' as they quickly leave, Patrick tries to chat up 'a couple of hardbody rich girls', only to find himself being told by 'the one with the *nose ring*' to '[g]o back to Wall Street [...] [f]ucking yuppie'.[332] Apparently unfazed, Patrick responds by claiming that '[y]ou may think I'm a really disgusting yuppie but I'm not, *really*'.[333] Elsewhere, Patrick describes an incident where he found someone – another 'Wall Street guy' – writing 'Kill...All...Yuppies' on the wall above a urinal in a restaurant bathroom.[334] Again, at the level of the narrative, Patrick here insists on distinguishing between 'Wall Street guys' and 'really disgusting yuppies', a distinction that Ellis's reader might find to be negligible, but which serves more to deny the latter as an 'identity given by another', one that is no less abject than the identity of 'dufus' or 'faggot'. The term 'yuppie', therefore, functions here in a manner that refuses to distinguish between yuppies, just like Kincaid's characterisation of white tourists in *A Small Place*. Moreover, just as the latter provokes hostile responses from Aegerter and Frederick's 'mainstream students', so Patrick 'denies' this identity of 'yuppie' in favour of either that of 'Wall Street guy' or serial killer. Even for Patrick, there is only one kind of 'yuppie' in *American Psycho*: the 'really disgusting' kind. Similarly, there is only one kind of 'yuppie' for the novel's critical audience: the kind who have 'no identity beyond that which [they consume]'; the kind who are 'indifferent to art, originality or even pleasure except in so far as [their] possessions are the newest, brightest, best, most expensive and most fashionable'; the kind who perceive 'the rise of the marginalized' solely as a threat

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[332] Ellis, pp. 198-99.

[333] Ellis, p. 199.

[334] Ellis, p. 374; the film adaptation has Patrick write these words inside a closet in Paul Owen's apartment, which he appropriates after killing Paul.

to their 'central position'. Both within and beyond the diegesis of *American Psycho*, every yuppie is 'Everyyuppie'.

My point is not to argue against the assumption that yuppies are 'really disgusting', or rather that they are racists, classists, misogynists and homophobes who lack any form of intellectual or emotional depth. Equally, in arguing that Patrick himself is more than just a 'really disgusting yuppie', I do not mean to treat *American Psycho* as if it were some reliable account of the *historical* phenomenon of the yuppie social type, some social or cultural document' rather than a novel.[335] Instead, my interest here has lain with the extent to which even those critics who have sought to rehabilitate the novel have done so in a way that reduces the complexity of its central character, as if it is the critics that have 'negate[d] him as a "character"', more so than Ellis. Patrick's efforts to be recognised and accepted by his peers as a yuppie easily distract from the ways in which he is not a yuppie. As long as these efforts continue to distract critics like Young and Eldridge in this way, then the metonymic moment of Patrick's self-identification as a yuppie will go unnoticed. Without losing sight of Patrick's fictionality, *American Psycho* illustrates how assuming that existing frameworks and categories are capable of exhaustively apprehending the consciousness and will of any given individual or group can risk establishing a self-perpetuating, circular logic, in which 'self-metonymisation' validates synecdochal address, and vice versa. In order to break this circular logic, I argue that we must pursue other ways of articulating the 'unassimilable excess' that inevitably remains after 'self-metonymisation', and which therefore obtains among all who subscribe to a wider discourse, ideology or collective identity. Without such alternatives, that circular logic persists, and the task of dissolving such collective structures – like Said's 'imperial consensus' – remains all too daunting.

Conclusion

In disparate ways, Spivak, Kincaid, Orwell, Naipaul, Courtemanche, and Ellis all suggest that 'dis-identifying' oneself from one's 'place' within a 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies' can only occur if one's

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[335] Sahlin, Nicki, '"But This Road Doesn't Go Anywhere": The Existential Dilemma in *Less Than Zero*', in *Critique*, 33, 1 (Fall 1991), p. 24.

consciousness, experience, intentions, or practices exceed how that 'place' is defined. Moreover, in no less disparate ways, all of the writers and thinkers discussed in this chapter attest to variances of consciousness, purpose, and in some cases practice among the privileged, even though not all of them believe it is possible for the privileged to align their practices with an avowed opposition to the structures that render them privileged. I have explored how the pessimism of Memmi and Naipaul risks leading us into a self-perpetuating cul-de-sac. For if we assume that no such alignment is possible, then there seems to be little point in attempting to encourage the privileged to even declare their opposition to those structures. In turn, we mount no significant challenge to the hegemonic ascendancy of Said's 'imperial consensus', and Memmi's 'colonizer who rejects' continues in their 'tormented dance', agonising over their integrity rather than actively contributing towards overturning the colonial order they avowedly oppose.

If we are to challenge that 'imperial consensus', then, we must assume that everyone who participates in it do so by 'metonymising' themselves as Spivak describes. For only then would it be possible to encourage them to 'dis-identify' themselves from it instead, in response to a consciousness that that consensus cannot hope to incorporate. Thus, assuming that no such excess exists, that Said's 'imperial consensus' exhaustively articulates the consciousness and will of everyone who subscribes to it, forecloses this possibility of 'dis-identification'. In the process, this assumption risks inducing a circular, self-corroborating logic in which existing categories appear to be capable of exhaustively apprehending that consciousness and will. This circular logic can only impede any attempt to dissolve Said's 'imperial consensus', by encouraging the assumption that all such attempts can only fail to encourage those to participate in it to assume an alternative 'sensible order' instead. Once again, Spivak's notion of 'self-metonymisation' provides us with a way of approaching such participation in a manner that does not reduce the consciousness, experience, will and intentions of those who do so to the terms of that consensus, and which therefore does not efface Young's 'unassimilable excess' entirely.

Nonetheless, I have also emphasised that keeping open this possibility of 'dis-identification' is not enough to ensure that it actually occurs. I have suggested that Said's 'imperial consensus' will only dissolve if alternatives become available, in which case distinctions like Memmi's between 'the colonizer who accepts' and

'the colonizer who refuses' become important, even if they articulate a mere possibility rather than an already-existing reality. Ultimately, the latter's material illogicality may well be irreducible; moreover, as Memmi notes, the integrity of anyone who claims to be a 'colonizer who refuses' must be judged according to their willingness to become something other than a 'colonizer'. In the same way, I have argued in this chapter that no 'political and legal order' can be overcome simply by encouraging or registering 'dis-identification' among those who otherwise consent to it. As I have demonstrated with reference to Spivak's 'bourgeois white male' students – as well to Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses' – 'dis-identification' can induce paralysis wherever it occurs as merely 'the denial of an identity given by another', rather than as the displacement of that identity by another that more adequately articulates one's consciousness, experience, will, intentions and practice. Of course, though, the danger of providing alibis for complacency remains, which I will address in my next chapter.

Chapter 4
Liberalism, Apartheid, and 'inactive dis-identification'

The hegemonic ascendancy of imperialism can only be challenged by encouraging those who subscribe to Edward W. Said's 'imperial consensus' to 'dis-identify' from it instead. Clearly, though, we can hardly expect to dissolve imperialism entirely by simply encouraging this mass 'dis-identification'. For one thing, 'dis-identification' does not always entail actively pursuing the dissolution of whatever one 'dis-identifies' from. Moreover, this 'inactive dis-identification' might well be common wherever a 'hegemonic discourse'[336] is confronted by well-established 'alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture[s]'[337] – wherever there is 'a conflict between one sensible order and another',[338] an 'opposition between logics that count the parties and parts of the community in different ways.'[339] As we saw in Chapter 3, this first of Jacques Rancière's two definitions of 'politics' implies that anyone whom the prevailing 'sensible order' does not 'count' as 'a part of the community' may well be counted in this way by an alternative order. Thus, in this first definition, 'dis-identification' from the prevailing 'count' occurs as a double moment, as the simultaneous 'assertion of an identity' and 'the denial of an identity given by another, given by the ruling order of policy.'[340] What proved to be supplementary to the prevailing 'count' is incorporated into another, without disturbing its own, alternative 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies'.[341]

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[336] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'The *Intervention* Interview', in *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. by Sarah Harasym (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 121.

[337] Williams, Raymond, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 113.

[338] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', in *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 21, 4 (December 2007), p. 560.

[339] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. by Steven Corcoran (London, New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 35.

[340] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', in *October*, 61, 'The Identity in Question' (1992), p. 62.

[341] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

In this chapter, I explore how this first definition of 'politics' can give rise to inactive 'dis-identification', and how we can address the latter in a way that encourages active, unconditional opposition instead. Previously, I have considered how Rancière's second definition of politics might give rise to 'inactive dis-identification' in the form of paralysis, as contended by Albert Memmi. This second form of politics occurs whenever 'there is something wrong in the picture, when something is not at the right place [...] when we don't know how to designate what we see, when a name no longer suits the thing or the character that it names, etc'.[342] Here the 'dis-identified' appear to have no recourse to any more suitable way of 'naming' themselves.[343] Hence the statement by Spivak's 'bourgeois white male' students that they are '*only* bourgeois white male[s]',[344] even as their subsequent claim that they 'can't speak' indicates that they are in fact more than just 'bourgeois white males'.[345] In contrast, therefore, in Rancière's first definition of 'politics', 'inactive dis-identification' occurs wherever an existing alternative identity allows one to deny one's 'identity given [...] by the ruling order of policy', without actively pursuing the dissolution of that order.

Such alternatives can clearly function as alibis for avoiding active politics. Hence my emphasis on how 'dis-identification' is merely a starting point, a necessary condition that enables the subsequent task of encouraging active, unconditional opposition instead. I maintain that it is important for us to assume that 'dis-identification' is always possible, no matter how unlikely it might be. Yet we cannot allow this working assumption to provide those who forego active politics with a way of disregarding their implication in whatever they might 'dis-identify' from, as if one's declared intentions exonerated one from any culpability for that 'ruling order of policy'. However, neither can we allow this culpability to ever convince us that those who 'dis-identify' without undertaking active opposition will never do so, for whatever reason. In this chapter, I explore how this secondary

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[342] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560 (my emphasis).

[343] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

[344] Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', in Harasym ed., p. 62.

[345] See Chapter 3 of this thesis, p. 175.

working assumption applies as much to instances where 'inactive dis-identification' occurs among those who continue to benefit from whatever they claim to have 'dis-identified' themselves from. I address one such exemplary instance: white South Africans who openly declared their opposition to Apartheid's white-supremacist regime, even as they continued to enjoy the considerable privileges reserved for whites at the expense of the country's 'non-white' population.[346] A majority of these avowedly dissident whites were English-speaking proponents of South Africa's tradition of Anglophone liberalism, and they opposed Apartheid out of a declared belief in the fundamental equality of all human beings, regardless of spurious racial hierarchies. South African liberals were committed to non-racialism, and they firmly insisted on opposing the incumbent Afrikaner National Party (NP, or 'Nats') through non-violent means, respecting the rule of law, and campaigning via existing parliamentary structures, in which only whites could participate, and which the NP subsequently dominated.

Under Apartheid, this liberal agenda was the only openly anti-government front within South Africa that the country's authorities tolerated. Moreover, during much of the 1960s, liberalism seemed to be the only anti-government front in existence. A year after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, the government officially banned the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC); two years later, these organisations' highest-profile leaders – including Nelson Mandela – were imprisoned in the Rivonia trial of 1963-64. A generation of non-whites gradually succumbed to defeatist quietism, and 'politics' became 'a dirty word and people "bottled it all in" for fear of banning, imprisonment, or worse.'[347] Non-whites were still 'free to join the Liberal and Progressive parties until 1968[:

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[346] Under Apartheid law, the racial composition of South Africa was sorted into four categories. There were three categories that qualified under 'non-white': 'African', 'Indian' and 'coloured'. The first two were self-explanatory: anyone of full African descent were categorised as 'Africans', while anyone of full Indian descent were classified as 'Indians'. Similarly, anyone of full European descent qualified as 'whites'. Those whose heritage was mixed-race, though, were 'coloureds'. These categories were then hierarchised. Predictably, 'whites' were afforded the most privileges under Apartheid, while 'Africans' had the least. 'Indians' and 'coloureds' were afforded a slightly higher standard of living than 'Africans', although their quality of life was still much closer to that of 'Africans' than that of 'whites'.

[347] Magaziner, Daniel R., *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968-1977* (Athens, Jacana, Johannesburg: University of Ohio Press, 2010), p. 21.

however,] it was whites in these organizations who for the most part took on the task of articulating African grievances and demands. Blacks who spoke out invited martyrdom.'[348] In 1968, the government banned all political parties from having mixed-race memberships. In protest, the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA) disbanded; the government had already driven the South African Communist Party (SACP) underground in 1950. As can be expected, by the end of the decade, liberal opposition to Apartheid had done little to prevent successive NP majority governments from realising Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd's (1961-66) vision of 'Grand Apartheid' with relative impunity. As a result, the 1960s saw the implementation of such infamous Apartheid policies as the 'Homelands' and the country's racially-segregated education system.

Ironically, this latter policy was to sow the seeds of Apartheid's eventual demise. In 1969, non-white members of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) broke away to form the South African Student Organisation (SASO), a national student group that denied membership to whites. The new organisation promoted Black Consciousness, a new sensibility that called upon non-whites to shake off their defeatism, and once again assume responsibility for their own emancipation.[349] SASO's founders were motivated by the clear failure of liberal strategies to achieve any meaningful change in South Africa, coupled with an increasing sense that liberal whites had become complacent towards their own implication in the regime's oppression of non-whites. The rallying call of Black Consciousness, then, entailed branding liberal whites as closet Nats who sought to frustrate non-white aspirations by channelling them into ineffective strategies.

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[348] Gerhart, Gail M., *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1978), p. 257; the terminology used in reference to Apartheid's four official racial profiles – 'White', 'Indian', 'Coloured' (i.e. mixed race) and 'Bantu', 'African' or 'Native' – is often variable, partly because of SASO's efforts to discredit the term 'non-white' in favour of the more affirmative 'Black'. This essay will use the term 'non-white' to refer to Indians, Coloureds and Africans collectively; 'African' to refer to non-mixed-race Africans specifically; and 'Black' to refer to the alternative, more positive sense of self promoted by SASO.

[349] Almost all historical accounts of South African socio-politics under Apartheid dedicate a chapter to the rise and subsequent legacy of Black Consciousness, generally beginning with the movement's foundation in 1969 and ending with the Soweto uprisings in 1976.

Eventually, this claim was extended to dissident whites in general, regardless of their ideological persuasions. According to SASO's simplistic analysis of South African socio-politics, whites only ever looked out for themselves and their ill-gotten privileges, and cared little for the rights and wellbeing of their non-white compatriots. Predictably, these claims provoked a multitude of objections and counter-accusations from among avowedly dissident whites, many of which ironically exposed the very complacency that SASO had accused them of. SASO, it seemed, had a point: whites were not interested in bringing down Apartheid – not even those who claimed they were, who 'dis-identified' themselves from white supremacy.

Not all whites, though, responded in this manner, and in this chapter I explore Nadine Gordimer's response to these claims. In her non-fiction, Gordimer made it clear that she welcomed Black Consciousness as a positive development. Her fiction was marginally more critical, registering what the movement made possible, but also what it risked foreclosing. In particular, between 1978 and 1981, Gordimer's fiction suggested that the movement's habit of addressing all whites as white-supremacists was closing down potentially productive avenues of political co-operation between white and non-white dissidents. Hence the ambiguous endings of two of Gordimer's novels published during this period – *Burger's Daughter* (1978) and *July's People* (1981) – the latter of which has been described by Robin Visel as one of Gordimer's several portraits of 'dead-end heroines'.[350] The 'heroine' of *July's People* is Maureen Smales, a white, middle-class housewife who with her husband Bamford 'Bam' Smales and their three children, finds herself at the mercy of her former servant July, who has offered to shelter them all in his rural home from the ravages of a civil war between the South African government and non-white rebels. As per their liberal sensibilities, the Smaleses had made some effort to treat their non-white household servants as fellow human beings, and they believed they had earned their friendship in return. Given this belief, the Smaleses hope that July will protect them should either side find them in the middle of the bush[351] – not

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[350] Visel, Robin, 'Othering the Self: Nadine Gordimer's Colonial Heroines', in *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 19.4 (October 1988), p. 38.

[351] Gordimer does not specify the precise location of July's community in the South African countryside.

as his employers, nor as fellow human beings, but as his friends, no less. This conviction, though, gradually fades, as July confronts Maureen over her own role in the regime's oppression of him as a non-white. Eventually, Maureen appears to assume responsibility for her own survival, and *July's People* ends ambiguously, with Maureen running straight towards a helicopter which, being unmarked, could equally contain non-white rebels or government troops – that is, death or salvation from exile, destitution, and an uncertain future.

In this chapter, I compare this ambiguous ending with that of *Burger's Daughter*, in which the titular Rosa Burger is incarcerated in the same prison – perhaps even the same cell – in which her father Lionel died near the beginning of the novel. This circularity suggests a testing of the limits of Black Consciousness ideology, of what effect the movement's 'polarised rhetoric'[352] might have had on white political behaviour during the 1970s, and perhaps beyond. Rosa finds herself in a similar situation as Maureen does, confronted by someone who she thought was a friend, who at least did not doubt her integrity as an opponent of Apartheid, but who summarily dismisses her as just another white racist, in terms that echo the rhetoric of Black Consciousness. Both *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People* reiterate Gordimer's claims in her non-fiction, that the provocations of Black Consciousness towards complacent liberal and dissident whites were cogent and necessary. However, the ambiguous endings of both novels suggest that these provocations risked either compounding that very complacency, or inducing a sense of paralysis, just like that which besets Memmi's 'tormented' figure of 'the colonizer who refuses'.[353] For these provocations mostly imputed that all whites could be nothing other than a white supremacist: only rarely did SASO activists and ideologues like Steve Biko suggest that dissident whites were something else. Much like Memmi's dispiriting portrait of 'the colonizer who refuses', then, these

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[352] MacQueen, Ian, *Re-Imagining South Africa: Black Consciousness, Radical Christianity and the New Left, 1967-1977* (Brighton: University of Sussex PhD thesis, March 2011), p. 3.

[353] Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. by Howard Greenfeld (London: Earthscan, 2003), p. 89.

provocations left dissident whites with nothing other than the identity of 'the colonizer who accepts', an identity that they had ostensibly 'denied'[354] already.

The 'polarised rhetoric' of Black Consciousness forcefully registered a 'difference between the voice and the body',[355] between the declared intentions of dissident whites and their collusion in the daily injustice of Apartheid. I find it debatable, though, how effective this rhetoric was at redressing this difference, at encouraging dissident whites to align their practices more closely with their intentions. Certainly, Black Consciousness ideologues insisted that it was necessary for whites to more actively pursue Apartheid's downfall, rather than 'simply shut up and leave it to the blacks'.[356] Nonetheless, the debate never really moved beyond the question of whether whites were even capable of redressing this difference between purpose and practice. As such, the question of *how* whites were to do so mostly went unanswered, even unaddressed. Mabel Raisibe Maimela and Ian MacQueen both attribute the persistence of the former question to mere rhetoric. For the claim that whites could never commit themselves to overcoming white supremacy was at most a provocation, a way of shocking liberal whites out of their complacency. The liberal reaction to this manoeuvre, though, suggests that this tactic had mixed results at best. For most liberals responded to such claims by merely reiterating the 'denial of an identity given [...] by the ruling order of policy' that was already implicit in every liberal's subscription to the liberal agenda. As a well-established 'alternative or directly oppositional politics', the enduring appeal of South African liberalism lay in its affirmation of a variance of purpose among whites, its recognition that not all whites were white supremacists, even if they all benefited from white supremacy.

What was needed, therefore, was a challenge to this appeal. Black Consciousness forcefully disputed the integrity of liberal whites, but in a manner that refused to recognise any variance of purpose among white South Africans. For this approach offered no alternative to that already-existing, liberal alternative to the 'identity given [...] by the ruling order of policy' that liberal whites had already

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[354] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

[355] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

[356] Turner, Richard, 'Black Consciousness and White Liberals', in *Reality: A Journal of Liberal Opinion*, 4.3 (July 1972), p. 21.

'denied'. Black Consciousness, therefore, compounded the lack of an alternative to an already-existing 'directly oppositional politics' that allowed whites to 'dis-identify' themselves from white supremacy without actively pursuing its dissolution. Instead, the 'polarised rhetoric' of Black Consciousness suggested that any such second-order alternative was impossible – that in fact there was no such thing as an 'alternative' way of being white in South Africa, that 'alternatives' to the identity of the 'Afrikaner nationalist', the 'racist', the 'white-supremacist' or 'the colonizer who accepts' were actually misleading variants of that identity. As I demonstrate in this chapter, though, this 'polarised rhetoric' belies how Black Consciousness sought precisely to encourage liberal whites to 'dis-identify' themselves from the liberal 'sensible order'. Yet without any other way of registering their opposition to Apartheid, it is no wonder that so many liberal whites refused to do so, in favour of defending their integrity in liberal terms, and accusing Black Consciousness in turn of having capitulated Apartheid.

I demonstrate how in *Burger's Daughter*, *July's People*, and to a lesser extent, *A Sport of Nature* (1987), Gordimer registers the absence of second-order alternatives for dissident white South Africans. I also explore how in these novels, a common consequence of this absence is something like the political paralysis that grips Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses', and which is no less productive than the complacency of liberal whites. In all three novels, then, Gordimer imputes that redressing 'inactive dis-identification' must certainly involve registering a 'difference between the voice and the body', between one's professed intentions and actual practices. Yet in doing so, we should maintain that the consciousness, experience, and intentions of anyone that subscribes even to an existing 'alternative or directly oppositional politics' exceed it. In short, we can only redress 'inactive dis-identification' by encouraging a second-order 'dis-identification', which in turn is only possible if the conditions that give rise to 'dis-identification' from any 'sensible order' exist. Otherwise, we risk succumbing to Memmi's fatalistic 'failure of vision', condemning the 'dis-identified beneficiary' to the 'tormented dance' of Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses'. In the process, we subscribe to that circular, self-corroborating logic that I described in my previous chapter, according to which a 'colonizer' is nothing more than a 'colonizer', and that there is no point in trying to encourage them to 'refuse', to become something more than a 'colonizer', if not something else altogether. As I argued in my previous chapter, if we subscribe to

this circular logic, then we cannot hope to challenge the hegemonic ascendancy of imperialism. It remains important, therefore, to avoid ever assuming that any collective identity or 'sensible order' exhaustively articulates the consciousness, experience, and intentions of those who subscribe to them – not even those which are 'alternative or directly oppositional'.

4.1 Black Consciousness in debate with South African liberalism

The 'polarised rhetoric' of Black Consciousness reflected the frustrations of SASO's founders as non-white members of NUSAS, given how the latter was dominated by liberal whites. SASO was the product of a schism between white and non-white NUSAS members that came to a head in 1968. NUSAS already had a reputation for its vocal opposition to Apartheid. However, as with every other openly dissident group, the authorities tolerated NUSAS only because it promoted and practiced a liberal agenda. Towards the end of the decade, NUSAS was succumbing to the shortcomings of South African liberalism in general. Indeed, according to Gail M. Gerhart, NUSAS had started drifting politically to the right, 'largely confining itself for several years to symbolic multiracial activities and protests after-the-fact against government and infringements on academic freedom.'[357] During these years, NUSAS adopted 'an ill-defined political mandate that valued the sanctity of political and moral convictions over radical action', a mandate that MacQueen has described as being 'more broadly representative of liberals at this time.'[358] NUSAS also firmly subscribed to the implicit consensus among Apartheid's opponents at the time that '[t]o be politically legitimate meant being "colourless."'[359] Thus, NUSAS confidently claimed a mandate in opposing Apartheid 'not only from the schools, where whites were in the majority, but also from the general population, where they most decidedly were not'.[360] This claim was clearly problematic, and in fact was only sustainable as long as NUSAS denied the country's non-white majority a

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[357] Gerhart, p. 258.

[358] MacQueen, p. 63.

[359] Magaziner, p. 27.

[360] Magaziner, pp. 19-20.

substantial voice in its own affairs. For the Union practiced 'colourlessness' in the form of one-man-one-vote, thus giving South Africa's 46,000 white students a clear advantage over their 8,600 non-white peers.

According to Maimela, as early as 1965, non-white members were making 'allegations that the Union's leadership had virtually no prospects of ever changing or altering government policy or structure.'[361] Increasingly, NUSAS seemed no less complacent than South African liberalism in general, which by then had 'become not an inspiration to constructive action but a sterile dogma disguising an unconscious attachment to the status quo.'[362] Yet non-whites did not seriously consider breaking away from NUSAS until the Union's 1967 annual congress, where it was 'standard practice' for non-white delegates to be 'allocated racially separate sleeping accommodation.'[363] Using this policy as 'the pretext for breaking away from the Union', non-white NUSAS members met a year later at Stutterheim, where they decided to found an alternative national student organisation whose agenda would prioritise non-white interests.[364] Among the delegates was Steve Biko, an African student of the University of Natal Non-European medical school (UNNE), and a rising star in the NUSAS leadership. In defiance of 'colourlessness', Biko proposed that the new organisation deny membership to whites entirely, in order to protect its prioritisation of non-white affairs. Plans for SASO's inaugural conference were formalised at a more public meeting at Marianhill in 1968, and SASO was formally inaugurated at Turfloop on July 1 1969, with Biko elected as its first president.

Inevitably, SASO's departure from liberalism's insistence on non-racialism provoked controversy. Daniel R. Magaziner notes that, even before SASO's formal inauguration, NUSAS's white leaders 'were predictably appalled by black students'

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[361] Maimela, Mabel Raisibe, *Black Consciousness and White Liberals in South Africa: Paradoxical Anti-Apartheid Politics*, University of South Africa, PhD Thesis, 1999), p. 136.

[362] Gerhart, p. 260.

[363] Maimela, p. 137.

[364] Maimela, p. 138.

decision [...] to meet without them' at Marianhill.[365] SASO, though, anticipated these objections, and initially tempered its position regarding non-racialism to such an extent that its 'early communiqués seemed to apologize for the organization's existence.'[366] These communiqués emphasised the parallel goals of SASO and NUSAS, including eventual racial integration, despite the two organisations' divergent methods.[367] Nevertheless, Gerhart remarks that, despite these conciliatory gestures, 'a strong reaction from the NUSAS rank and file and from white liberals generally was soon forthcoming':[368]

> In NUSAS, a minority, including most of the top leadership, was sympathetic to black initiatives and accepted SASO's emergence as a healthy development. To the majority, however, acceptance of black separatism came hard and many of the attitudes caricatured in SASO attacks were openly exhibited. If whites were not to be allowed to play the role of defenders and saviors of the oppressed, what role was left for them to play? Excluded from power by the racist white majority, and excluded from the camp of the underdogs by blacks bent on going it alone, liberal whites felt a sense of isolation and weakness unknown in the history of South African liberalism.[369]

These fervent objections to SASO's foundation are generally far better documented than those few responses that took SASO's critiques of liberal complacency more seriously, some of which I will explore below. Indeed, Gerhart's account here of the response to SASO's foundation is typical in both its brevity and emphasis on the ways in which this response corroborated Biko's claim that, 'although [the white liberal] does not vote for the Nats (now that they are in the majority anyway) he feels quite secure under the protection offered by the Nats and subconsciously shuns the idea of change.'[370] For Maimela, these accounts are misleading, given how SASO's 'criticism of white liberals and liberal institutions [...] is often adduced as evidence of a basic hostility and variance of purpose' between SASO and South

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[365] Magaziner, p. 26.

[366] Magaziner, p. 27.

[367] Magaziner, p. 27.

[368] Gerhart, p. 267.

[369] Gerhart, pp. 267-68.

[370] Biko, Steve, 'Black Souls in White Skins?', in *I Write What I Like*, ed. by Aeldred Stubbs (London: Bowerdean, 1978), p. 22.

African liberals.[371] In contrast, Maimela demonstrates abundantly – as does MacQueen – that 'many such statements (but by no means all) veiled an often complex symbiotic reality which was frequently concealed from public view under many rhetorical flourishes of the time.'[372]

As per Gerhart's account, liberals were just as susceptible to such 'flourishes' as SASO's activists. Maimela and MacQueen both provide substantial evidence of collaboration between SASO and white-led organisations. Yet even then, this evidence suggests that only a minority of dissident whites were open to SASO's critiques. Otherwise, liberal whites either defended South African liberalism on its own terms, or responded to SASO's charges of conspiring with Apartheid with similar accusations, most of which focused on SASO's racially-exclusive membership policy. Hence Alan Paton's remark that, although '[b]lack consciousness is the direct creation of white arrogance', SASO's 'refusal to believe – on principle – that any white person can speak the truth' risked rendering Black Consciousness 'the twin of White Nationalism', and depriving it of 'the noble future which Mr. Biko dreams for it'.[373] A year later, Leo Marquard confessed that 'for the most part I find it impossible to distinguish the language and idiom of black consciousness from that of nationalism.'[374] Neither Paton nor Marquard addressed SASO's appraisal of liberalism's credentials as an anti-Apartheid platform. Indeed, their own appraisals of Black Consciousness reflect a stubborn refusal to part with 'the essential principles of liberalism'.[375] This resolve would persist throughout the

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[371] Maimela, p. 3.

[372] Maimela, p. 3.

[373] Paton, Alan, 'Black Consciousness', in *Reality: A Journal of Liberal Opinion*, 4, 1 (March 1972), pp. 9-10; Paton was arguably the most influential figure in South African liberalism during Apartheid, and was leader of the LPSA up until it disbanded in 1968. Paton continued to serve as chairman of the editorial board for the current affairs periodical *Liberal Opinion*, and the later *Reality: A Journal of Liberal Opinion*.

[374] Marquard, Leo, 'Black Consciousness', in *Reality: A Journal of Liberal and Radical Opinion*, 5, 4 (September 1973), p. 10; *Reality* changed its name from its November 1972 issue onwards, in response to critiques of 'the traditional attitudes, approaches and formulations of many of those who have supported liberal principles [...] by a number of liberally-inclined people, many of them young' (Editorial, *Reality: A Journal of Liberal and Radical Opinion*, 4, 5 (November 1972), p. 2).

[375] Editorial, p. 2.

1970s among many liberal commentators, who maintained that 'there can never be any question of abandoning or modifying' these principles, given how they were '"as immortal as the heart of man".'[376] Thus, despite conceding in 1979 that liberalism had 'failed in South Africa', Pierre L. van den Berghe would insist upon assessing this 'failure' on liberalism's own terms, declaring that it had 'failed nobly, for complex reasons which had little to do with its proponents'.[377]

No doubt SASO's damning appraisal of liberalism was only further corroborated by these responses, especially in their insistence on assessing political integrity according to 'the essential principles of liberalism'. However, this insistence might well have been a consequence of SASO's claim, that liberal complacency merely proved that all whites who declared their opposition to Apartheid were in fact its knowing collaborators. Certainly, this claim forcefully conveyed how liberalism's emphasis on upholding the sanctity of 'reason, decency and universalism',[378] only allowed its white adherents to disregard certain inconvenient aspects of their socio-historical circumstances.[379] Yet this claim equally kept the debate from moving beyond the question of whether dissident whites could ever eschew this 'sterile dogma', and so commit themselves unconditionally to actively opposing Apartheid. Hence Paton and Marquard's insistence on critiquing Black Consciousness for failing to abide by 'the essential principles of liberalism', as well as van den Berghe's efforts to rehabilitate both liberalism and liberals, by shifting the blame for their 'failure' in South Africa onto the fact that 'South Africa is such an insane society.'[380]   Indeed,   Gerhart's account of how SASO's rejection of liberalism led liberal whites to feel 'a sense of isolation of weakness', is reminiscent of the paralysis that Memmi describes as 'the

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[376] Editorial, p. 2.

[377] Van den Berghe, Pierre L., 'Introduction', in *The Liberal Dilemma in South Africa*, ed. by Pierre L. van den Berghe (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 7 (my emphasis).

[378] Van den Berghe, p. 57.

[379] Ironically, van den Berghe neatly summarised this historical blindness, when extolling liberalism as 'the political ideology and moral pasture most likely *in the abstract* to give all South Africans a viable future on the basis of equal rights and human dignity' (van den Berghe, p. 57 (my emphasis)).

[380] Van den Berghe, p. 57.

tormented dance of the colonizer who refuses and continues to live in a colony'.[381] Moreover, just as this paralysis reflects Memmi's inability to imagine anything other than a compromised existence for his 'colonizer who refuses', so Gerhart conveys a comparable absence of second-order alternatives, when remarking that '[i]f whites were not to be allowed to play the role of defenders and saviors of the oppressed, what role was left for them to play?' Clearly there is a touch of irony here, given Gerhart's implication that Apartheid's white opponents were susceptible to white-supremacist tendencies. Gerhart equally suggests, though, that this particular complacency could hardly be redressed as long as there was no alternative 'role for [whites] to play' in the resistance, nothing other than 'the role of defenders and saviors of the oppressed' that SASO had now rendered untenable.

Hence the following, rather glib remark by Paton, who in exasperation asked '[w]hat [do] SASO want liberals to do? [...] Emigrate? Join the National Party?'[382] As Magaziner notes, '[t]he answer to Paton's question was, more or less, nothing.'[383] This 'answer' was clearly insufficient, given SASO's claim that liberals had colluded with Apartheid precisely by doing 'nothing'. Yet if 'nothing' was indeed SASO's answer here, then I suspect it reflected a shortcoming of SASO's 'polarised rhetoric'. For if white complacency did reflect a cynical hidden agenda, then there would simply have been no point in considering how 'dissident' whites might overcome their complacency and ineffectiveness. This 'polarised rhetoric', then, risked substituting paralysis for complacency, a 'tormented dance' in place of deluded self-assurance. Having said that, I hardly mean to blame SASO alone for what appears to have been the general failure of whites to more actively oppose Apartheid during and after the 1970s. It was hardly SASO's mandate to guide dissident whites towards a more effective way of contributing to the resistance. Instead, SASO's 'polarised rhetoric' was primarily meant to galvanise *non*-whites to stop looking towards dissident whites to overcome Apartheid on their behalf, and to assume responsibility for achieving their own liberation instead, independently of whites. Moreover, for SASO to have instructed whites on how to contribute more

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[381] My emphasis.

[382] Magaziner, p. 30.

[383] Magaziner, p. 31.

meaningfully to the resistance would have gone against the organisation's belief in the necessity of *self*-direction and *self*-liberation.

These principles were usually extolled with reference to *non*-white activism, yet SASO activists – including Biko – occasionally suggested that they applied equally to whites. Thus, with its emphasis on '"continuous self-examination," on "self-awareness, self-analysis, and self-criticism"',[384] Black Consciousness itself presented whites with ways of overcoming their complacency, as well as non-whites with the means to take active, self-assertive responsibility for themselves. As Maimela and MacQueen both demonstrate – and as I outline below – this dual applicability was not entirely drowned out by SASO's 'polarised rhetoric', with NUSAS and the ecumenical Christian Institute being two white-led organizations that sought to radicalise themselves from the early 1970s onwards. As we have seen, though, Paton and Marquard's appraisals of Black Consciousness, as well as van den Berghe's later 'epitaph'[385] to a 'failed' liberalism, demonstrate how other dissident whites stubbornly continued refusing to even consider questioning or reassessing the supposedly 'immortal' 'essential principles of liberalism'. Again, if SASO's emphasis on 'self-awareness, self-analysis, and self-criticism' was lost on liberal whites like Paton, Marquard, and van den Berghe, then I wonder how much of it was due to SASO's claim that whites could never shake off their complacency, and contribute meaningfully to the resistance. For if 'white critics of white supremacy'[386] could not hope to espouse any kind of 'logical attitude' – never mind one that was 'materially coherent'[387] – then it seemed pointless to pursue other ways of being a dissident white, other options that would enable them to break out of Memmi's 'tormented dance'.

SASO's insistence, therefore, on addressing whites as 'a homogeneous community' was at odds with the movement's conviction in the possibility of change and self-reinvention. Black Consciousness sought to encourage active

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[384] Sanders, Mark, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 173.

[385] Van den Berghe, p. 8.

[386] Turner, p. 22.

[387] Memmi, p. 89.

politics among non-whites by presenting them with an 'interval between identities', in the form of two images of the non-white South African that Biko at one point referred to as the 'non-white' and the 'black'. For Biko, the former was a wretched figure whose 'aspiration is whiteness but [whose] pigmentation makes attainment of this impossible'.[388] A 'non-white' 'calls a white man "Baas",' and 'serves in the police force or Security Branch'.[389] In contrast, '[b]lack people – real black people – are those who can manage to hold their heads high in defiance rather than willingly surrender their souls to the white man.'[390] The very term 'non-white' imputed that being 'black is an aberration from the "normal" which is white'.[391] In defiance of this claim, Biko's 'real black people' swelled with 'a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life.'[392] 'Real black people' no longer sought 'to run away from themselves and to emulate the white man',[393] including the *dissident* white man, who for all his avowed opposition to the injustices of Apartheid, nonetheless was mostly blind to his own, frequent albocentric tendencies.

Biko's 'black man' was an 'envisioned self', 'a free self'[394] insofar as, even if he continued to endure 'the yoke of oppression', he did so without the 'sheepish timidity'[395] of the defeated, compliant, yet resentful, *impotent* 'non-white'. For Biko, the 'non-white' was complicit 'in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth.'[396] Biko's 'non-white' had allowed himself to be '[r]educed to an obliging shell [that] looks with

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[388] Biko, 'The Definition of Black Consciousness', in *I Write What I Like*, p. 48; 'baas' is Afrikaans for 'boss'.

[389] Biko, 'The Definition of Black Consciousness', p. 48.

[390] Biko, 'The Definition of Black Consciousness', pp. 48-49.

[391] Biko, 'The Definition of Black Consciousness', p. 49.

[392] Biko, 'The Definition of Black Consciousness', p. 49.

[393] Biko, 'The Definition of Black Consciousness', p. 49.

[394] Biko, 'The Definition of Black Consciousness', p. 49.

[395] Biko, 'We Blacks', in *I Write What I Like*, p. 29.

[396] Biko, 'We Blacks', p. 29.

awe at the white power structure and accepts what he regards as the "inevitable position"'.[397] As such, the 'non-white' only had himself to blame for having 'become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity.'[398] Biko here is just as derisive as he is towards liberal whites who feel 'quite secure under the protection offered by the Nats', and who therefore shun 'the idea of change.'[399] Indeed, Biko's 'non-white' is all the more pitiable in striving to emulate a people who themselves were guilty of 'sheepish timidity', if not sheer hypocrisy, in the face of all the daily injustices committed in their name. Biko's dual portrait of the 'non-white' and the 'black man', therefore, presented non-white South Africans with a choice, affirming their capacity to reinvent themselves in ways that broke out of their complicity in their own 'reduc[tion] to an obliging shell'. Moreover, if all non-whites were capable of reinventing themselves, then anyone who continued 'sheepishly' 'obliging' the 'white power structure' had chosen to do so, and was therefore complicit in their own oppression.

In contrast, though, by insisting that '[b]asically the South African white community is a homogenous community', Biko presented whites with no such choice, as if they lacked their non-white compatriots' capacity for self-reinvention. Black Consciousness spurred non-whites into action by presenting them with an 'envisioned self'. As such, the relative *inaction* of dissident whites during and after the 1970s tellingly coincided with a relative absence of a corresponding white 'envisioned self', one that might have affirmed whites' ability to contribute more meaningfully to the resistance. If Biko's rallying calls were predicated on the possibility of self-reinvention, then we might argue that these calls went relatively unheard among dissident whites because Biko affirmed that possibility almost exclusively in non-whites. Again, given their emphasis on 'intense *self*-questioning', it was hardly up to SASO and Biko to make it clear to whites that they too were capable of reinventing themselves. Nonetheless, if whites generally failed to reinvent themselves during and after the 1970s, I wonder whether this failure was

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[397] Biko, 'We Blacks', pp. 28-29.

[398] Biko, 'We Blacks', pp. 28-29.

[399] Biko, 'Black Souls in White Skins?', p. 22.

written into the 'polarised rhetoric' of Black Consciousness itself, into its singular portrait of 'the white man' as a 'homogeneous' entity whose albocentrism and self-interest were congenital, and thus ineradicable.

Indeed, SASO's singular portrait of a 'homogeneous' white community ironically validated itself by provoking a response from liberal whites that mostly corroborated it. Thus, as long as SASO provoked this response, it risked sustaining the very inactivity among whites that it so virulently condemned as complacency. White South Africans would only ever remain 'a homogeneous community' as long as SASO claimed that '[b]asically the South African white community is a homogenous community'. Subsequently, any hope of breaking out of this circuitous, self-corroborating claim demanded affirming something other than Biko's homogenisation of those intentions, something that would therefore affirm whites' capacity to reinvent themselves by pursuing alternative ways of opposing Apartheid. In short, breaking out of this circuit demanded something like Jamaica Kincaid's affirmation in *A Small Place*, that white 'masters' – whether they be slavers, plantation owners, colonialists, or tourists – are never just 'masters', and that they are therefore capable of becoming something other than a 'master'.

4.2 Nadine Gordimer, Richard Turner, and the pursuit of second-order alternatives for dissident whites

Both Maimela and MacQueen amply demonstrate how there were exceptions among the liberal response to SASO's foundation described above by Gerhart. Thus, MacQueen insists that '[v]iewing the 1970s through the lens of the polarised rhetoric of Black Consciousness obscures moments of meaningful interaction and their consequences', and encourages 'assumptions of rigid separation' that overlook how SASO's 'polarised rhetoric' did in fact encourage 'real dialogue' between SASO and more receptive dissident whites.[400] In many cases, this dialogue took the form of a collaborative 'search for a new model of political change for South Africa.'[401] In Gordimer's own reflections on Black Consciousness, this search entailed looking for new ways of apprehending the role and motivations of Apartheid's white opposition.

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[400] MacQueen, p. 3.

[401] MacQueen, p. 3.

Speaking in a 1971 lecture about SASO's dismissal of white student activists, Gordimer freely admitted that as a dissident white, she found it 'hard to accept [such] rebuff[s], even in terms of other people's needs.'[402] Gordimer, though, welcomed Black Consciousness, arguing that 'the ironic refusal of black students to co-operate with white students who have fought so many battles on their behalf [...] must be seen in the light of a healing négritude.'[403]

Moreover, Gordimer readily accepted much of SASO's critique of 'the dispersion and ultimately failure of the liberal ideal in South Africa', despite insisting that 'the genuine liberals [...] the real liberals honestly did want to abolish white supremacy'.[404] Thus, Gordimer conceded that 'radical liberals offered everything, and were powerless to give anything', and that '[a]gainst the cold measure of the needs of our historical situation, the liberals with small or large 'L' failed twice over; first, to gain a following where political power existed, among whites; second, by inevitably falling into the role of acting proxy for black aspirations.'[405] The message of Black Consciousness was clear, and the time had come for 'those of us who are outraged by and prepared to take responsibility for the injustices of our society [to] relinquish the role of proctor'.[406] However, Gordimer found it equally clear that, although they could no longer 'play the role of defenders and saviors of the oppressed', dissident whites could hardly do 'nothing' instead. Nonetheless, as with Gerhart, so with Gordimer, the question remained: if dissident whites 'must relinquish the role of proctor, what is left to us?'[407] If whites could neither claim 'the role of proctor' nor 'simply shut up and leave it to the blacks',[408] 'what role was left for them to play?'

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[402] Gordimer, 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest', in *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics and Place*, ed. by Stephen Clingman (London: Jonathan Cape, 1988), p. 101.

[403] Gordimer, 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest', p. 101.

[404] Gordimer, 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest', p. 100.

[405] Gordimer, 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest', p. 100.

[406] Gordimer, 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest', p. 101.

[407] Gordimer, 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest', p. 101.

[408] Turner, p. 21.

As we have already seen, Paton posed a similar question, to which the answer 'was, more or less, nothing.'[409] Gordimer's answer to her own question was very different. For whereas Paton could see no alternative to a strict liberal agenda, Gordimer accepted that 'what is needed [...] now is a change of emphasis.'[410] Rather than continuing to 'see our efforts [...] as attempts to right wrongs on behalf of the blacks', Gordimer called upon dissident whites to oppose Apartheid 'on behalf of [them]selves' instead, as a 'demand to be fully human' as opposed to white perpetrators of injustice.[411] Gordimer here might have been echoing Biko's call for whites to stop being 'presumptuous enough to think that it behove[s] them to fight the battle *for* the blacks',[412] and instead 'fight on [their] own and for [themselves].'[413] Biko rationalised this notion of whites 'fight[ing] for their own freedom' by claiming that all whites who were 'true liberals should realise [...] that they themselves are oppressed'.[414] We might be sceptical towards Biko's suggestion here that Apartheid's white-supremacist regime oppressed whites, given the rather obvious fact that, as Margo Russell noted in 1979, '[a]lthough the very wide powers sought by and granted to the government inevitably threaten [dissident whites'] liberties in principle, in practice the vast majority of whites are unaffected by legislation essentially designed to perpetuate their unduly privileged position.'[415] Indeed, Biko's suggestion here appears towards the end of an essay in which he otherwise pours scorn on claims by whites to 'feel the oppression [of Apartheid racialism] just as acutely as the blacks', claims that Biko derides for 'say[ing] that they [dissident whites] have black souls wrapped up in white skins.'[416] Undoubtedly,

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[409] Magaziner, p. 31.

[410] Gordimer, 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest', p. 102.

[411] Gordimer, 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest', p. 102.

[412] Biko, 'Black Souls in White Skins?', p. 25.

[413] Biko, 'White Racism and Black Consciousness', p. 66.

[414] Biko, 'Black Souls in White Skins?', p. 25.

[415] Russell, Margo, 'Intellectuals and Academic Apartheid, 1950-1965', in van den Berghe ed., p. 136.

[416] Biko, 'Black Souls in White Skins?', p. 20.

these claims trivialised the considerable differences between the standard of living enjoyed by whites under Apartheid, and those endured by their non-white compatriots. As a result, Biko's contention that Apartheid 'oppressed' whites who were 'true liberals', might well reflect a lack of recourse to any other way of rationalising white opposition to white supremacy, other than in terms of resisting one's own oppression.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that Gordimer largely avoided suggesting that whites were also oppressed under Apartheid, although she occasionally toyed with the idea that racial 'segregation is harmful to those who impose it and those who submit to it.'[417] For Gordimer, this harm took the form of 'guilt, shame or that coarsening and blunting of the spirit that is the price of indifference'.[418] This blight could only be redressed by actively, defiantly 'demand[ing] to be fully human', in the sense of being 'ordinary members of a multi-coloured, any-coloured society, freed both of the privileges and the guilt of the white sins of our fathers.'[419] Gordimer was not alone in claiming that the injustices of white supremacy also took a unique, psychological toll on whites. Hence Richard Turner's claim that '[i]n an important sense both whites and blacks are oppressed, though in different ways, by a social system which perpetuates itself by creating white lords and black slaves, and no full human beings.'[420] Yet although oppressed in different ways, Turner found that Black Consciousness promised to help redress whites' oppression under Apartheid as much as non-whites', for one significant similarity between both

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[417] Gordimer, 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest', p. 102.

[418] Gordimer, 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest', p. 102.

[419] Gordimer, 'Where Do Whites Fit In?', p. 32.

[420] Turner, p. 22; according to MacQueen, Turner's reaction to SASO's critiques of liberal complacency was notable for 'advanc[ing] 'important criticisms of the movement, especially its tendency to over-simplify and to absolutise' concepts', while also exploring its potential to contribute to 'the creation of a new culture' – that is, one of racial equality, in which even dissident whites had overcome their paternalistic tendencies (MacQueen, p. 155). Turner was a lecturer in political philosophy at the University of Natal: an active opponent of Apartheid, he was also a prominent figure in South Africa's New Left movement in the early 1970s, and was a close friend of Biko's. In 1977, as the government struggled to suppress the Soweto uprisings, Turner was shot in the head through his living room window. Although the government's involvement in Turner's death remains unestablished, Biko died around the same time in police custody, under equally mysterious circumstances.

groups was their tendency to 'oppress themselves'.[421] If Biko's scorn for 'non-whites' signalled 'a rejection of the idea that the ideal for human kind is "to be like the whites"', then Turner found that this rejection 'should lead to the recognition that it is also bad for whites "to be like the whites".'[422] As a result, if the 'non-white's' desire 'to be like the whites' was a central aspect of his oppression, then 'whites themselves [were] oppressed in South Africa',[423] at least wherever they too desired 'to be like the whites'.

The lesson of Black Consciousness, therefore, was not that 'white critics of white supremacy' should 'simply shut up and leave it to the blacks'. Instead, dissident whites were now required to undertake the daunting task of 'changing white consciousness', of 'devis[ing] ways of bringing home to [whites] the extent to which the pursuit of material self-interest empties their lives of meaning.'[424] Towards this end, Turner found that Black Consciousness was an alternative to the present state of 'white consciousness', which Turner described as 'cabbage consciousness, a mindless absorption of material from the environment.'[425] The meaning of the term 'Black Consciousness', therefore, was by no means restricted to an awareness among non-whites 'of the significance and importance of their own value systems'.[426] Instead, 'Black Consciousness' was an 'antithesis' to 'cabbage consciousness', and non-white value systems were credible alternatives to the 'moribund materialism'[427] that was inflicting 'mental atrophy' on white South Africans.[428] Thus, the principal goal of Black Consciousness was no different to that

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[421] Turner, p. 22.

[422] Turner, p. 22.

[423] Turner, p. 22.

[424] Turner, p. 22.

[425] Turner, p. 22.

[426] Nengwekhulu, Ranwedzi, 'The Meaning of Black Consciousness in the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa', United Nations Centre Against Apartheid, Notes and Documents No. 16/76 (July 1976).

[427] MacQueen, p. 71.

[428] Turner, p. 22.

of liberals like Paton – a 'synthesis of cabbage consciousness and its antithesis black consciousness' that would yield 'human consciousness'.[429]

Both Gordimer and Turner, therefore, rationalised white opposition to Apartheid in terms of 'demand[ing] to be fully human', in the sense of resisting one's constitution as a white, and therefore one's implication in the systemic injustices of white supremacy. Gordimer and Turner looked to the category of 'human' in order to achieve something similar to Biko's distinction between 'non-white' and 'black'. Just as Biko's distinction articulated non-whites' capacity to reinvent themselves, so Gordimer and Turner sought to convey a similar capacity in whites, in terms of an 'interval' between two identities – 'white' and 'human'. The question, though, is whether whites could ever 'liberate' themselves of their constitution as 'whites', as long as non-whites refused to recognise them as anything other than 'whites'. For SASO's 'polarised rhetoric' was emphatic in this refusal. Thus, as much as Turner insisted on distinguishing 'liberals' from 'racists', and 'radicals' from 'liberals',[430] SASO officially recognised no such variances among whites. According to SASO, 'radical' and 'liberal' whites were ultimately 'racists'. As a result, whites like Paton who remained steadfast liberals did so because liberalism as a 'partition of the sensible' already recognised these variances, thus allowing liberal whites to distinguish themselves from the 'racist' majority without having to take SASO's conflation of 'liberals' with 'racists' all that seriously.[431]

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[429] Turner, p. 22.

[430] Turner, pp. 20-21.

[431] Van den Berghe's claim that South African liberalism's failure 'had little to do with its proponents' insists upon affirming a similar variance of purpose among white South Africans, as if the better intentions of liberal whites exonerated them of culpability for Apartheid's injustices. According to Mark Sanders, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission produced 'an account of complicity that generalizes ethico-political responsibility', according to which all South Africans were culpable for Apartheid's injustices, albeit to varying extents (Sanders, p. 2). As Sanders notes, this account demands a reconception of ethical and political integrity, so as to avoid compromising any endeavour to oppose systemic injustice. In other words, this account demands a conception of ethical and political integrity that does not depend solely on absolute disaffiliation – in both words and deeds – from that which one opposes. If we are all complicit in injustice, then we cannot allow that complicity to completely disable our opposition to injustice, and so induce paralysis rather than efforts to mitigate our complicity as much as possible.

For Gordimer and Turner, therefore, such stubbornness could only be redressed by coming up with second-order alternatives to that of liberalism, whether they were the 'human' resisting their constitution as a 'white', or the 'radical' who distinguishes themselves from 'liberals' and 'racists' by more actively resisting Apartheid. Moreover, as MacQueen demonstrates, these efforts went beyond mere postulations in essays and articles. For many white-led organisations that opposed Apartheid sought practical ways of making these proposals a reality. Perhaps the most well-known and successful experiment at radicalisation is the Black Community Programmes (BCPs), a joint initiative between SASO and the Christian Institute launched in 1972, under the auspices of the latter's Spro-cas 2 commission.[432] MacQueen very briefly mentions that the BCPs were launched alongside 'a separate, white conscientisation project, under Horst Kleinschmidt',[433] of which I have found no mention elsewhere. Kleinschmidt did edit a collection of essays entitled *White Liberation* which was published in 1972 as part of Spro-cas 2. However, since no one in the volume refers to a 'white conscientisation project', its connection to the venture mentioned by MacQueen remains conjectural at best. Nonetheless, the essays rehearse SASO's critiques of liberal methods, before discussing case studies of community engagement programmes in the United States of America concerning race relations. As with Turner, Kleinschmidt's introduction proceeds from Biko's claim that whites 'themselves are oppressed' to reconceive white opposition to Apartheid as 'fight[ing] for their own freedom', rather than on behalf of non-whites.[434] Turner was meant to contribute to the collection: however,

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[432] The Christian Institute had run Spro-cas 1 – the Student Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society – from 1969 to 1971, in order to assess Christianity's role in South African society, including the religion's role in sustaining Apartheid. Spro-cas 2 – the Special Programme for Christian Action in Society – sought to implement the findings and recommendations of Spro-cas 1.

[433] MacQueen, p. 138.

[434] Indeed, Kleinschmidt's rationale echoes Biko's remark on how the 'sheepish' 'timidity' of the 'non-white' amounted to 'the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth.' According to Kleinschmidt, Apartheid oppressed whites insofar as it 'manipulat[ed] and us[ed]' then as 'pawns of those who possess power' (Kleinschmidt, Horst, 'Introduction', in *Spro-Cas 2: White Liberation*, ed. by H. Kleinschmidt (Johannesburg: Spro-Cas, 1972), p. 2). Whites, therefore, were to resist their 'oppression' by resisting the regime's attempts to use them as vessels for its own consolidation. Again, this statement is

where his essay should be, there are only blank pages with a caption attributing the essay's absence to a banning order issued against him.[435]

It is likely that the paucity of information on this 'white conscientisation project' – compared with information available on the BCPs – suggests that the initiative came to nothing. Indeed, MacQueen notes that a similar undertaking by NUSAS met with little success. In 1971, NUSAS sought to radicalise itself by splitting 'into three separate affiliate bodies, concerned with social, educational and welfare matters', in order 'to signal 'a change of emphasis [...] from talk to action' as well as marking a withdrawal from black politics and instead a direct engagement with white society.'[436] The three initiatives – 'Aquarius', 'NUSED' and 'NUSWEL' – sought to 'influence and spread progressive ideas in the country':

> Aquarius rejected 'moribund materialism' and the consumer culture of the previous generation, rather seeking to reflect 'more humane moral beliefs' which they sought to spread through popular culture, using song, poetry and drama. NUSED, mirroring student protests in Britain, protested against the 'tyranny of examinations' and called for an 'education that liberates rather than oppresses' and which opened new ways of thinking. NUSWEL looked to engage students by bringing them into a closer relationship with the wider community, and took on the radical impulse to 'tackle problems at their roots, not just their symptoms'.[437]

According to MacQueen, though, NUSAS's pursuit of a more radical agenda was almost immediately hampered by '[g]overnment bannings [that] significantly curtailed the activities of NUSAS. In June 1973 the government outlawed all outdoor gatherings in the centre of Cape Town, an action which, together with restrictions on its national leadership, placed NUSAS on the back-foot until the

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nonsensical, insofar as all whites effectively 'possess[ed] power', or were at least complicit in its unjustly unequal distribution under Apartheid. Kleinschmidt, though, may be referring here to *executive* power, which we might argue was held by a relative minority of whites, as opposed to the constitutive power enjoyed by all whites, no matter how variably. For a definition of these various modalities of power, see Chapter 2 of this thesis, p. 99.

[435] Turner's omission, though, is a mystery, given that *White Liberation* was first published in 1972, and Turner's banning order was issued in 1973. The most likely explanation would be that copies of *White Liberation* continued to be published after Turner's banning.

[436] MacQueen, p. 71.

[437] MacQueen, p. 71.

outbreak of the student uprisings in Soweto.'[438] Moreover, according to Maimela, NUSAS's leaders found it increasingly difficult to garner interest in these initiatives among its grass-roots members, who grew 'apathetic as they lost interest in NUSAS or succumbed to the blandishments of the widespread and coordinated propaganda onslaught which the government waged against NUSAS.'[439]

Most historians identify the rise of Black Consciousness as a watershed moment in the history of the anti-Apartheid struggle. According to some historiographers like Tom Lodge, the movement's activities led to the situation that – beginning with the Soweto disturbances in 1976 – provoked schoolchildren across South Africa to boycott classes, march unarmed in the streets, and confront the government's security forces, who readily responded with lethal force.[440] Soweto rocked South African socio-politics in ways that permanently undermined Apartheid's long-term future, as the government would struggle to contain the aspirations of an evermore active, confrontational non-white majority throughout the following decades. Moreover, the Progressive Federal Party (PFP, or 'Progs') consolidated its status as the official Opposition in the 1981 General Election, which suggested that after Soweto, whites were more open to a liberal alternative to Apartheid. As Anthony Lemon noted, though, 'it remained true that all the seats won by the PFP and almost those which it came close to winning in 1981 were in areas of traditional United Party [UP] allegiance', while 'total support for parties to the 'left' of the NP remained below the level of 1974.'[441] In other words, the PFP's success remained largely confined to traditional strongholds of South African liberalism. Elsewhere, the NP's authority was threatened by the rise of the resurgent Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP; in English, the 'Re-established National Party'), a far-right alternative that protested the NP's conciliatory approach to non-white demands. A year after the election, another far-right alternative arose in the form of the

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[438] MacQueen, pp. 72-73.

[439] Maimela, p. 164.

[440] Lodge, Tom, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London, New York: Longman, 1983), pp. 332-33.

[441] Lemon, Anthony, 'White Voters and Political Change in South Africa 1981-1983', Research Paper 32, School of Geography, University of Oxford (1984), p. 25.

Conservative Party (CP), founded by former NP members of parliament – including Dr. Andries Treurnicht, who at the time was Minister of State Administration and Statistics – who left the party in protest against Prime Minister P.W. Botha's support for 'some form of qualified power-sharing' between whites, coloureds and Indians.[442]

Whatever efforts were undertaken to engage with white communities in the 1970s appear to have done little to foment enough opposition to Apartheid among whites to challenge its ascendancy via parliamentary means. Certainly, the PFP's gains in 1981 suggested a receptiveness among liberal and English-speaking whites to a more radical liberal agenda, than those of either the UP or Paton's LPSA in previous decades.[443] However, even as the official Opposition, the PFP's 26 seats were dwarfed by the NP's 131, meaning that liberalism's parliamentary presence in South Africa remained miniscule compared to that of Afrikaner nationalism. When considering how SASO's 'polarised rhetoric' might have contributed to the entrenchment of support for Apartheid among the white community's political right, it is important to acknowledge that the organisation oversaw a profound resurgence in non-white political activism, that would continue unabated until the end of Apartheid in South Africa's first multiracial General Election in 1994. It is equally important to acknowledge the multitude of factors that contributed to this entrenchment – and Apartheid's subsequent survival for almost two more decades – including precisely the complacency and 'unconscious attachment to the status quo' that SASO observed among Apartheid's white opponents.

Nevertheless, Maimela and MacQueen are alone among SASO's historiographers to consider whether its 'polarised rhetoric' has overshadowed historical accounts of the anti-Apartheid struggle during and after the 1970s, as well as the extent to which this rhetoric was also *polarising*, in the sense of alienating potentially receptive whites. As I have demonstrated, this rhetoric certainly did not alienate *all* whites. Yet those who presented moderate responses – including Gordimer and Turner – did so in the form of critiques of SASO's 'very loose grasp of the concept "liberal"', as well as the necessity of 'see[ing] different 'categories'

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[442] Lemon, p. 27.

[443] Lemon, p. 24.

of white South African, namely 'racist, liberal and radical'.'[444] I have outlined above how Turner provided one such balanced response. In the remainder of this chapter, I will consider how Gordimer explored the consequences of SASO's 'polarised rhetoric' in her fiction towards the end of the 1970s. I have established how, in her non-fiction, Gordimer was receptive towards SASO's critiques of liberal complacency, and how she joined other 'radicals' like Turner in pursuing an alternative to the now-tarnished identity of the 'liberal' that might recuperate the integrity of dissident whites in the eyes of their non-white counterparts. Nonetheless, in her fiction, Gordimer put Black Consciousness itself to the test, as a means of fomenting more active opposition among whites. Indeed, in these fictional engagements with SASO's 'polarised rhetoric', Gordimer suggests that the organisation risked replacing complacency with paralysis, by refusing to acknowledge in whites a capacity to be anything other than self-interested, white-supremacist 'racists'. In the process, Gordimer sought to register multiple intentions among dissident whites, in order to envision how they might affirm the integrity of their commitment to non-racialism by assuming a more radical praxis.

4.3 Gordimer's 'dead-end heroines' and the search for a white 'envisioned self'

So far, critics have largely emphasised how Gordimer's perspective on the political circumstances of white South Africans converge with SASO's own accounts of white complacency, especially among liberals. Often this emphasis gives rise to a prescriptive pessimism among Gordimer's critics, as if any suggestion that the prospects of white Africans were anything other than 'hopeless' or 'tragic'[445] were 'symptomatic' more of Gordimer's 'desperate hope',[446] than of a staid, reliable assessment of those prospects. Hence Visel's description of Hillela Kgomani – protagonist of Gordimer's 1987 novel *A Sport of Nature* – as 'half joke, half wistful dream', 'a mythic rather than realistic character' who indicates 'Gordimer's

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[444] MacQueen, p. 155.

[445] Temple-Thurston, Barbara, 'Madam and Boy: A Relationship of Shame in Gordimer's *July's People*', in *World Literature Written in English*, 28.1 (1988), pp. 51; 57.

[446] Visel, p. 39.

frustration, not so much with the limits of the realist genre, as with the political stalemate for whites in South Africa.'[447] Certainly, we cannot imagine a more unlikely portrait of a white who successfully engineers the downfall of Apartheid. Yet even if she amounts to a departure from a rigid realism, I find that Visel too readily dismisses Hillela as authorial fantasy. Hillela's unreality may well derive from her ability to overcome obstacles that Gordimer had suggested were insurmountable in her previous two novels, *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People*. However, as I demonstrate below, Hillela is no less 'mythical' than Biko's 'real black people', those proud, upstanding non-whites who initially existed mostly as a potential, an 'envisioned self' for non-whites to assume in order to liberate themselves of being 'sheepish' 'non-whites'.

Indeed, as an 'envisioned self' for whites, Hillela redresses an absence of 'envisioned selves' that, among other things, is what leads to the discouraging conclusions to both *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People*. Both novels search for a 'post-liberal alternative',[448] a new sensibility following the trauma of being rejected by someone whom their central protagonists thought of as a close friend, but who accuses them of being no less white-supremacist than the Apartheid regime they claim to oppose. Stephen Clingman notes how Black Consciousness looms over *Burger's Daughter*, especially given the recent Soweto uprisings, which Clingman – like Lodge – attributes to circumstances that Black Consciousness helped foment.[449] Thus, in *Burger's Daughter*, Gordimer's pursuit of a new role for dissident whites in response to Soweto entailed confronting SASO's 'polarised rhetoric', and seeking out a productive white response to its provocations. Most critics agree with Clingman that Gordimer eventually finds a suitable response, and that the ending of *Burger's Daughter* is encouraging, even though its protagonist Rosa Burger ends up in a South African prison, detained without charge. For unlike her celebrated father Lionel Burger, a prominent figure in the illegal SACP who died in prison, 'in the

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[447] Visel, p. 39.

[448] Peck, Richard, 'What's a Poor White to Do? White South African Options in "A Sport of Nature"' [sic], in *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 19.4 (October 1988), p.81.

[449] Clingman, Stephen, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside* (London, Boston, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 176.

aftermath of Black Consciousness and the Soweto Revolt there can be no special glory attaching to [Rosa's] situation. In contrast to Lionel, whose role as a white leader had been pre-eminent, after the events of 1976 [i.e. the Soweto uprisings] Rosa's can at best be secondary, supportive, peripheral.'[450]

Rosa is imprisoned shortly after returning to South Africa, after having tried to 'defect' to Europe in pursuit of a carefree life away from the incessant demands of the anti-Apartheid resistance. She returns after a traumatic encounter with Zwelinzima Vilundlela in London, whom Rosa had previously known as Baasie, Afrikaans for 'little boss'. As a child, Zwelinzima – whose name means 'suffering land' – had been taken in by Lionel due to his own father's political activities, eventual imprisonment, and death, apparently via suicide. Having not seen or heard from him in years, Rosa notices Zwelinzima watching her at a party, where she is being paraded as the daughter of the late, great Lionel Burger, Afrikaans opponent of Afrikaner nationalism. Later in the evening, Zwelinzima accuses Rosa of living off her father's legacy, which in itself indicated how deeply white-supremacist tendencies run even among Apartheid's white opponents. Zwelinzima derides how

> [e]veryone in the world must be told what a great hero he was and how much he suffered for the blacks. Everyone must cry over him and show his life on television and write in the papers. Listen, there are dozens of our fathers sick and dying like dogs, kicked out of the locations when they can't work any more. Getting old and dying in prison. Killed in prison. It's nothing. I know plenty blacks like Burger. It's nothing, it's us, we must be used to it, it's not going to show on English television.[451]

For Zwelinzima, Lionel Burger's prominence was almost entirely due to his skin colour. Otherwise, as opponents of Apartheid go, Lionel was somewhat unremarkable, especially given how many non-white fathers were dying in prison at the time of Lionel's death. Nonetheless, no one remembers any of these non-white prisoners, although Rosa points out how she has not forgotten Zwelinzima's father. Zwelinzima, though, retorts by pointing out how '[n]obody talks about him. Even I don't remember much about him.'[452]

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[450] Clingman, p. 192.

[451] Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter* (London: Bloomsbury, 1979), p. 328.

[452] Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*, 329; indeed, neither Rosa nor Zwelinzima know for sure how Vilundlela died. Rosa concedes that all she knows is that the prison authorities

Clingman, therefore, finds Rosa's own incarceration to be an encouraging litmus test of the potential for whites to respond productively to such critiques, given how she claims no glory from her situation, nor is it glorified by others, unlike her father's. Similarly, Kelly Hewson remarks that, having initially found that 'there is no "place" for her in her father's country', Rosa's incarceration is positive insofar as she 'finds herself "in place," in prison, fulfilling her responsibilities to herself and to her society.'[453] Visel echoes this notion that Rosa's rightful place in the world is in a South African prison, when describing her incarceration as – quite literally – a homecoming, in the sense that 'only within that enchanted circle can she overcome her whiteness, her alienation, her otherness. Outside, apartheid laws, distrust, resentment, fear and confusion separate her from her black comrades.'[454] Rosa's decision to forfeit a comfortable life in Europe for the risks of returning to an increasingly turbulent South Africa may well reflect a newfound 'sense of historical' or 'necessary engagement'.[455] Moreover, this commitment may well entail breaking with her father's near-religious adherence to Communist doctrine, in favour of a more personal, more immediate commitment to witnessing and alleviating the suffering of others.[456] Nonetheless, I find it curious how Clingman, Hewson, and Visel identify prison as the rightful place of Apartheid's opponents, as well as the only place where a cross-racial fraternity can ever be more than a thwarted aspiration. All three critics ironically concur with Apartheid's own 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies', with respect to where the regime's opponents belong in South African society.

Thus, Rosa's incarceration might well affirm the integrity of her commitment to overcoming Apartheid, yet it hardly marks a radical rupture of that

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claimed to have 'found him hanged in his cell', yet although he berates Rosa for not knowing for sure, Zwelinzima himself seems to know very little, postulating that his father '[h]anged himself with his own prison pants' after the prison staff confiscated his belt (Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*, pp. 326-27).

[453] Hewson, Kelly, 'Making the "Revolutionary Gesture": Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee and Some Variations on the Writer's Responsibility', in *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 19.4 (1988), p. 62.

[454] Visel, p. 40.

[455] Clingman, p. 191.

[456] Clingman, p. 191.

distribution, since her place in South African society remains dictated by Apartheid. Indeed, the similarities between the opening chapter of *Burger's Daughter* and its closing scene reinforce this sense of Apartheid's redoubtability, by implying a cyclical return to a situation that has hardly progressed at all. Having opened with Rosa visiting her mother in prison, the novel closes with Rosa herself receiving a visitor in prison. Moreover, Gordimer strongly suggests that Rosa has come to occupy her father's old cell, given how she writes a postcard to Lionel's first wife, in which she originally described 'a water-mark of light that came into the cell at sundown every evening, reflected from some west-facing surface outside; something Lionel Burger once mentioned. But the line had been deleted by the prison censor.'[457] If Rosa ultimately finds her rightful place in Apartheid's 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies', then *Burger's Daughter* conveys a pessimistic appraisal of the prospects of breaking radically out of that distribution, of destabilsing it in the process, and thus of eventually dissolving it entirely.

For Visel, the contrasting fates of Rosa and Hillela only further emphasise the latter's unreality, insofar as Hillela is somehow able 'to manipulate the transition to the Future, which even for Rosa Burger is unattainable'.[458] Gordimer, though, seems aware of this contrast, given how she counterpoints Hillela's successes with the increasingly sorry lot of her cousin Sasha. As adolescents, it was Sasha who was politically attuned, dropping out of university in order to commit himself wholeheartedly to the resistance, only to end up in prison rather swiftly. Meanwhile, Hillela – who had never shown much interest in politics – becomes an unlikely talismanic figure in the global call to end Apartheid. Hillela accidentally falls into here political career after being forced to flee South Africa, as a known associate of a foreign journalist[459] who attracts the authorities' suspicions. She finds her way to a transnational community of political exiles, one of which is Whaila Kgomani, a fictional ANC leader, whom Hillela marries only to witness his assassination by the

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[457] Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*, p. 374.

[458] Visel, p. 39.

[459] Gordimer keeps it unclear whether the journalist is Australian or Canadian, since for Hillela '[c]ategories were never relevant to her ordering of life' (Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 112).

South African government soon after. As the widow of an internationally well-known anti-Apartheid activist, Hillela soon comes to bear Whaila's cause, eventually remarrying after meeting Reuel, a former president of a newly-independent African country. Reuel was recently ousted during a military coup organised by the former colonial power, and orchestrated in part by his own son. He quickly re-established himself through military means, and afterwards plays a key role in the negotiations that culminate in Apartheid's formal abolition. *A Sport of Nature* closes with the triumphal image of Hillela and Reuel attending the inauguration of South Africa's new, majority-rule dispensation, watching as the new national flag slowly rises over them.

Meanwhile, Sasha watches Hillela's unlikely rise to global prominence from his jail cell, occasionally sending her letters that she hardly ever receives. By the novel's triumphal closing image, he has fallen into complete obscurity, although he was never that publicly prominent anyway. As with Rosa, so with Sasha, 'there can be no special glory attaching to [his] situation', and he must settle for a role in the resistance that is 'secondary, supportive, peripheral', if indeed there is any role for him. In Rosa's case, this humble role is encouraging, at least according to Clingman and Hewson. Juxtaposed with Hillela's, though, Sasha's fortunes question how sufficient a challenge to Apartheid's ascendancy Sasha and Rosa's 'more binding commitments' really are. For their comparable fates suggest that the task of rupturing the symbolic circuit of Apartheid – along with its 'political and legal order' – demands something still more radical of whites than simply assuming 'a more binding commitment' to opposing the regime. Thus, if critics like Visel and Richard Peck are dissatisfied with Hillela's unlikely triumph, then it is precisely because she manages to rupture this order, by radically breaking out of a 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies' that defines the rightful place of dissident white South Africans as being in prison, on the furthest margins of history.

Thus, to dismiss Hillela as 'a mythic rather than realistic character' is to risk dismissing the *possibility* of breaking out of the 'sensible order' of Apartheid. As such, I find Visel's dismissal of Hillela to be unsettling in its suggestion that white South Africans are ultimately incapable of breaking out of 'the social ties, the rules

of behavior, [and] finally, the failure of imagination, which bind and limit' Gordimer's 'dead-end heroines'.[460] Moreover, such pessimism is ironic when applied to Maureen Smales, protagonist of *July's People* and one of Visel's hapless 'dead-end heroines'. Certainly, compared with those of Rosa, Sasha, and Hillela, Maureen's fate is profoundly ambiguous. For one thing, it remains unclear whether Maureen proves herself capable of overcoming her complacency as an affluent, politically-inactive liberal white, and making 'a more binding commitment' to an as yet uncertain future. Hence the inconclusive ending of *July's People*, with Maureen running towards an unmarked military helicopter that, for all we know, could equally contain government troops or non-white rebels, life or death. Maureen and her family have been given shelter by their former servant July in his rural community, as South African society is engulfed in a civil war between an intransigent Apartheid government, rebellious non-whites, and their respective foreign allies, including Rhodesian commandos and communists from Russia and Cuba. Given how we never find out who is in the helicopter, Maureen's decision to run straight towards it has so far proven 'baffling' for critics, since 'logic would seem to suggest that she should run in the opposite direction to the helicopter in order to assure her own safety and survival.'[461]

As with Rosa's incarceration, Clingman finds that Maureen's flight towards the helicopter is an encouraging development, insofar as Maureen acts out of a newfound resolve or 'personal integration' that is comparable to that which prompts Rosa's return to South Africa. The circumstances that prompt this 'personal integration' are very similar to those which lead to Rosa's renewed sense of 'necessary engagement'. Thus, just as Rosa's integrity is called into question by someone whom she thought of as a friend and comrade, so July scorns the integrity of Maureen's liberal opposition to Apartheid. For years, Maureen and Bam have striven to respect the dignity of their non-white servants as fellow human beings, believing that in turn they have earned a similar reciprocal respect, perhaps even their servants' friendship. Ali Erritouni, though, contends that the Smaleses' 'liberal

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[460] Visel, p. 38.

[461] Nicholls, Brendon, *Nadine Gordimer's* July's People (London, New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 33.

views and [their] humane treatment of [their] servant[s] before the revolutionary war do not go to the heart of the racist and discriminatory policies of white South Africa. They are cosmetic and leave intact the economic discrimination of apartheid.'[462] With their seven bedrooms, swimming pool, garish pickup – or 'bakkie' – and their live-in servants, the Smaleses have enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle, even by white standards. Moreover, 'their attempts to overcome the color bar have blinded them to the economic component of apartheid',[463] which as Rosemarie Bodenheimer notes, prompts the Smaleses to 'manifest the 'morbid symptoms' of a dying consumer culture in which identity is created by ownership and relationships are mediated by objects.'[464]

Bodenheimer here alludes to the epigraph of *July's People*, which Gordimer takes from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* – 'The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms.'[465] 'Morbid symptoms' are aspects of 'the old' that linger on after its demise, hampering the emergence and ascendancy of 'the new'.[466] These remnants litter *July's People*, from the Smaleses' complacency and latent white-supremacist

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[462] Erritouni, Ali, 'Apartheid Inequality and Postapartheid Utopia in Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*', in *Research in African literatures*, 37.4 (Winter 2006), p. 74.

[463] Erritouni, p. 71.

[464] Bodenheimer, Rosemarie, 'The Interregnum of Ownership in *July's People*', in *The Later Fiction of Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Bruce King (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), p. 109.

[465] Gordimer, *July's People* (London: Bloomsbury, 1981), p. v; Gramsci, Antonio, '"Wave of Materialism" and "Crisis of Authority"', in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973) , p. 276.

[466] These 'morbid symptoms' approximate Louis Althusser's notion of 'survivals', and Raymond Williams's of 'the residual', both of which are social elements that were 'effectively formed in the past, but [which are] still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present' (Williams, p. 122). Thus, Althusser uses 'survivals' to refer to 'certain economic structures which the [socialist] Revolution was unable to destroy with its first decrees', along with '*other structures*, ideological structures, etc.: *customs, habits*, even *'traditions'* such as the '*national tradition*' and its specific traits' (Althusser, Louis, *For Marx* (London: Allen Lane, 1969), p. 114 (emphases in original)). For Althusser, the 'meaning' or 'essence' of 'survivals' were not entirely reducible to that of the present conjuncture, and so they demonstrated how society's form is not entirely determined by its economic structures.

tendencies, to July's own investments in the old order, such as the prestige among his own people that comes with his connection to the Smaleses.[467] With respect to the Smaleses, Bodenheimer finds that the persistence of these 'morbid symptoms' demonstrates how '[t]he ethic of private property remains *ineradicably* etched in [their] white consciousness'.[468] Indeed, such is the extent of the Smaleses' investment in this ethic that Bodenheimer cannot decide whether Gordimer believes it is possible to change 'the mental equipment of an adult white South African', so as to establish a 'new white identity'.[469] Thus, for Bodenheimer, the ambiguous ending of *July's People* is not quite as encouraging as Clingman and Erritouni find it to be. The latter two critics agree that Mareen's 'audacious dash' towards the helicopter indicates a desire to overcome the complacency of her dubious liberal principles. For Clingman, Maureen

> is running from old structures and relationships, which have led her to this cul-de-sac; but she is also running towards her revolutionary destiny. She does not know what that destiny may be, whether it will bring death or life. All she knows is that it is the only authentic future awaiting her.[470]

Maureen's run reaffirms the capacity of complacent whites to get beyond the 'dead-end of history'[471] that they have sleep-walked into, and to assume 'a more binding commitment' to a future that as yet still cannot guarantee a place for any whites, complacent or otherwise. Similarly, Erritouni finds that Maureen in this moment pursues 'a new identity, one that is different from the liberal identity she has cultivated under and in opposition to the political and social arrangements of apartheid.'[472]

Of course, we cannot know for sure whether Maureen ever finds a 'new identity', given how ambiguous and inconclusive this closing episode is. Hence Bodenheimer's suggestion that Gordimer is uncertain in *July's People* over whether

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[467] Bodenheimer, p. 118.

[468] Bodenheimer, p. 114 (my emphasis).

[469] Bodenheimer, p. 110.

[470] Clingman, p. 203.

[471] Clingman, p. 193.

[472] Erritouni, p. 76.

we can alter 'the mental equipment of an adult white South African'. Given this claim, though, it is unsurprising that Bodenheimer should find that 'Maureen's run for the helicopter is an almost *unreadable* act.'[473] For despite suggesting otherwise, Bodenheimer's response to this episode lends credence to Erritouni's claim that Maureen's 'audacious dash' enacts 'a new identity, one that is different from the liberal identity' that she had previously maintained. Just as Hillela's unreality stems from her radical break with Apartheid's 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies', so Maureen's response to the helicopter's appearance is 'baffling', 'illogical', and 'unreadable' because unlike Rosa and Sasha, Maureen steps 'out of place'.[474] Her final flight is 'baffling' only insofar as it is incomprehensible within any existing 'sensible order'. In this moment, Maureen does something that we would least expect in her – indeed, perhaps in anyone, but least of all in self-interested, hypocritical white liberals who have already agreed to flee should either side in the conflict arrive in the village. As such, Maureen's flight towards the helicopter leaves us unable 'to designate what we see' since – as per Rancière's second definition of 'politics'[475] – this act seems uncharacteristic of a complacent, self-interested, materialist liberal hypocrite. That description, therefore, 'no longer suits the thing or the character that it names, etc',[476] the 'thing' here being Maureen. Yet the uncertainty surrounding this act suggests that we are unable to more adequately 'name' Maureen, as if there is no alternative 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies' that differentiates between complacent, self-interested, materialist liberal hypocrites, and liberals like Maureen who appear to have become aware of their hypocrisy, and – moreover – who pursue a way beyond it.

Thus, the very fact that Maureen's run is 'baffling', 'illogical', and 'unreadable' indicates a radical break with 'the old', even if the inconclusive ending of *July's People* leaves the nature of 'the new' unknown, along with Maureen's place in it, if there is one. As such, to claim that Gordimer is ultimately uncertain of

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[473] Bodenheimer, p. 119 (my emphasis).

[474] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 559.

[475] See Chapter 3 of this thesis, pp. 163-65.

[476] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560 (my emphasis).

whether we can alter 'the mental equipment of an adult white South African', is to contribute to that hampering of the birth of 'the new' that, according to Gramsci, gives rise to 'a great diversity of morbid symptoms.' To claim that *July's People* simply 'makes plain the hopelessness of the South African situation'[477] is to risk foreclosing the possibility of breaking out of Apartheid's symbolic circuit, by attributing the ascendancy of this 'sensible order' with a sense of inevitability. Indeed, these approaches are ironic, given how *July's People* plays out a very similar foreclosure via July and Maureen's confrontations, albeit with respect to how SASO's 'polarised rhetoric' risked foreclosing the possibility of encouraging white radicalisation, as described above. For it becomes clear in these confrontations that to insist upon viewing 'the South African white community [as] a homogeneous community' risks hampering the task of promoting among whites 'a more binding commitment' to the dissolution of Apartheid. Thus, Maureen's 'audacious dash' may well suggest that 'it is incumbent on white South Africans – more so than blacks – to take a leap of faith and embrace the unknown future.'[478] However, the uncertainty of that future equally suggests that it is incumbent on non-white South Africans to take their own 'leap of faith', by acknowledging in whites a similar capacity for self-reinvention as Biko sought to affirm in non-whites.

4.4 An 'interregnum' of identity in *July's People*

If she is as unrealistic as Visel suggests, then Hillela serves precisely as an 'envisioned self', through which Gordimer seeks to affirm that whites too are capable of meaningful, productive self-reinvention. Moreover, if 'the new' shows no signs of being born by the end of *July's People*, then we might attribute its elusiveness to the absence of a white 'envisioned self'. As I have already discussed, the novel's epigraph is most often read as alluding to the death of Apartheid, yet something else 'dies' in *July's People*. For with Apartheid goes a liberal agenda that allowed whites to both vocally oppose the regime without actively pursuing its demise, and legitimise their security and comforts in terms of Bodenheimer's 'ethic of private property'. The epigraph of *July's People* appears in a passage of the

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[477] Temple-Thurston, p. 57.

[478] Erritouni, pp. 76-77.

Prison Notebooks that I briefly discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.[479] In this passage, Gramsci describes a scenario where a 'ruling class' and its respective 'ruling ideologies' are confronted by a 'crisis of authority', insofar as 'the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously, etc.'[480] Clearly, it is unlikely that non-white South Africans ever subscribed to the 'ruling ideologies' under Apartheid. As such, the 'crisis of authority' that Gordimer's epigraph alludes to is more likely to be that which besets the Smaleses' liberalism. Again, it is unclear whether July or any of the Smaleses' servants ever shared their liberal principles. Either way, the Smaleses were able to convince themselves that they did, and so were able to sustain their pretensions of liberal decency and integrity without significant challenge.

Once they are reduced dispossessed refugees, though, July quickly realises that the Smaleses have no way of sustaining those pretensions – that they 'can't do anything. Nothing to us anymore.'[481] July, therefore, becomes increasingly obstinate towards both Maureen and Bam, appropriating their bakkie, and prompting a series of confrontations between himself and Maureen after she asks him to return it. As with Rosa's argument with Zwelinzima, in many respects Maureen's with July resembles the debate between Black Consciousness and South African liberalism. In particular, July's refusal to address Maureen as anything other than a white supremacist is highly reminiscent of SASO's 'polarised rhetoric'. Thus, Maureen is taken aback when July begins referring to himself as her 'boy', to her as his 'madam', and to Bam as 'the master', a language burdened with white supremacism that 'was never used in *her* house; she priggishly shamed and exposed others who spoke it in her presence. She had challenged it in the mouths of white shopkeepers and even policemen.'[482] Maureen initially reacts with disbelief, although she appears to accept the implication of this mode of address early on, conceding to July that '[i]f ever I offended you, if I hurt your dignity [...] I know I don't know, I didn't

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[479] See pp. 120-21 above.

[480] Gramsci, '"Wave of Materialism" and "Crisis of Authority"', p. 276.

[481] Gordimer, *July's People* (London: Bloomsbury, 1981), p. 25.

[482] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 85.

know, and I should have known'.[483] Of course, Maureen's gestures of apology and reconciliation provide little solace for July, who for fifteen years has had to endure the hypocrisy of his liberal employers, who opposed Apartheid only in principle, and only vocally.

However, in accusing Maureen of white supremacy, July demands more than a mere apology or admission of guilt from her: hence his persistence in referring to himself, Maureen and Bam in white-supremacist terms, even after she apologises. For these accusations also call on Maureen to acknowledge July as her equal, in a way that departs radically from the understanding of equality that had informed the Smaleses' previous efforts to respect July's dignity. Certainly, though, these accusations amount to 'a show of claiming a due',[484] as Gordimer describes them – of demanding that Maureen acknowledge how she and Bam had effectively hijacked July's sense of self, in order to exonerate themselves of any culpability for 'all the inequalities. The things we couldn't put right. Oh, and those we could have, I suppose.'[485] July's accusations, therefore, incite Rancière's first definition of 'politics' as outlined in my previous chapter – 'politics' as 'a conflict between one sensible order and another',[486] an 'opposition between logics that count the parties and parts of the community in different ways.'[487] The Smaleses initially 'count' themselves and July as equals who respect one another's dignity, yet July challenges this 'count' or 'sensible order' with another that 'counts' them as perpetrators of injustice, and himself as their victim. This challenge takes Maureen by surprise, given her assumption that July's offer to shelter her family in his village affirmed her belief that she and Bam had earned his friendship.

From the opening page, though, it is clear that the 'offer' was in fact one of a diligent servant seeing to his employers' welfare, as per the terms of his employment. Although they urge him not to, July continues to wait on the Smaleses

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[483] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 88.

[484] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 87.

[485] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 71.

[486] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 560.

[487] Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', p. 35.

like a servant, 'as his kind has always done for their kind.'[488] As a result, when Maureen points out that he no longer works for her, July appears shocked to realise that he will not be paid for that month. Maureen reacts with similar astonishment: 'Pay you! [...] You know we can pay you what you used to get, but we can't pay you for – '.[489] Either July cuts Maureen off here, or she abruptly realises the subtext of his remark – that he has saved her life not as her loyal, caring friend, but rather as her 'good boy'[490] seeing to his responsibilities. July's demand for payment might well be flippant, given his awareness of how the Smaleses are now destitute. Thus, the demand is less for money than for recognition. For by referring to himself as Maureen's 'good boy', July rejects the identity of 'July' as 'an identity given by another, given by the ruling order of policy'.[491] As the Smaleses later learn, 'July' 'was a name for whites to use' – his own people know him as 'Mwawate'.[492] For July himself, this 'name for whites to use' is synonymous with the shameful figure of Maureen's 'good boy', which itself amounts to Biko's 'non-white'. Thus, by conflating these identities, July disrupts the 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies'[493] that informs the liberal 'ruling order of policy' of the Smales household, which he has had to endure for fifteen years, and which dissociates the Smaleses meticulously from white supremacism.

Maureen responds by insisting on sustaining this 'ruling order of policy'. Claiming that '[n]obody's ever thought of [...] as anything but a grown man',[494] Maureen distinguishes 'July' from her 'good boy', whom she initially rejects out of hand, so as to distinguish her intentions from those of white-supremacists. As with Paton, Marquard, and van den Berghe, Maureen does not immediately abandon liberalism because it allows her to 'dis-identify' from white supremacy, without

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[488] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 1.

[489] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 87.

[490] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 85.

[491] Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization', p. 62.

[492] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 146.

[493] Rancière, 'What Does it Mean to be *Un*?', p. 561.

[494] Gordimer, *July's People*, pp. 86-87.

seriously considering the cogency of July's accusations. Whereas for July himself the name 'July' is synonymous with Maureen's 'good boy', for Maureen 'July' refers to a 'grown man', to someone who is her equal as an adult human being, and who therefore deserves as much respect as she does. The signifier 'July', therefore, becomes the principal site in which the conflict between the Smaleses' 'ruling order of policy' and July's alternative 'count' plays out. As long as this conflict persists; as long as the Smaleses refuse to relinquish their liberal 'sensible order', then July is suspended in the 'interval' between two identities – 'July' the 'good boy' and 'July' the 'grown man'.

Hence July's, or rather Mwawate's recourse to a third identity whenever he declares that 'I'm *big man*, I know for myself what I must do.'[495] This third 'name' manifests itself in terms of a corporeal, increasingly aggressive, threatening masculinity, such as when July abruptly thumps his chest in anger during his second altercation with Maureen. This gesture is as 'unreadable' for Maureen as her own 'audacious dash' at the end of *July's People* is for Bodenheimer, given how the sound of this gesture 'echoe[s] no other experience she ha[s] ever had.'[496] Moreover, the gesture provokes fear in her, albeit not 'in him, not physical, anyway, but in herself. How was she to have known, until she came here, that the special consideration she had shown for his dignity as a man, while he was by definition a servant, would become his humiliation itself'.[497] Again, Maureen here carefully avoids conceding the veracity of July's own 'count', by insisting that, even if she has not treated him as a 'man', it remains that she has treated him as a 'servant' rather than a 'good boy'. Once again, this qualitative difference allows Maureen to come to terms with July's 'dis-identification' from her liberal 'sensible order', without having to seriously question the veracity of her own 'dis-identification' from white supremacism. July may have been her social inferior, but Maureen maintains that she never regarded this as evidence of *racial* inferiority.

By referring to himself as Maureen's 'good boy', therefore, July challenges Maureen's conviction that she has treated him like a 'grown man'. Moreover, in

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[495] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 86 (my emphasis).

[496] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 119.

[497] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 119.

claiming to be a 'big man', July equally asserts a very different understanding of what it means to be a man, and be treated like a man, than that which informs Maureen's contention that '[n]obody's ever thought of you as anything but a grown man.' The bone of contention here, then, is not just July's identity or Maureen's integrity, but also the terms in which they encounter one another. Hence the inadequacy of Maureen's apologies for 'hurting' July's dignity.[498] For what July demands of her is respect not as a 'grown man', but rather as a 'big man' – that is, respect in terms that he himself defines, and by extension respect for him as someone who is just as entitled as she is to define those terms in the first place. This latter demand is perhaps the most traumatic for Maureen, given how within the terms of her liberal 'sensible order', her apologies would have demanded in turn that July treat her fairly. For Maureen, therefore, to step outside this order is to relinquish any such demand, and thus consign herself to a deeply uncertain fate, dependent on the whim of someone who has become something other than what she knew and could depend on – or indeed what she *controlled*. Moreover, as long as that 'someone' is unable to address her as anything other than a white supremacist, Maureen's fate seems sealed. As such, in objecting to July's insistence on referring to himself as her 'good boy', Maureen tries to re-establish control over both him and the terms in which they relate to one another, in the hope of influencing her fate, which is entirely in his hands.

Undoubtedly, Maureen's efforts to retain control over these terms indicate a latent dependence on her prior authority as a white. July, therefore, is fully justified in accusing her of white supremacy. Nonetheless, as long as Maureen is unwilling to let go of this authority, then her confrontations with July prove unable to give rise to 'the new', whether it is a non-racial, post-Apartheid commonwealth, or a 'post-liberal alternative' that enables Maureen to get beyond the 'cul-de-sac' or 'dead-end of history'[499] into which her liberal commitments have led her. For as long as July refuses to distinguish Maureen's intentions from those of Afrikaner nationalism, then he himself compounds her initial reluctance to abandon 'the essential principles

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[498] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 87.

[499] Clingman, p. 193.

of liberalism'.[500] For only a liberal 'sensible order' appears to recognise that distinction. Maureen, then, hangs onto liberalism because no other 'sensible order' exists – at least within the novel's diegesis – that recognises any distinction between 'racists', 'liberals', and 'radicals'. As such, when responding to July's accusations, Maureen initially fails to move beyond a fervent self-defence that remains squarely within a liberal framework, towards a reassessment of that framework itself that might provoke her to seek out an entirely 'new frame of reference'.[501] Given his claim that she cannot think of him as anything other than her 'good boy', July condemns Maureen to remaining strictly within the terms of 'the old' – not just those of a dying Apartheid, but also those of a dying liberalism. Both Maureen *and* July, then, are responsible for the fact that their confrontations prove inadequate as a crucible for the birth of 'the new'. Clingman, Visel, Bodenheimer, and Erritouni largely place the onus on Maureen to take the 'leap of faith and embrace the unknown future.' Yet as long as July refuses to take his own 'leap of faith' and trust in Maureen's readiness to embrace that future, he condemns them both to remain trapped in the symbolic circuit of 'the old'. Without this double 'leap of faith', the 'interregnum' can only persist, and 'the new cannot be born' as long as both Maureen *and* July do not allow it to.

Thus, the 'baffling', 'illogical', and 'unreadable' nature of Maureen's response to the helicopter's appearance is both discouraging and encouraging. On one hand, the fact that we cannot establish whether or not Maureen is prompted by a more progressive, 'post-liberal' sensibility indicates our lack of a 'sensible order' that can adequately make sense of her response, and that can therefore also perceive liberal whites as being capable of acting in ways that are otherwise uncharacteristic of liberal whites. On the other hand, this inadequacy is encouraging, since it suggests that Maureen has finally succeeded in moving beyond the 'dead-end of history' that she has sleep-walked into. Just like July's drumming of his chest, Maureen's run 'echoe[s] no other experience [we] ha[ve] ever had', and thus demands that we consider the possibility that complacent liberal whites can exceed what we would normally expect of them. The very fact that critics continue to

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[500] Editorial, p. 2.

[501] Clingman, p. 198.

debate the significance of Maureen's run; the very fact that it has 'become one of the standard debates of South African fiction',[502] surely demonstrates how it defies all categorisation. In contrast, Rosa and Sasha's incarceration dramatises categorisation. In Rosa's case, her imprisonment is an act of unconditional submission to a 'sensible order' that is entirely defined by Zwelinzima, insofar as she affirms the integrity of her newfound sense of 'necessary engagement' in a way that conforms completely to how Zwelinzima defines ethical and political integrity. Rosa claims that '[i]t isn't Baasie [...] who sent me back here',[503] yet as Clingman notes, she strongly suggests otherwise when articulating the reason for her return in terms of suffering:

> I don't know the ideology:
> It's about suffering.
> How to end suffering.
> And it ends in suffering.[504]

We might well be sceptical towards Rosa's insistence that Zwelinzima in no way provoked her decision to return to South Africa, given his Considering Zwelinzima's claim that the Burgers had never experienced suffering, at least compared with the suffering endured by non-whites. Once she is back in the country, Rosa takes a job as a physiotherapist at 'a black hospital',[505] 'teaching them to walk again, at Baragwanath hospital. They put one foot before the other.'[506] After Soweto is engulfed in violence, Rosa finds herself having to tend to both her own patients and 'those who had been shot' in the fighting.[507] Eventually, of course, Rosa herself is made to suffer, detained indefinitely without charge in a prison cell that looks suspiciously like her father's. Thus, if Rosa succeeds in re-establishing her integrity as an opponent of Apartheid, she does so by personally confronting, and then experiencing suffering under the regime. *Burger's Daughter*, therefore, suggests that one's ethical and political integrity after Soweto depends on the extent to which one

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[502] Green, Michael, 'Nadine Gordimer's 'Future Histories': Two Senses of an Ending', in *Wasafiri*, 9.19 (1994), p. 16.

[503] Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*, p. 343.

[504] Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*, pp. 343-44.

[505] Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*, p. 347.

[506] Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*, p. 344.

[507] Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*, p. 354.

has suffered under Apartheid. Rosa sums up this reconception when recalling Russian communist Vera Figner's remark that 'a trial is the crowning point of a revolutionary's activity.'[508]

In contrast, although she eventually acknowledges July's entitlement to define the terms in which they relate to one another, Maureen certainly does not do so quite as unconditionally as Rosa does. Nonetheless, by refusing to submit herself unconditionally to July's authority, Maureen demands from him precisely what he demands from her – an acknowledgement that she is as entitled as he is to define the terms in which they relate to one another. Rosa's response to Zwelinzima's provocations implies a mere inversion of a previous unequal relationship. Subsequently, the scathing, simmering mutual indifference in which Maureen and July take leave of one another after their final confrontation is perversely encouraging. After Bam's shotgun goes missing from their allotted hut, Maureen demands that July 'get it back' for her,[509] in what appears to be a lapse back into a familiar role of unquestioned authority over him as a white. July initially responds by claiming to know nothing about the shotgun's whereabouts, before objecting to her assumption that 'I must know who is stealing your things? Same like always. You make too much trouble for me. Here in my home too [...] I don't want it any more. You see?'[510] Yet again, July here accuses Maureen of refusing to trust him on racialist grounds. From his perspective, the subtext of her constantly looking to him to recover misplaced items is that he knows where they are, and that – as with the bakkie – he took them in the first place. Ironically enough, since arriving in the village, Maureen has continually found small, inconsequential household items that disappeared from her home over the years, scattered among the huts. She therefore counters July's insinuation by observing that '[y]ou stole small things. Why? I wouldn't tell you then but I tell you now.'[511] July objects to this accusation of theft

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[508] Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*, p. 157.

[509] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 185.

[510] Gordimer, *July's People*, pp. 184-85.

[511] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 185.

by claiming that '[a]lways you give me those thing!'[512] Maureen, though, repudiates the claim, although she admits that she never voiced her suspicion that he was stealing from her 'because I was ashamed to think you would do it.'[513]

At this point, July begins 'to talk at her in his own language, his face flickering powerfully.'[514] Gordimer does not disclose the content of his outburst, but just as when July thumped his chest at her, the message is clearly conveyed to Maureen without meaningful words,[515] and the effect upon her is profound:

> The heavy cadences surrounded her [...] She understood although she knew no word. Understood everything: what he had had to be, how she had covered up to herself for him, in order for him to be her idea of him. But for himself – to be intelligent, honest, dignified for *her* was nothing; his measure as a man was taken elsewhere and by others. She was not his mother, his wife, his sister, his friend, his people. He spoke in English what belonged in English.[516]

Maureen here acknowledges how 'July' has mostly been 'her idea of him', a personal fantasy that has underwritten what has been no less of a fantasy – her 'envisioned self' as the principled, unimpeachable, and appreciated liberal white opponent of white supremacy. In response, though, Maureen turns the tables on July by sneering at his own 'envisioned self', driving around in what was once a white man's bakkie

> like a gangster, imagining yourself a *big man*, important, until you don't have any money for petrol, there isn't any petrol to buy, and it'll lie there, July, under the trees, in this place among the old huts, and it'll fall to pieces while the children play in it. Useless. Another wreck like all the others. Another bit of rubbish.[517]

This counter-riposte leaves July speechless, and Maureen laughs at him triumphantly. Maureen might well have recognised that July's effrontery towards

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[512] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 185.

[513] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 185.

[514] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 185.

[515] Not in the sense that July's language lacks coherent meaning, but rather that it is meaningless to Maureen, given that she is completely unfamiliar with it. Thus, as with July's chest-thumping, the meaning of this outburst for Maureen lies in the extra-linguistic, such as what appear to be July's aggressive mannerisms and tone of voice.

[516] Gordimer, *July's People*, pp. 185-86.

[517] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 187.

her was mostly a way of contesting her previously absolute control over the terms in which they related to one another. However, Maureen's scorn towards what she perceives to be the inherent pretension beneath the virile, self-sufficient identity that July fashions for himself in the process, initially appears to be an attempt to re-establish that control. Maureen's recognition that July's 'measure as a man was taken elsewhere and by others' initially appears to give rise only to more 'morbid symptoms', rather than to something that presages the imminent birth of 'the new'.

Nevertheless, this scorn does depart from Maureen's previous pretension of liberal concern for his dignity and well-being, her efforts to treat him like a 'grown man'. Maureen sees no reason to sustain that pretension, having realised that she can no longer depend on July to validate her liberal agenda, and thus affirm the integrity of her declared opposition to Apartheid. Indeed, this realisation prompts Maureen to point out how July's own 'envisioned self' is no less of a pretension. Oddly enough, this exchange is encouraging, insofar as Maureen appears to have overcome the stubborn commitment to liberalism that had led her into the 'cul-de-sac' or 'dead-end of history'[518] that has confronted all the 'white pariah dogs in a black continent'[519] like her and Bam. Now that she is of no significance to July, Maureen in turn dismisses any significance he might have to her. As such, they part ways in an atmosphere of mutual indifference, he free of her control over his sense of self, and she free of the guilt that had driven her to assert such control in the first place. In this respect, this indifference frees both July and Maureen from the symbolic circuit of Apartheid. Rather than 'madam' and 'servant' – or 'madam' and 'boy' – they take leave of one another as refugees from the ruins of 'the old', equally destitute, equally vulnerable, and equally uncertain of where their respective places will be in the as yet unborn 'new'.

Of course, though, it remains frustratingly unclear whether this newfound indifference can provide an adequate basis for 'the new', or whether Maureen's indifference towards July is any more progressive than her prior condescension towards him as her charity case. Yet just as this uncertainty haunts optimistic readings like Clingman's and Erritouni's, it also troubles pessimistic approaches like

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[518] Clingman, p. 193.

[519] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 10.

Bodenheimer's. This uncertainty conveys the complexity of 'the South African situation', but I hardly find that it establishes the *hopelessness* of that situation. Instead, the 'notoriously open-ended'[520] finale of *July's People* seeks to reconcile optimism with realism: optimism insofar as complacent liberal whites are capable of taking a 'leap of faith and embrac[ing] the unknown future'; realism insofar as Gordimer remained aware of how that future – being unknown – could not guarantee even the most committed whites anything at all. Judging by the scepticism among her critics towards *A Sport of Nature*, it seems that this reconciliation of optimism with realism proved elusive elsewhere in Gordimer's *oeuvre*. Yet even as a realist appraisal of the political circumstances of white South Africans after the 'trauma'[521] of Black Consciousness and Soweto, *July's People* identifies the necessity of optimism as much as of realism. Thus, precisely because she is more 'myth' than reality, what Hillela amounts to is not a practical guide on how dissident whites are to contribute towards Apartheid's downfall. Instead, Hillela affirms the *potential* for whites to do so – their capacity to '*earn* a civic and national status other than that of colonizer, eternal outsider.'[522] Hillela presents us with a white 'envisioned self', whose absence from *July's People* is what prompts Maureen to hang on to the only 'sensible order' that acknowledged the disparities between her intentions and those of Afrikaner nationalists, between Turner's 'liberals' and 'racists'. Thus, what is missing from *July's People* is the crucial third term – Turner's *radical* – a second-order alternative to a liberal alternative to Afrikaner nationalism, given how July and SASO render the latter completely untenable. It is unclear whether Hillela might have identified herself as a political radical, yet she is 'radical' insofar as she effects a radical break with a 'stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies' in which the only rightful place of radical dissident whites – it seems – is in prison.

The figure of Hillela, then, is 'mythic' only insofar as her success is impossible. In my previous chapter, I argued that encouraging anyone to 'dis-identify' from a 'partition of the sensible' – such as Said's 'imperial consensus' – is

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[520] Green, p. 14.

[521] Clingman, p. 193.

[522] Gordimer, 'Introduction', p. 38.

only possible if we affirm their capacity to identify with another 'sensible order'. This capacity, though, depends on there being another such order in the first place, one that affirms that the consciousness, experience, and intentions of the 'dis-identified' do indeed diverge from, or exceed the terms of the first 'partition of the sensible'. I argue above that Black Consciousness was precisely this kind of alternative 'sensible order', affirming the capacity of non-whites to reinvent themselves in ways that broke out of the 'sheepish timidity' of Biko's abject figure of the 'non-white'. Just as the 'sociological actuality'[523] of Biko's 'black man' was called into question by liberals like Paton; just as Maureen mocks July's self-assertion as a 'big man' – in other words, just as these figures were more an 'envisioned self' than an actual self, so Hillela is more 'myth' than 'reality'. However, just as Biko's 'black man' and July's 'big man' affirm the capacity of non-whites to reinvent themselves, so Hillela affirms a similar capacity in whites. Equally, therefore, Hillela is more possibility than actuality, an 'envisioned self' for whites to affirm in themselves by making 'a more binding commitment' than ever to actively, unconditionally pursuing Apartheid's demise. As such, if Maureen is more 'realistic' than Hillela, then it is because in Maureen, Gordimer concedes that even this heightened commitment cannot guarantee whites a place in South Africa's post-Apartheid future. Thus, any such commitment can only entail being prepared for the possibility of exclusion from that future, regardless of how prepared one was to 'do something really dangerous'.

Maureen's altercations with July, therefore, suggest that redressing liberal complacency was only possible if the 'mythic' figure of Hillela were presented as a possibility, no matter how unlikely. As a result, Maureen's initial inability to come to terms with the shifts in how she and July encounter one another, may be compounded by July's refusal to recognize in her any possibility of reinventing herself, in ways that break entirely with her own white-supremacist tendencies. There are no 'envisioned selves' for whites in *July's People*, nor are there any in *Burger's Daughter*, that are not somehow compromised and problematic. If both these novels are more 'realistic' than *A Sport of Nature*, then their ambiguous

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[523] Lazarus, Neil, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', in *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 45.

endings suggest that this lack of more productive 'envisioned selves' may prove to have profound political consequences, not just for whites but for South Africans in general, who will never be reconciled with one another at any level. Thus, as much as 'it is incumbent on white South Africans – more so than blacks – to take a leap of faith and embrace the unknown future', in *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People*, Gordimer suggests that it is equally incumbent on non-whites to take a 'leap of faith' with respect to the integrity of dissident whites' claims to have different intentions to those of Afrikaner nationalists. If South Africa is to break out of the symbolic circuit of Apartheid entirely, then it is important for all opponents of Apartheid to distinguish 'radicals' from 'liberals' – if not as a reality, then certainly as a possibility.

Conclusion

The debate between SASO and South African liberalism concerning the methods and – more importantly – the intentions of liberal whites under Apartheid amply illustrates my argument in this chapter, that the possibility of encouraging active opposition in place of inactive 'dis-identification' is only foreclosed wherever we assume that it is *im*possible. SASO's historiographers have largely attended to how the organisation's critiques of liberal complacency were corroborated by reactions among liberal whites to non-white activists' decisions to 'go it alone' in the early 1970s. I have drawn attention, therefore, to the possibility that SASO's 'polarised rhetoric' may have contributed to the failure of this debate to foment enough active opposition to Apartheid among the white community to bring down the regime sooner. I have explored how Gordimer appraised this rhetoric in terms of what it made possible and what it risked foreclosing, including a mass mobilisation of whites against Apartheid. I have suggested that, particularly in her fiction, Gordimer found that SASO hampered the task of radicalising whites, by foreclosing the possibility of new, more promising 'envisioned selves' for whites to pursue, even as the organisation called upon whites to reinvent themselves in this manner. Subsequently, in *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People*, Gordimer portrays this search for a new 'envisioned self' as being inconclusive and uncertain, even if both novels affirm that whites are capable of achieving 'a more binding commitment' to overcoming Apartheid than they had made in previous decades. In *A Sport of*

Nature, Gordimer appears to succeed in finding a new 'envisioned self' in the figure of Hillela. However, compared with the 'realistic' Rosa and Maureen, Hillela's 'mythic' nature demonstrates how there could be no easy answer to the question of how to promote opposing white supremacy among its principal beneficiaries and, in many cases, its primary orchestrators.

The complacency of liberal white South Africans during and after the 1960s exemplifies how 'dis-identification' alone will not thoroughly dissolve a 'political and legal order', or even a 'sensible order'. As I argued in my previous chapter, 'dis-identification' is at most a starting point, a necessary condition for opposition to be possible, but one that cannot stand in for opposition as evidence of the integrity of one's opposition to a 'political and legal order'. However, as a way of galvanising more radical, more productive activism among whites, SASO's 'polarised rhetoric' had mixed results. I have explored here whether Biko's claim that 'basically the South African white community is a homogeneous community' hampered this task of promoting white radicalisation, in much the same way as assuming that a collective exhaustively articulates the consciousness, experience, and intentions of those who subscribe to it. In my previous chapter, I argued that this latter assumption risks inducing a circuitous, self-corroborating logic, according to which those who subscribe to a given collective do not exceed its terms in any way. Without this excess, we cannot hope to dissolve the collective, since it is this excess that makes 'dis-identification' possible. In this chapter, I have demonstrated how encouraging active opposition in place of inactive 'dis-identification' is only possible if we continue to assume that the consciousness, experience, and intentions of anyone who claims to have 'dis-identified', but who is politically inactive, exceeds the terms of whatever alternative collective they identify themselves with. As such, if we are to challenge the ascendancy of alternative identities that enable such 'inactive dis-identification', then we must present second-order alternatives to these alternative identities that entail more active, more radical practice. Turner's distinction between 'liberals' and 'radicals' exemplified this notion of second-order alternatives, whereas Biko's homogenisation of white intention foreclosed them as a viable option for whites.

Conclusion

By definition, any total vision of a properly postcolonial world must encompass even the hegemonic apex of today's geopolitical hierarchy, whether it is 'the West', 'Euro-America', 'the First World', the 'metropolis', or the 'core capitalist nation-states'. Here, though, the task is to establish how we might challenge the popular hegemonic ascendancy of that global conjuncture, how to promote opposition to the myriad forms of imperialism that continue to uphold that conjuncture, among their principal beneficiaries. Throughout this thesis, I have argued that in many ways, postcolonial criticism remains ill-equipped for this task, given many of its assumptions regarding this geopolitical apex. All too often, postcolonial critics impute that this apex amounts to a spontaneous, integral monolith, geopolitically, socio-politically, socio-economically, culturally, and ideologically. I have established not only how such formulations are questionable in themselves, but also how they jeopardise that prospect of a properly postcolonial world. For we have seen how Edward W. Said's totalised articulation of 'the West' led him to doubt the possibility of challenging what he claimed was the near-ubiquitous 'imperial consensus'[1] gripping 'Western society'. In this thesis, therefore, I have considered how we might reconceive that 'virtual unity of purpose'[2] without closing down that possibility. Central to my approach has been to avoid assuming that any form of collective unity either occurs spontaneously, or exhaustively articulates the subjective experience of those belonging to it.

Instead, I have assumed that any such unity belies the irreducibly infinite complexity of the sum total of the subjective experience of its constituents. To this end, I have drawn dialogues between the disparate work of Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Claude Lefort, Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Jacques Rancière. In various ways, each of these thinkers contends that

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[1] Said, Edward W., *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 62.

[2] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 62.

all forms of collective unity persist only as long as power intervenes in the consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices of their constituent elements. Their frontiers are maintained via the 'policing function'[3] of some apparatus of instrumental power, without which they would dissolve under the weight of both their internal differences, and the traffic that undercuts their frontiers, exposing the inherent contingency of their unity. Meanwhile, I have established how a similar logic informs Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's assertion that identifying oneself as belonging to a group is always a metonymic form of self-identification. The implication here is comparable to that assumption that the content and complexity of society are both irreducibly infinite, and that something always exceeds any attempt to apprehend an entire society. For if identifying oneself as a member of a group is always metonymic, then no group identity can ever exhaustively articulate one's consciousness, experience, intentions, and practices, the sum total of which is no less irreducibly infinite. At both the social and the individual level, then, something always exceeds the collective, and so collective unity always entails disavowing this 'unassimilable excess'.[4]

The first half of this thesis outlined this approach in order to establish the relevance of categories like 'the West' to the task of adequately understanding 'what imperialism is and how it works'.[5] I registered my sympathy with Neil Lazarus's impatience with any approach that 'refers' imperialism solely to 'the West', as if it were merely the expression of a cultural predisposition. Equally, I agreed with Lazarus that all too often, postcolonial critics overstate the unity of 'the West', especially with respect to the 'structuring assumptions' that supposedly cut across the 'many and manifest differences' between 'Western' thinkers like Karl Marx and

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[3] Gramsci, Antonio, 'The Political Party', in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973), p. 155.

[4] Young, Robert J.C., *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 136.

[5] Lazarus, Neil, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', in *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 54.

Thomas Carlyle, to borrow one of Lazarus's examples.[6] I certainly agree that failing to register these differences – if only at the level of intention – can yield an understanding of those 'structuring assumptions' that is simply 'too blunt an instrument, too reductive and undiscriminating.'[7] However, I maintained that it is just as important to avoid allowing these differences to detract from commonalities, wherever they do exist. For postcolonial critics might well be susceptible to a 'disposition to homogenisation' with respect to the consciousness and intentions of 'Westerners'.[8] Yet I find that any adequate corrective here cannot simply dismiss the claim that some form of unity underlies the 'many and manifest differences' between individual 'Westerners'. As such, I contended that we must 'refer' imperialism to both 'the West' *and* capitalism simultaneously, in order to establish why this unity was necessary for the latter's global proliferation under European imperialism, and then neoliberal globalisation. However, we must equally reconceive that unity in light of the contingency of all such collectives.

Moreover, we should also repurpose the category of 'the West' itself. For as I established in Chapter 1, the category is not always meant to refer to a polity, state, or confederation of states,[9] so much as to three 'hyperreal' or 'imaginary figures'.[10] First, we have the 'Hegelian West', the telic apogee of human progress, that recasts the contemporary geopolitical hierarchy as a natural consequence of the superiority of 'Western civilisation', and European imperialism as a benevolent *mission civilisatrice*. The second 'West', the 'other West', emerges from the 'dispute over [this] distribution of the sensible'[11] that has unfolded ever since formal decolonisation, the dispute over what European imperialism was, what it entailed,

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[6] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', in *Race & Class*, 53.1 (July 2011), pp. 15-16.

[7] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 15-16.

[8] Lazarus, 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', p. 15.

[9] Lazarus, 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', p. 44.

[10] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 36.

[11] Rancière, Jacques, 'Ten Theses on Politics', in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. by steven Corcoran (London, New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 37.

and what motivated it. The 'other West' emerges from a counter-history of European imperialism that encompasses much of what official histories omit, including the violence, the oppression, the exploitation, the injustice of European colonial rule. A significant outcome of this dispute is Dipesh Chakrabarty's claim that the 'Hegelian West' is nothing more than an 'imaginary figure', yet we should be mindful of how the 'other West' is in many ways no less 'hyperreal'. For one thing, referring to this latter 'West' simply as 'the West' can encourage the assumption that the category refers equally to an entire social aggregation. Yet the 'other West' is no less of a totality than is the 'Hegelian West', in which case this latter assumption can lead to the kind of homogenising tendencies that Said's articulation of 'the West' in *Culture and Imperialism* exemplifies.

The need to distinguish more explicitly between different senses of the term 'the West' became much more pressing when considering the third 'imaginary figure' that 'the West' refers to in postcolonial studies. For this third 'West' is by far the most 'hyperreal' of the three. What I called the 'Other West' in no way refers to a polity or agency. Instead, this third 'figure' refers to an intention or predisposition, an imperialist will to power, that serves as a 'constitutive outside'[12] against which postcolonial critics identify themselves and their critical practices, according to an anti-imperialist counter-intention. Each of these 'Wests', then, serves a very clear purpose, but none of them provide an adequate way of understanding how Said's 'imperial consensus' could have encompassed all of 'Western' society. For all three of these 'Wests' were never really meant to refer to a polity, to the constituent societies of the 'geopolitical West', so much as to an idea, an agency, and an intention respectively. If we are to better understand Said's 'imperial consensus', then, we must distinguish these 'Wests' from the polities and aggregations that together make up the 'Western world', the 'geopolitical West', 'Western society', whatever we want to call it.

Postcolonial studies has compellingly disputed the reliability of official histories of European imperialism, U.S. militarism, and neoliberal globalisation. Yet as Said and Paul Gilroy have variously claimed, these histories have yet to significantly challenge the hegemonic ascendancy of these official histories

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[12] Mouffe, Chantal, *The Return of the Political* (London, New York: Verso, 1993), p. 2.

throughout much of the 'Western world'. Clearly, then, challenging this ascendancy must entail more than casting doubt on truth-claims and exposing systematic misinformation. In this thesis, I have proposed that we conceive this ascendency in properly 'hegemonic' terms – that is, in terms of the formation of subjects and subjectivities, including how individuals and groups perceive their own interests, even themselves. Again, this approach avoids turning to a totalised articulation of 'the West' in order to explain the endurance of imperialism's hegemonic ascendancy among 'Westerners'. For rather than reflecting a passive predisposition to an imperialist will to power, approaching this ascendancy in terms of the active formation of subjects accords with the claim that all forms of collective unity are contingent, and that they persist only as long as some agency of instrumental power actively sustains them. My second chapter outlined how we might apply this approach to Said's Orientalists, in particular Gustave Flaubert, Richard Burton, and Alexander William Kinglake. I suggested that we understand the 'internal consistency' of Orientalist discourse not in terms of some external pressure, against which 'individualists' like Flaubert and Burton resisted, but rather in terms of Spivak's notion of 'self-metonymisation'. This approach would explain why that external pressure eludes Said throughout *Orientalism*, given his efforts to explain Orientalism's 'internal consistency' by way of such vague notions as 'a formidable mechanism of omnicompetent definitions', which 'operated specifically (and effectively) upon personal human experiences that otherwise contradicted' that consistency.[13]

Moreover, this approach would also explain why Kinglake's experiences of the 'terrestrial reality' of the Levant appear to have corresponded entirely with the spurious, truncated truth-claims of 'bookish Orientalism'. For this claim emerges from Said's distinction of 'conformists' like Kinglake from 'individualists' like Flaubert and Burton, whose highly personal accounts of their travels in the Levant consciously, deliberately fought against the rigid, enforced anonymity of 'bookish Orientalism'. According to this distinction, though, only among those who consciously resisted Orientalism did individual consciousness, experience, intention, and practice exceed Orientalism's terms. This logic has severe implications for the

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[13] Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 156.

prospect of challenging the hegemonic ascendancy of the 'imperial consensus' that Said would describe in his later book, *Culture and Imperialism*. Having acknowledged how *Orientalism* had 'said *nothing* about the possibility of resistance',[14] in *Culture and Imperialism* Said continued to figure 'resistance' in terms of conscious opposition or a counter-intention. As a result, Said's articulation of 'the West' became more totalised, and thus – ironically – more 'Foucauldian', at least as Said himself understood Foucault's claim that 'power is everywhere'.[15] Through his distinction in *Orientalism* between Flaubert, Burton, and Kinglake, Said acknowledged the possibility that some Orientalists could see beyond the rigid strictures of Orientalist orthodoxy, even if he did so in order to sustain his 'theological'[16] conviction in the immutability of a common humanity. In *Culture and Imperialism*, though, Said gives very little indication that 'Westerners' can see or even think beyond the 'virtual unity of purpose' that renders imperialism hegemonic.

My third chapter established how this implication forecloses the possibility of challenging this hegemonic ascendancy. I contended that Rancière's notion of 'dis-identification' provides a useful, plausible way of imagining this challenge. Yet I also established how 'dis-identification' only occurs wherever an individual's subjective experience exceeds the terms of whatever 'sensible order' or collective identity they 'dis-identify' themselves from. In short, an imperialist will only 'dis-identify' themselves from imperialism if they are more than just an imperialist; moreover, they are more likely to do so if they are able to identify themselves in turn as something else. I attributed the complaints of Spivak's 'bourgeois white male' students to being unable to 'speak' to an absence of this other way of identifying themselves: hence their claims that they are '*only* bourgeois white males'. Similarly, I suggested that the 'tormented dance' of Albert Memmi's 'colonizer who refuses' is partly down to Memmi's refusal to distinguish them from his 'colonizer who

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[14] Said, '*Orientalism* and After', in *A Critical Sense: Interviews with Intellectuals*, ed. by Peter Osborne (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 214 (emphasis in original).

[15] Foucault, Michel, *History of Sexuality, Volume I: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. by Robert Hurley (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1998), p. 93.

[16] Young, p. 134.

accepts'. If we cannot allow for even the possibility of a variance of purpose among the socially privileged, then we cannot possibly dissolve the structures that underpin their privilege entirely.

I further illustrated this claim by addressing literary reflections on the subjective experience of those who benefit the most from today's grossly unequal global conjuncture. Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* clearly affirms that today's imperial 'masters' will only become something else if we assume that no one is ever just a 'master'. No wonder, then, that George Orwell felt compelled to shoot the elephant in spite of himself, given how the Burmese refused to address him as anything other than a European colonial functionary, a 'master'. Meanwhile, V.S. Naipaul's claim in *Guerrillas* that all 'masters' are only ever just 'masters' – even when they try to make something else of themselves – is troubled by his own status as a 'master' who is nonetheless more than a 'master'. Hence Naipaul's doubts over whether his fatalistic pessimism is simply just a mark of his privileged status, given his ability to avoid enduring most of the consequences of such pessimism for citizens of the Third World. In *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*, Gil Courtemanche echoes Kincaid's claim that although we should avoid assuming that 'masters' are nothing more than 'masters', nonetheless a 'master' can become something else only if they identify themselves as a 'master' first. Yet Courtemanche warns that if we refuse to affirm that excess, then this self-identification can hinder this transformative process. Thus, Valcourt's self-identification as a 'master' initially does not lead him beyond his paralysing self-remorse over his implication – as a white French-Canadian expatriate – in the circumstances leading to the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Finally, I demonstrated how critical attention to Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* has largely reduced the novel's protagonist Patrick Bateman to a familiar stereotype of boorish, ignorant, selfish, materialist yuppies. Having traced how the media discourse on yuppies had a penchant for stereotype, I suggested that Ellis parodies the yuppie stereotype, ostensibly offering a reassuringly familiar, moralistic condemnation of 'yuppiedom', and yet literalising it to the point of absurdity. In the process, Ellis warns that such stereotypes offer little to anyone wishing to intervene in the conjuncture that underpins and perpetuates both yuppie privilege, and the ascendancy of their selfish value-systems.

We can hardly dissolve that conjuncture entirely, though, simply by encouraging its principal beneficiaries to 'dis-identify' themselves from it. Hence my insistence that such 'dis-identification' is only a starting-point, a necessary condition for the no less necessary task of encouraging *opposition* to that conjuncture. in Chapter 4, I addressed a historical scenario in which 'dis-identification' did not in itself compel beneficiaries of injustice to actively pursue the dissolution of that which they benefited from. I explored what we could learn from Black Consciousness's provocations against liberal white South Africans during the early 1970s, about how to redress this 'inactive dis-identification'. Insofar as they refused to register any variance of purpose among whites – whether or not they supported Apartheid – I considered whether these provocations compounded the very inactivity among dissident whites that Black Consciousness condemned as political complacency. Hence Richard Turner and Nadine Gordimer's various efforts to displace liberalism's popularity among dissident whites, by promoting a second-order alternative, based on the identity of Turner's 'radical'. Black Consciousness might well have forcefully disputed any claim that the intentions of liberal whites exonerated them of culpability for Apartheid. Yet by refusing to recognise the possibility that whites could be something other than white supremacists, Black Consciousness ironically left South African liberalism as the only 'sensible order' that acknowledged this possibility. As a result, the identity of 'liberal' remained the identity of choice for any white wishing to register their 'dis-identification' from Apartheid, a scenario that was hardly conducive to the promotion of active, unconditional resistance to the regime among whites.

In short, we can only redress 'inactive dis-identification' by encouraging a second-order 'dis-identification', which in turn is only possible given the conditions necessary for any form of 'dis-identification' – that individual subjective experience exceeds all collective identities and 'sensible orders', including 'alternative or directly oppositional'[17] ones. As such, we should avoid assuming that no one is capable of 'dis-identification'. As I argued in Chapter 3, this assumption can only discourage us from attempting to promote anyone from doing so, thus sustaining the

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[17] Williams, Raymond, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 113.

hegemonic ascendancy of whatever 'sensible order' we seek to challenge in the process. For then the persistence of this order would in turn appear to corroborate our initial scepticism towards the prospect of challenging that ascendancy. This circuitous, self-corroborating logic can only hamper the endeavours of postcolonial critics to contribute meaningfully to the final, lasting dissolution of imperialism. We must therefore take a leap of faith and anticipate the possibility of 'dis-identification' obtaining wherever we might otherwise expect it to be absent, unlikely, or altogether impossible. We must certainly also expect resistance from Gramsci's 'reactionary social elements': how we are to meet that challenge effectively, though, remains unanswered. However, if we respond to these elements by retreating back into familiar ways of understanding their consciousness, experience, intentions and practices, then we risk rendering ourselves politically irrelevant. We must be wary of comfortable, familiar, yet pessimistic appraisals of the consciousness and intentions of those whose consent lends imperialism its hegemonic durability. Yet this is only a starting-point, a premise on which to proceed to the much more daunting, difficult task of intervening in the consciousness, intentions, and practices of those who benefit the most from today's unequal global conjuncture, in order to turn them against that conjuncture, and so undermine that durability once and for all.

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